

# APPENDIX B

## CONTRIBUTIONS BY SOUTH AFRICAN THEOLOGIAN ON THE THEME "WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY?"

### AN ECUMENICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROPRIUM OR DIS- TINCTIVE ELEMENTS OF PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY\*

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#### 1 I HAD A DREAM

Not long ago I had a vivid and significant dream. I was back at university, as always deeply involved in student affairs. I was delighted to be chairperson of an important student body which held public meetings on current affairs. My committee and I were firm supporters of a broadly-based, liberal perspective and we controlled this society and were even influential in the University at large. One fine day while chairing a meeting I realised to my distress that I had been caught unawares by the fact that the constitution required that the election for next year's executive committee be held at the close of that very meeting. Glancing over the packed audience I saw with mounting agitation that most of the people present were not supportive of my particular perspective. On the contrary they seemed to be mainly from

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a troublesome new conservative and evangelical group whom I had of late noticed actively proselytising among the first-year students. Their enthusiastic leader was a fiery young fellow with a mop of red hair and the unlikely name of John Thunder. In desperation I sent off some of my trusted assistants to the residences to try and bring in our supporters before the election. These last-minute attempts proved to be futile. Most of our supporters could not be found or else they made lame excuses and the few who were brought in belatedly were not sufficient to avert the impending disaster. I felt the control already slipping out of my grasp and experienced intense anguish and despair as thoughts raced frantically through my mind.

At last I could postpone the election no longer and proceeded to call for nominations. John Thunder was the first to raise his hand to speak. He said in a calm voice that he thought it would be unfair to hold an election at this juncture. It seemed to him that sufficient supporters of all the various perspectives were not present and that we would not be able to elect a truly representative committee that evening. He proposed a postponement of the election and the motion was passed unanimously. I was stunned. I looked at him and immediately I loved him. With someone of such calibre and sensitivity I could get on - we could work together, co-operate as a team. I felt all my prejudice melting away. Freely and selfishly he had given up his golden opportunity to gain complete control of the committee and I had all the while thought that he had been skilfully engineering a take-over. I felt energised and liberated by the experience. As I sprang forward to embrace him I had this strange sensation of becoming integrated and strong. I could see an action-packed future. John and I would serve *together* on the next committee. With such a combination there would be no stopping our society. We could tackle an army, scale a wall, leap over all obstacles. I had a dream. I believe this dream was from God.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

"Doctrine divides, service unites" was the slogan of much superficial ecumenical enthusiasm at the beginning of the twentieth century. The many interchurch and interconfessional theological dialogues taking place today, the Lima Document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry of 1982 and the ensuing discussion it has generated, as well as the study programme "Towards the common expression of the Apostolic Faith today" are major contemporary factors which have led to the questioning of this old adage. In 1977 the German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, claimed that *doctrine, in fact, unites* whereas it is the practical issues that are now dividing Christianity. The study of the *propria* of Chris-

tian churches and their theologies is a relatively new and exciting task in Ecumenical Theology. Determining the actual differences between the major confessional groupings of Christianity is essential to any meaningful ecumenical progress. If the aim of Ecumenical Theology is to discover (uncover) and further the unity of the Christian Faith then part of its task will be to express doctrinal convictions in terms of basics and the resulting convergence in truth. Dietrich Ritschl, ecumenist from Heidelberg has recently stated: "Das letzte Ziel der Suche liegt in der Entdeckung ökumenisch konsensfähiger Sätze und Axiome" (1986:19).

In order to find such doctrinal expressions we need to know more accurately how and where we differ from one another before we may discover that others possibly express the same truth in other words or view it from a different angle. Seeking to define propria should thus not be seen as an unhealthy dwelling on what divides us. It belongs rather to the essence of ecumenical enterprise. As we shall see it is usually a pathway characterised by *innovations* or 'surprises of the Holy Spirit' (as Donald Gelpi calls them).

Our task is to discover what the proprium or distinctive element of Pentecostalism and Pentecostal theology is. There is a new urgency to this question in ecumenical circles today. As the unprecedented growth of Pentecostal Churches gradually makes its impact felt on the whole of Christendom many believers from Orthodox and Catholic, mainline and free Protestant Churches show an increased interest in this section of Christianity which has been most maligned and habitually looked down on in the past. The surprising statistics of D B Barrett that Pentecostalism, taken as a unit, has outstripped all the major confessional communions of Protestantism has finally caused the penny to drop - even in the rarified halls of established theological academia.

The fact that this paper is being presented at an annual meeting of the SPS is to no mean degree related to these growing perceptions. In 1983 the Institute for Theological Research at the University of South Africa in Pretoria commenced with a research project on Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement in order to try and understand the growth of this section of Christianity and to take its theological contribution seriously. Unisa, as our University is known, houses the major theological faculty in Africa with close on a hundred full-time teachers (from almost all the different Christian denominations) and about 4 000 students in Theology and Biblical Studies. The research on Pentecostalism is being done in the Department of Systematic Theology.

After a publication on the healing ministry of the church and apart from work on various historical themes, attention has recently been focused on "Prosperity teaching" and Pentecostal distinctives.

There have naturally been many attempts to try and describe the distinctive element of Pentecostalism including especially work by scholars of the Society for Pentecostal Studies. This present investigation is just one of many trying to make headway with this enigmatic task.

### 3 THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVES

#### 3.1 The concept proprium in general

I believe the concept of a theological "proprium" or distinctive first requires some clarification. Although the Latin term *proprium* may be somewhat unfamiliar, that to which it refers is not unknown. It is understood today in at least three ways. When people speak of *typical*, *unique*, *distinctive* or *characteristic* elements of a particular theology they mean (a) that which it is known for in the form of *caricature*, (b) that which describes its *essence*, the core of its faith, or (c) that element or those elements which specifically *distinguish* it from other related and similar but not identical theologies.

#### 3.2 The Proprium of Reformed theology

Let me illustrate what I mean by taking a brief look at the proprium of Reformed theology in these three senses. I am specifically choosing to use Reformed theology as an example because I am most familiar with it and I believe the advantages of an "insider" type of analysis far outweigh the disadvantages.

*3.2.1 Caricatures* are usually the easiest. There is a very common perception that the most typical belief of Reformed Christians is the doctrine of predestination. There even seems to be some historical evidence for such a statement. Reformed people, however, find this description far from accurate. Undoubtedly the spectre of Calvin's "horrible" eternal decree of double predestination or for that matter Barth's high-handed historical supralapsarian view belong to the Reformed tradition. Their impact, however, is negligible today. It would be grossly unfair to see even the various modified versions of what should rather be called the doctrine of *election* as being central to present-day Reformed and Presbyterian theology. The classical doctrine of predestination is certainly peripheral to most of the preaching,

catechising, evangelising or pastoral ministry of Reformed churches - even where it is openly adhered to, rather than serving merely as a skeleton in the doctrinal cupboard. Another, typically South African, caricature of Reformed theology is that it, of inherent necessity, gave birth to the evil system of legalised racial discrimination called 'apartheid'. Equally facile is the attempt to blame all the evils of capitalism on Calvinistic doctrine. None of these descriptions come close to describing the proprium of Reformed theology in a way which would be recognised by most of its inherents.

3.2.2 Secondly we turn to the usage of proprium to describe the core or *essence* of the faith of a specific group of Christians. How would Reformed theologians express the heart of their theology? I would venture to say quite simply that it lies in *the doctrine of the triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit*. This too will be a surprise to some. It sounds very general but we are attempting to describe the essence or basic component of the faith of Reformed Christians. It is to be expected that every group of Christians would describe their core beliefs in very 'ecumenical' terminology. As these basic concepts are developed divergent understandings soon appear.

3.2.3 Lastly we turn to what might be termed the 'proper' use of a proprium - the distinguishing element or *distinctives* of a particular theology. What then is characteristic of the Reformed faith? I would suggest that distinctly Reformed theology distinguishes itself with respect to its concept of *Lordship*. This is classically expressed in various ways. I wish to propose that these following formulations capture something of that element: the sovereignty of God our Father, the covenant relationship between God and his people, the all-encompassing cosmic Rule of Christ as the ascended Lord and King, or, more abstractly, the infinite qualitative difference between the Creator and all creation. These ideas are all closely linked, expressing various aspects of the typically Reformed idea of Lordship. In and of themselves these expressions are still extremely general and perfectly acceptable to most other branches of Christian theology. I would, however, submit that Methodist or Lutheran theologians, for example, would intuitively respond to the question: Do you believe in the sovereignty of God? posed by a Calvinist, by saying: Well, yes, of course, but I suspect we may mean something quite different by it. (Naturally many Reformed theologians are also self-critically aware of misunderstandings in such concepts or having them interpreted in unacceptable philosophical frameworks). The truly distinctive nature of the Reformed concept of Lordship lies not so much in its content but rather in the particular way in which it has been integrated in the broader Reformed community throughout the tradition of the

last four centuries. Within the context of the lives of Reformed and Presbyterian believers this distinctive element has received its specific significance and motivation. In fact, it is virtually impossible to pinpoint any *material* divergence regarding the Reformed concept of Lordship. It is rather the particular *emphasis* that Reformed people place on the cosmic Rule of Christ that has led, for example, to a more or less 'Reformed' approach to societal issues which may be contrasted for example with Lutheran or Catholic attitudes.

To the Reformed believer this "Reformed" idea of Lordship and Fatherhood is also directly related to the more basic faith in the triune God. Precisely this connection is the Achilles' heel of the "hierarchy of truths" approach. A Reformed theologian inevitably understands the Trinity in terms of this concept of Lordship, and the converse is also true. In this *reciprocal determination* between the essence and the distinctive elements of a particular branch of Christianity lies the inherent justification for that particular type of theology and ultimately also for the apologetic defence of its ongoing separate existence in an ecumenical age.

The most surprising of all is that even the ultimately distinctive proprium of Reformed theology should reside in something so foundational to the whole of Christianity as the Lordship or Kingdom of God in Christ. If this analysis is accurate one cannot help lamenting the extremes of common caricature mentioned above. The paradoxical realisation that the typically distinctive element is actually something so fundamental and central to Christianity seems to give hope to the fresh search for the common "Apostolic Faith" of all Christians across the globe.

### 3.3 The proprium of Pentecostal theology

The same method will now be applied to Pentecostalism.

3.3.1 Once again the determination of *caricature* presents no difficulty. With the possible exception of Roman Catholicism it is difficult to think of a group of Christians that has been as unfairly and vehemently slandered as the Pentecostals. Yet even within the most extreme caricature there is often an element of truth. For example the perception of the proprium of Reformed faith residing in a "capricious" predestinating God condemning the reprobate from eternity is certainly incorrect, but it is still possible to see that such a view is not totally unrelated to an emphasis on God's sovereign rule.

Misrepresentations of early Pentecostalism abound and some still linger on after eight decades. Fortunately one seldom hears remarks such as "the last vomit of Satan" any more, but the distinctive elements of Pentecostalism are still perceived of as being hyper-emotionalism, hysterical, ecstatic ramblings (glossolalia) and fanatical enthusiasm (cf. the term of abuse: the "Holy Rollers"). The tragedy of the "Berliner Erklärung" of 1909 probably forms the pinnacle of anti-Pentecostal rhetoric (Eisenlöffel 1979: 23-27). More prevalent have been the paternalistic perceptions of Pentecostalism as: typically childish and naive, superstitious, credulous and characteristic of the lower strata of society and the mentally less gifted and less mature. The degree of this abuse and the extent of the caricature reveals how seriously the threat of Pentecostalism was perceived to be to the basic structure of Western rationalistic Christianity. The most general caricature was to see Pentecostalism as "The Tongues Movement"! This is far from accurate although glossolalia is perhaps not quite as peripheral to the daily walk of Pentecostals as predestination is to the practice of Presbyterians. "Speaking in tongues" is just one of a much wider range of charismata operative in Pentecostal assemblies and is certainly not perceived of as dominating Pentecostal preaching and witness. There are indications that a large number of Pentecostals do not claim to exercise this particular gift (Kantzer 1980:26). Many would limit their experience of it to a single 'once only' occurrence of "initial physical evidence".

Other caricatures picture Pentecostals as "other-worldly" fanatics, stringent moralists or syncretistic sorcerers. Such descriptions are so grotesque that they present a portrayal that is rendered quite unrecognisable to people within "Pentecost" as well as to many "outsiders".

3.3.2 Next we turn to the understanding of *proprium* as the *essence* or core of one's faith. As an "outsider" at least in the sense that I have never belonged to a classical Pentecostal or independent charismatic denomination I shall attempt to lean heavily on Pentecostal sources, especially oral sources, in these two following sections. I hope that my "experiential" approach as a "participant observer" allowed me sufficient access to really understand Pentecostalism. Others will have to be the judge of this.

I would venture to suggest that the essence of Pentecostal faith lies in the doctrine of Jesus Christ and that it can be found in the specific concentration on *Jesus as Saviour, Spirit-baptiser, Healer and the soon and coming King*. In these traditional four elements (cf. the Foursquare Gospel) I believe we have the epitome of Pentecostal faith.

Although these elements describe, with some accuracy, the heart of what Pentecostals believe, they are also still surprisingly 'ecumenical'. Most Christian theologians would acknowledge that in some or other way they would fully accept each of these basic tenets. Different confessional groups may, however, give differing interpretations to these words. It will be immediately clear that the recognition of Jesus as Saviour and as the One who is coming again belong to the basic components of the Christian gospel. The manner and 'time schedule' of the Second Coming may still be hotly debated and, in fact, are - both within and without the bounds of Pentecostalism. The confession of Christ as Healer, the Great Physician, also seems to be virtually universal in Christianity - both in the sense of his ministry in Palestine and in his healing power for today. Some Christians would, however, prefer to interpret this in a more spiritual and less literal sense than Pentecostals do. Even the seemingly contentious "Spirit-baptiser" role of Jesus is not as exclusive as it may seem. Although it may not be perceived of as a very central element of the faith, most Christian theologians would probably acknowledge that Jesus is portrayed as the One who according to Acts 2:32, 33 received the Spirit from the Father and poured the Spirit out on this foundational day, thereby baptising the Church in the Spirit, evoking "this which you now see and hear".

There would be sharp disagreement regarding the extent to which this event may legitimately be individualised, personalised and repeated in ongoing generations, but that does not per se detract from a recognition of Christ as the Spirit-baptiser.

This 'four-fold' gospel may not seem to be as basic as the 'triune' core of Reformed theology and yet in a sense it is even more fundamental since it proves to be acceptable to evangelical Christians who struggle with the philosophical problems inherent in the technical concept of the "Trinity".

An added advantage of this description of the core of Pentecostal theology is that it is equally acceptable to the three major "3/2/1" theological groupings in Pentecostalism. I here refer to the classical division into the *Three-stage Wesleyan-Holiness Pentecostals*, who acknowledge three distinct events in the Christian life: conversion, sanctification as a step and Spirit baptism; the *Two-stage Pentecostals* (conversion and a subsequent Spirit baptism) who see sanctification as a process; and the *"Oneness" Pentecostals* who argue "that Jesus is the full manifestation of the Godhead in this dispensation" (Dayton 1985:D9). I am indebted to Prof Dayton's lucid paper "Toward a theological analysis of Pentecostalism" presented at the 1985 SPSP meeting for a persuasive defence of defining the four-fold gospel although, since I realise he is not a Pentecostal, I hasten to

add that my choosing of this formula as the essence of Pentecostal theology was influenced by its broad acceptance within Pentecostalism itself. It is the potential for the wider acceptance of the four-fold formula that comes as a surprise. In encompassing a "Unitarianism" of the Second Person it is at least as inclusive as the core of Reformed theology. Differences only emerge as these central concepts are developed and interpreted. The Eastern Orthodox, for example, put a *slightly* (after Klingenthal 1979 - even this may be questioned!) different interpretation on the Third Person of the Trinity and some Lutheran theologians may want to argue with Reformed theologians about the unity of Jesus as a person (even after Leuenberg 1973) but all accept the doctrine of the Trinity. Similarly all Christians may be united with Pentecostals in confessing Christ as Saviour, Spirit-baptiser, Healer and Coming Lord despite varying interpretations of what this entails in detail.

3.3.3 Thirdly we need to inquire what the truly characteristic element of Pentecostal theology is. What is *distinctive* about Pentecostalism? It is here that I wish to rely on some oral testimonies and my personal observation of Pentecostal piety. I seem to discern that *the experiencing of God's presence and power* are characteristic of Pentecostalism. This basic concept can be described in various related phrases: the Holy Ghost came upon us, the reality of God, 'Jesus touched me', the powerful anointing of the Spirit on the meeting, the dynamic power of God in miraculous manifestations, an encounter with the living God. To my mind these phrases capture something of the distinctly Pentecostal element of the Christian faith. Once again we stand amazed at how general they are. This sense of presence and power is not the exclusive property of Pentecostals or charismatics. Confessional groupings ranging from Catholic to Baptist, from Russian Orthodox to the Society of Friends would all recognise something of their own heritage in descriptions like these. But I am confident that most observers would agree that there is something unique about the Pentecostal emphasis on experiencing God in the charismatic manifestations of his power. As the sovereign Lordship of God seems to belong uniquely to the Reformed, so, I would submit, the dynamic presence of God and the experiencing thereof belongs to Pentecost in a very special sense. The truly distinctive nature of this 'touch' of God's power owes much of its depth to its total context in the Pentecostal tradition. It is a communal concept which has received its meaning from the freedom and vibrancy of Pentecostal worship and fellowship over the decades of this century. It is this emphasis on God's reality and the role it plays in the gathered assembly rather than any doctrinal difference concerning God's presence that distinguished Pentecostal spirituality from that of the evangelical and sacramental Christian alike.

Naturally this distinctive element of Pentecostalism is closely connected to what I have called the essence of Pentecostal faith. It is precisely as Saviour, Spirit-baptiser, Healer and Coming King that the presence and power of God is encountered and experienced in Jesus. As the essence influences our understanding of the distinctive element so too the distinctive element receives further definition from the core of Pentecostal faith.

Looking back one can now acknowledge some small element of truth in the caricature of Pentecostalism as ecstatic emotionalism and a Tongues' movement. To the unsympathetic "outsider" these misrepresentations were the clumsy manner of trying to express the unfamiliar immediacy of God's power and presence - a grotesque exaggeration which greatly contributed to the isolation of the Pentecostal community and prevented it, until quite recently, from making a valuable contribution to Christianity at large. If this analysis is in some measure correct it may come as an unexpected shock to many Protestants who value the *coram Deo* of Martin Luther and many Orthodox or Catholic believers who greatly treasure the "Real Presence" in the eucharist that the distinguishing mark of Pentecostalism is the experiencing of the presence of God in Christ Jesus.

In the concluding section of this paper I wish to address the issue of Spirit baptism briefly since it probably represents the major objection to the primary contention of this paper, that the distinguishing element of Pentecostalism lies not in a specific 'additional' doctrine but in a unique emphasis on a very basic component of our common Christian faith.

#### 4 SPIRIT BAPTISM

The Chairman of the Assemblies of God in South Africa, Rev John Bond, who is a much appreciated Pentecostal leader with an apostolic ministry, makes the following statement in his article in Appendix A of this volume, describing the distinctive element in Pentecostal Theology. (The only reason I am quoting from this part of his contribution and not from the much more provocative and valuable contribution which Mr Bond makes concerning a distinctively Pentecostal attitude towards *truth* is that it provides a classic illustration of a common position from which I wish to differ). Mr Bond writes:

The one great distinctive of Pentecostalism is the belief that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is a second experience to salvation and that it should be or can be accompanied by speaking in tongues (real languages unknown to the speakers).

Two minor points are interesting in this formulation. First Mr Bond seems to belong to a generation of Pentecostals who do not bother to meticulously replace "baptism of" with "baptism in" the Spirit in an attempt to avoid the misinformed reproach - generally by evangelicals - that Pentecostal theology is Spirit-centred and detracts from the centrality of Christ. The phrase "baptism in" underscores that Jesus (the Agent) baptises people in the Spirit (the element).

Secondly the element of *optionality* with respect to tongues as "necessary" accompaniment seems to betray the influence of the charismatic movement. If this is indeed what he means by "should be or can be accompanied" I can personally only applaud this shift since I believe the "law of tongues" contradicts the biblical evidence in 1 Corinthians 12, invalidating the primary argument of the interdependence of the various parts of the body. If the whole body were a tongue, where would the sense of sight be? (I am aware of the classical counter-argument making a distinction between tongues as a sign and a gift but I find it unconvincing).

The basic thrust, however, of the quotation given above is that Pentecostalism has "one great distinctive", namely the doctrine of Spirit baptism. I have argued in my doctoral dissertation *Treasures Old and New* that a doctrine of Spirit baptism as a second-stage event subsequent to conversion is wide open to the reproaches of elitist 'ultimacy' and an unhealthy event-centredness as well as to significant exegetical objections in the light of New Testament scholarship. I am aware that in claiming this I am saying very little that is new. I recognise all the basic elements of this position in a *minority viewpoint* held within classical Pentecostalism and associated with early leaders such as Leonhard Steiner, Jonathan Paul, Christian Krust and G R Wessels, right down to contemporaries like Dr Gordon Fee. Some of them also sought the basis of Pentecostal faith in the experiential, dynamic presence of God and the life in the Spirit rather than in the stereotyped single event "distinct from and subsequent to" conversion, with tongues as the only valid sign.

In my doctoral investigation I have also tried to outline the varying interpretations given to this contentious doctrine of "Spirit baptism" throughout the worldwide charismatic renewal movement, distinguishing a neo-Pentecostal position, a sacramental position (the experiential "release" of the Spirit as the flowering of baptismal grace) and a few evangelical and "integrative" approaches using such concepts for Spirit baptism as the final stage of Christian initiation, the infilling of the Spirit, congregational renewal in the Spirit, breakthrough and human growth experiences, etc.

My own position is that that which has currently but incorrectly become known as "Spirit baptism" is, in fact, the legitimate rediscovery of the charismatic or experiential dimension of the normal integrated Christian life which has been testified to by individuals throughout the history of the Church. Not a definitive "subsequent" event is called for but a recognition of the deeply experiential and doxological nature of the Christian faith and an ongoing openness to the full range of charisms as a present-day reality which the Holy Spirit freely distributes amongst the congregation for the common good.

In this sense "Spirit baptism" and the supernatural charismata are not special doctrines which Pentecostals and charismatics have added to orthodox Christianity but the fresh awareness of basic elements of our common Christian faith, viewed from the perspective of that unique emphasis which is the particular contribution of Pentecostalism to Christianity, namely the experience of the presence and power of God. Here doctrine may be seen to unite rather than to divide Christians.

## 5 I HAVE A DREAM

It is in this light that I believe that the dream with which I started this paper transcends the merely personal. (In Jungian terminology could one perhaps even see it as emanating from the collective unconsciousness?) In the Pentecostal world there has always been an appreciation for the possibility of prophetic insight being communicated in dreams and visions. I believe God desires unity for his people, the integration of the body of Christ, and oneness in the Spirit. Part of this process, of the answer to the prayer of Jesus in John 17, is surely that experience of grace when we transcend our parochial prejudices in self-denial and in not forcing our own advantage, recognising in a moment of truth in other groups of Christians, in the John Thunders of our lives, the basic elements of our common faith and brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we may work together.

I have a dream: that Pentecostals may become more ecumenical, *that the spirit of David J du Plessis may be multiplied a thousand-fold throughout global Pentecostalism.* My challenge to Pentecostal scholars is to consider whether our distinctive elements, our theological propria, may not become pathways for mutual enrichment. I believe it is part of our academic responsibility to help open up our communities and prepare our churches for serious theological dialogue and co-operation and to continue to do so.

I have been enriched by what I came to share of Pentecost in the denominational charismatic renewal. I remain convinced that as we return to basics we shall grow in our understanding of the common expression of the Apostolic Faith in God and in our love for one another.

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# PLURALISM HITS PENTECOST? CONFLICTING VIEWS AND DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES ON THE PENTECOSTAL PROPRIUM: A CASE STUDY FROM THE APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

From preliminary observations it is clear that the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is going through an interesting stage in its development. Issues like a possible stronger structural unity with its so-called daughter churches, the influence of some new independent, non-denominational churches (Rhema Bible Church, Christian City and the Christian Community Centre in Pretoria), leadership changes and so forth, compel the church to think about the direction it should take. It can be assumed that in order for the church to identify the dangers that should be avoided as well as the course that should be followed, it would be helpful to understand more about its own history. The same applies in terms of the future. If the church can at a very early stage identify developing trends within its own ranks, it will be in a better position to give valuable direction to its members.

It is with this purpose in mind that this article was written: to serve the AFM to better understand its own history and to clarify as far as possible the present and future developments or trends.

While efforts are presently being made to ascertain what the Pentecostal proprium from the viewpoint of systematic theology is, it was felt that this particular theological concept could also be utilised in a practical theological way. This opened the door for the researcher to investigate the proprium as it has been understood and even as it has been experienced in the past by those actively involved in Pentecostalism. The same applies to the present. From this perspective the proprium can be analysed in terms of how it is experienced today, and not only in terms of what it, according to church leaders, theoretically should be.

## 2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

### 2.1 The research group

As this article was also meant to form a preliminary basis for future research it was decided to restrict the people to be interviewed to about 10% of the ordained pastors active in the AFM. Those contacted were specifically selected by five pastors

known to the researcher. These five were independently asked to identify the leading pastors in terms of four given categories: The leadership (group 1); those who obtained advanced theological degrees at universities (group 2); those who are actively pursuing the theological pathway and practice of the so-called Rhema or "hyper-faith" or independent renewal churches (group 3); those who are believed to be conservative or traditional Pentecostals (group 4). These categories were only loosely circumscribed. They were selected on the basis of what is observed to be the current issues in the church.

Although all five pastors asked to give their advice identified more or less the same people who according to them are at present leading figures in the above-mentioned categories, the following should be noted:

1. Some of those identified in one group to a certain extent also represent another category. For example: Some pastors who are part of the leadership of the church form part of the category named "traditional". On the same basis it can be said that some pastors representing one group (e.g. the traditionals) may have strong sympathies towards another grouping (e.g. the Rhema group).
2. It was easier to identify the leadership and academically interested pastors. Their names could actually have been taken from lists which are publicly available. The pastors in the other two groups were identified more on the basis of public perceptions.

Forty two pastors were identified and asked to take part in the survey. Of them 10 were classified as primarily part of the leadership of the church, 12 were selected on the basis of their "faith-movement" connections, 12 belonged to the academic group and 8 pastors were perceived as to be part of the more traditional group. A letter was sent to each one explaining the aim of the project, asking them to react promptly and confirming that their replies would be handled confidentially. A very strict time limit was set for their responses and that may be part of the reason why not more of them took part in the survey.

## 2.2 The questionnaire

The first question asked consisted of three sections:

1. to identify the hallmarks of the very early stages of Pentecostalism;
2. to say what the hallmarks of pentecostalism should be and
3. to list what the current hallmarks of Pentecostalism are.

A list of 17 possible answers ("factors") were supplied and the respondents were asked to rate them on a 5 point scale in terms of their importance. These probable answers were collected from a general corpus of Pentecostal literature. In order not to influence the answer in any particular way the respondents were invited to rephrase the given possibilities or to add others if they would like to do so (see Appendix 1, section 1).

Another question was added. The respondents were simply asked to list the factors which are at present the greatest threat to the development of the AFM and those factors which can best enhance the development of the AFM. Once again the participants were asked to rate their responses on a 5 point scale. A new set of possible or leading responses were supplied (see Appendix 1, section 2).

### 3 THE FORMAL REACTION

Of the original 42 questionnaires, 22 were received back (52%). Of these, 5 were from group 1, 9 from group 2, 5 from group 3 and 3 from group 4, the last group being the least satisfactorily represented. This sample is considered to be representative of the group as a whole in terms of the original purpose: to establish the possibility of certain groupings and trends within the AFM. Most of the respondents added commentaries to the supplied answers and three wrote letters to elaborate on their viewpoints. These opinions were analysed, quantified and are used as part of the statistical data.

### 4 DISCUSSION OF THE RESPONSES: THE PROPRIUM

The interesting feature of the first part of the project is simply that the respondents did not identify any specific issue which can be acknowledged as *the* pentecostal proprium. This applies to the questions relating to the past, to the present and to what the hallmarks of Pentecostalism should be. This statement needs to be clarified further.

#### 4.1 The past: No consensus

When Möller relates the beginnings of the pentecostal movement, he first of all states the fact that people were filled with the Holy Spirit and that they spoke in tongues (1975:15-71). In fact, the emphases on the baptism in/with the Holy Spirit and on speaking in tongues gave this new movement its name: The Pentecostal movement. In contrast to these opinions, it seems that the

respondents have some other views about their own heritage. Only 36% of them are of the same opinion i.e. they underscore factor 3 in the possible responses. The leadership group (group 1) in general subscribes to this (4 out of 5 respondents). Of the academics (group 2) 30% hold the same view but the majority preferred other more general descriptions like the rediscovery of the charismata, the dedicated lives of the early Pentecostals (22% each) and other factors like the emphasis on the assurance of salvation and the distinctive quality of leadership that they were blessed with (a hallmark added by a respondent). Interestingly enough, in the faith group (group 3), only 20% saw this as a hallmark of early Pentecostalism while none of the three respondents in the traditional group (group 4) subscribed to this opinion. The last group felt the early emphasis was on the fact that everybody should have assurance of his or her personal salvation (67%) and on the spontaneous worship services which were held under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These figures specifically refer to the most important proprium as indicated by the respondents (no. 1 on the 5 point scale).

If second choices on the 5 point scale are brought into consideration the picture is altered to some extent. Another 44% of group 2 (the academics) underscore factor 3 as well as one respondent each from groups three and four. This means that 64% of the respondents feel that factor 3 applies to early Pentecostalism. If third choices are considered the percentage rises to 73.

Why this apparent diversity in opinions regarding the most prominent pentecostal roots? Answers to this question can hardly avoid being speculative and more research on a bigger scale needs to be done. One possible answer is simply that the respondents did not really try to indicate characteristics which could specifically identify the Pentecostals and their past practices, as distinct from other believers and their practices. Maybe they did not want to single out the aspect which is popularly used to describe the Pentecostals. The fact that the more traditional group paid the least attention to this factor is even more startling. Another explanation for this discrepancy might be a failure of the respondents to clearly distinguish between the given possibilities. As some respondents actually indicated in their replies, some of the supplied answers actually presuppose or include some others. Although this is true, it does not fully explain why the generally known and accepted Pentecostal proprium namely the baptism with/in the Holy Spirit with the speaking in tongues, did not fare that well in the replies of the research group.

## 4.2 What the hallmarks should be: Even more diversity

Once again it is obvious that the respondents differ widely in their opinions. The leadership group puts less emphasis on factor 3 (40%) and indicates factors 11 (assurance of salvation) (40%) and factor 7 (the teaching on the sovereign rule of God) as their first choices. If, however, the first three ratings on the scale are brought into consideration, all the respondents in this group refer to factor 3 as important. On the other hand, not a single respondent in group 2 even mentions the baptism in the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues (factor 3) as the preferable hallmark for Pentecostals today. It simply does not feature as an option on the 5 point scale. Of them 22% mention this factor as a second choice and 11% as a fifth choice but omit the traditionally important aspect of speaking in tongues, thus actually preferring factor 2. This is interesting because it may indicate a shift in emphasis in terms of the two groups' understanding of what pentecostalism is or should be. The different views are highlighted even more by the fact that factor 4 (emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit) is preferred by 44% of group 2 as the most important hallmark while it is not even mentioned as a first choice by any of group 1. Thirty-three per cent of group 1 choose factor 7 - the emphasis on the sovereign rule of God - to be the primary hallmark. The same pattern actually also emerges from the responses of the other two groups.

Group 3 accentuates the assurance of salvation as primary and as second choices factor 2 (baptism in the Holy Spirit) features alongside factor 3, factor 12 and factor 15. The amazing aspect of group 4 is that only once is factor 3 regarded as important and then only as a third choice by one of the respondents. Once again the teaching on the sovereign rule of God (factor 7) is preferred (66%). This is followed by factor 14 (worship services under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) as a first choice.

The overall impression thus remains the same. Although the leadership group (actually a minority of them) chooses factor 3 as being of primary importance there is a shift away from this factor being the Pentecostal proprium. On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit and the sovereign rule of God, received more attention. In general though, this means that there are a lot of diversified ideas among the members of the research group.

## 4.3 The present features: different observations

In terms of the first two points on the scale it is obvious that factor 3 once again received the most attention. And once again group 1 and group 2 more or less agree on this point while the

other two groups do not think this factor is featuring prominently today. Only one person in group 3 observes it to be so and only one person in the last group and then only as a second choice after factor 8 (the notion that the relationship with God can be directly experienced). For the rest factor 3 does not feature at all on the scale in these two groups. Something which is well noted by some in these groups (40% in group 3 and 33% in group 4 - both as a first value on the scale) is the more formal worship services and the fact that some pastors are very much aware of their own status. The fact that these observations are not mentioned in the second section of the first question (see the discussion in 4.3) is interpreted as indicating that the respondents do not approve of this. Belonging to the so-called "renewal group" and the traditional group might mean that they do not support this trend. This interpretation can only be substantiated in the light of these respondents' replies to question 2.

It should further be noted that each member of group 1 mentions factor 3 among the first two values on the scale while the same applies only to 67% of the respondents of group 2. Taken on its own factor 3 is not observed by group 2 as to be the most important hallmark of Pentecostalism today. Although 44% would positively affirm this, others feel that factors 1, 4, 5, 8 and 11 are more prominent today.

The overall impression thus once again is: The individuals in the research group differ widely in terms of their observations of present day Pentecostalism. The one issue which is most prominent, although only in group 1 by the majority in the group, is the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. The main fact however is that the respondents have diversified views on this issue as well.

## 5 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

One of the most obvious observations is the difference which the academics see in what the proprium should be and what it actually is. The fact that they also evaluate the teaching on the sovereignty of God, the experiencing of the relationship with God in a direct way and the fellowship of believers to be of more value than factor 3, is of importance. This indicates that they differ from the perspective of those in leadership in distinct ways.

The second observation concerns the unique responses of those in the renewal and the traditional groups. More research should be done and more light needs to be shed on the ideas and observations of these pastors.

## 6 TRENDS AND INFLUENCES

The second section of the research was aimed at complementing the first but also wished to establish whether there are indeed different trends developing within the ranks of the pastors of the AFM. Hence the second question on present day trends and influences.

It must be noted that because a new set of given possibilities or replies were used, the comparison to the first question and its replies could only be made in an indirect way. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that the mere fact that the respondents were classified into certain groups beforehand, to a certain extent leads to the question whether they have replied similarly to what was anticipated.

### 6.1 Trends: Dangerous as well as positive!

The single most dangerous trend was identified by the academics (30% of group 2) and by the traditionals (100% of group 4). They saw the growing number of heterogeneous churches and the different theological streams which form the basis of this development as detrimental to the future of the AFM. This view is also held by 20% of the leadership group and interestingly enough, by 20% of the faith group. If all the ratings on the 5 point scale are taken into account more of those in groups 1, 2 and 3 underscore this notion. It is, nevertheless, interesting though, that in all of the first three groups there are some who see this very trend as promising to the future of the church. In additional, spontaneous remarks made by some 20% of the respondents (all part of groups 1-3), it is stated in some or other way that a very strong central governing body which in effect hinders the development of freer expressions of Pentecostalism is a problem in itself.

A somewhat related issue, the growing number of so-called "mega-churches" with their diversity of ministries and cell groups, is evaluated differently. It didn't attract the same attention as the previous factor but nevertheless drew the support of 60% of the faith group, 20% of group 1 and 22% of group 3. On the other hand, this very factor was also seen as a danger by 22% of group 2, 40% of group 3 and 33% of group 4.

The other outstanding "dangerous issue" identified was the growing worldliness that is creeping into the lives of the members of the church. Almost 90% of the research group referred to this as a problem.

Other influences identified as being dangerous were mostly the problems regarding church unity and the relationship of the AFM to the Coloured, Indian and Black sections of the church. Pastors representing all the groups (40% of group 1, 77% of group 2, 60% of group 3 and 66% of group 4) see this as a problem. On the other hand, some others (20% of group 1 and 22% of group 2) see this as an issue which can in the long run have a very positive effect on the AFM. This is on condition that the issue should be worked through thoroughly and creatively. If the church is going to avoid the growing demand for structural unity it will in the short term have a positive or calming effect on some members and congregations but in the end it will lead to the AFM becoming irrelevant. That this whole issue should be looked at more extensively is obliquely underscored by the fact that almost 40% of the research group see the development of right-wing politics as dangerous to the AFM.

On the issue of the so-called "prosperity teaching" there was reaction from groups 1 and 2 who for 40% and 44% respectively see this theological emphasis as a problem. On the other hand 44% of group 2 and 40% of group 3 (sometimes known as the "renewal group") see the new developments in worship style, which mostly comes from the churches where the prosperity teaching is preached, as very positive. It should further be noted that group 2 (44%) and group 3 (40%) indicated that the alternative position, namely to return to the old traditional Pentecostal worship, would be bad for the AFM.

What are the present trends which are most acclaimed by the research group as being positive? Without a shadow of doubt the growing emphasis on the equipping of the (other) members of the church, the consequential change in pastoral practices and the development of a variety of ministries within the local body is valued as the most positive development. Only one person (from group 3) in the whole research group sees this negatively and then only as a number 5 rating on the scale. The fact that most pastors see this as a positive future trend is in itself interesting in the light of the fact that Pentecostalism originally brought the benefits of gifts and ministries to the fore. Perhaps there is much truth in the statement that Pentecostalism has for so long concentrated on only some of the charismata and that the development of other gifts and ministries within the local body only recently came to the fore - and then via the influence of some other renewal groups: not for classical pentecostal churches.

Because the development of skills in exercising gifts often takes place in smaller groups and gatherings and because the quality of fellowship is intensified within such groups, it seems under-

standable that a high percentage of the research group valued the growing number of these groups as being positive (80% of group 1, 67% of group 2, 40% of group 3 and 67% of group 4). Some of them specifically qualified their support for this development: It should be under the auspices of the local congregation. This means that they are thus not supporting the growing "house church movement" which tends to be more independently inclined.

In general the influence of television and radio is perceived to be positive (especially by 55% of group 2) although none of the respondents indicated this as to be of primary importance. Because of the fact that in the questionnaire, reference to the influence of the electronic media was only made in general terms, this positive evaluation needs further interpretation. Most probably the respondents had the more frequent and better coverage that the AFM as a church is getting on these media in mind and not the general influence of television and radio on the population as a whole.

Understandably, the fact that a growing number of AFM pastors are involved in studies at post-graduate level - contrary to the emphases in early Pentecostalism - is positively evaluated by those in group 2 (77% of the academics). In sharp contrast to this viewpoint 67% of those in group 3 (the faith or so-called renewal group), see this as being dangerous.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 First of all the results bear out the presupposition that there are indeed specific groups of like minded pastors existing within the AFM. The mere fact that as groups the respondents evaluate certain trends as positive or negative, substantiates this observation. This is particularly true of groups 2, 3 and 4 while it is also clear that the leadership group does not necessarily have the same strong feelings about certain issues as is the case with the other groups. This is in accord with the fact that the leadership is in effect representative of these different groupings.

What this means in terms of the future of the AFM is not clear. One might say that this is an indication of a healthy diversity in the church or it might also be interpreted as an indication of a possible or growing disunity. This should be investigated further before conclusive statements can be made.

7.2 At the same time it should also be taken into account that the respondents have very diversified ideas about the Pentecostal proprium. As has been shown they differ on almost every point:

what the hallmarks were, what they should be and what they are. This does not necessarily contradict the statement about the existence of different groups within the AFM. The fact is that the respondents, and specially the different groups, are more united in terms of evaluating present trends (question 2), than in interpreting their own history, what their hallmarks should be and what they are (question 1). Thus the conclusion can be drawn that in these matters there are a lot of different opinions going around. This calls for further research because the lack of unity on some of these cardinal issues may have some harmful results in the long run.

7.3 It should be noted that while the majority of the respondents see the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the speaking in tongues as important, there is also a de-emphasizing of this issue. *This is important and in the long run might change the face of Pentecostalism considerably.* It also raises a question concerning the unifying factor within Pentecostalism: If this is not *the proprium*, what else can it be? The question is a pressing one in the light of the fact that some of the factors indicated by the respondents will most probably also be preferred by people in the Reformed tradition, i.e. the emphasis on the sovereign rule of God.

7.4 It will be wise for the AFM as a whole to address certain issues. The discussion of factors which indicated a high and intensive divergence, for example the structural unity with other AFM churches, suggests this.

7.5 All in all the whole exercise suggests that the AFM as a Pentecostal church is in a situation of flux and that a lot of research should be done to understand the current dynamics in a better way.

#### WORKS CONSULTED

Möller, F P 1975. *Die diskussie oor die charismata soos wat dit in die pinksterbeweging geleer en beoefen word.* Braamfontein, Johannesburg: Evangelie Uitgewers.

## APPENDIX 1: SECTION 1

### THE ESSENTIAL HALLMARKS OF PENTECOSTALISM

#### Question 1

- 1.1 *According to your opinion, what were the essential hallmarks of Pentecostalism in the past (the first twenty years)?*
- 1.2 *What should the hallmarks of Pentecostalism be?*
- 1.3 *What are the actual present-day hallmarks of Pentecostalism?*

Below a number of possible answers are supplied. Please rate them in order of importance from 1 to 5 (1 being the most important). Rephrase these answers or replace them with some of your own if you would like to do so.

1. The (rediscovery of the) charismatic gifts;
2. The baptism in/with the Holy Spirit;
3. The baptism in/with the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues;
4. The fruit of the Spirit;
5. The notion that God still speaks to his people and that he guides them in direct ways;
6. The notion that physical healing in the Name of Jesus can still occur today;
7. The teaching on the sovereignty of God;
8. The notion that one's relationship with God can be directly experienced;
9. An emphasis on the fellowship of believers;
10. Speaking in tongues as a gift;
11. An emphasis on the notion that every believer should have assurance of personal salvation;
12. The holy, separated lives of dedicated believers;

13. Exorcism and prayers for the sick;
14. Free and spontaneous worship services under the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
15. The power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Jesus;
16. Formally structured services and an awareness among pastors of their status and importance;
17. Others .....

(Please fill in the 5 point scale which is provided on the last page.)

## APPENDIX 1: SECTION 2

### PRESENT TRENDS WITHIN THE AFM OF SA

Present-day trends and their influence in shaping the future of the AFM are looked at in this section. Evaluate these tendencies in the light of the question which is asked. Note that the question has two subsections.

#### Question 2

2. *Which of the following influences or trends do you perceive to be as*
  - 2.1 *the most dangerous and*
  - 2.2 *as the most positive in terms of the development of the AFM in years to come?*

Rate these factors once again on the 5 point scale in order of their importance (no. 1 being the most important).

1. The growing expectation of Christ's second coming and the numerous end-time prophecies which are currently in circulation
2. The growing emphasis on the equipping of church members as opposed to the more traditional forms of pastoral work; The emphasis on the mutual ministry of believers in the local church;

3. The development of the so-called "mega-churches"; big local churches with a variety of ministries and cell groups (Hatfield, Rhema and other Christian Centres);
4. The growing number of "house churches" and other types of smaller congregations where fellowship and mutual relationships receive emphasis;
5. The growing variety which exists within the AFM among the different local churches; the different forms of renewal which are developing; the different types or streams of theology which are developing within the one church;
6. The development of right-wing politics in South Africa; The development of the Conservative Party and the new "Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk";
7. The role and influence of the electronic media such as the radio and television;
8. The tendency of more and more pastors to pursue advanced theological degrees at universities;
9. The growing worldliness among the members of the church; members who conform to the standards set by society in the RSA and not necessarily those proclaimed by the Bible or the church;
10. The emphasis on signs and wonders as part of evangelism and the building up of the church;
11. The problems concerning church unity and the relationship of the AFM with the other sections of the church (Black, Coloured and Indian);
12. The so-called prosperity teaching with its emphasis on faith, positive confession, health, material prosperity and so forth;
13. The tendency to move back to traditional patterns of pentecostal worship;
14. Others .....

(Please fill in the last page).



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