Pentecostal/Charismatic Perspectives on a Missiology for the Twenty-First Century

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The Pentecostal/Charismatic communions have been mistakenly labeled over the years as a "Spirit movement" or a "tongues movement," and therefore bereft of a firm, biblical Christology in the tradition of historical theology. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is the Pentecostal/Charismatic confession that the presence of the Holy Spirit will only give more and more honor to the unique and indispensable revelation of God in the powerfully present person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Arthur F. Glasser relates this witness of the Holy Spirit to the Lordship of Christ in Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality:

Many evangelicals have been challenged by the immediacy and reality of God that Pentecostals reflect along with their freedom and unabashed willingness to confess openly their allegiance to Christ. The achievements of their churches are equally impressive, reflecting their settled conviction that the full experience of the Holy Spirit will not only move the Church closer to Jesus at its center, but at the same time, press the Church to move out into the world in mission.²

Pentecostal/Charismatic theology maintains the necessity of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as the indispensable enduement of power for Christian mission (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), that Jesus, the exalted mediator between God and humankind, is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33), and that Jesus Christ continues today to do all that he began in his earthly mission (Acts 1:1). They would confess the Trinitarian proclamation of Peter, "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, [Jesus] has poured out this which you see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

Missiology for the twenty-first century needs the preeminence of Jesus and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Training for the future must

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follow the pedagogy and paradigm of the Spirit in a Spirit-directed, Spirit-driven missiology that openly confesses with Moses:

If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth? (Exodus 33:15-17).

David Barrett's description of the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition, now numbering more than 400 million and growing by 19 million a year and 54,000 a day, is that it comes in an "amazing variety" of 38 major categories, 11,000 Pentecostal denominations and 3,000 independent Charismatic denominations spread across 8,000 ethno-linguistic cultures and 7,000 languages. A cross section of worldwide Pentecostalism reveals a composite international Pentecostal/Charismatic who is more urban than rural, more female than male, more Third World (66%) than Western world, more impoverished (87%) than affluent, more family-oriented than individualistic, and, on the average younger than eighteen.3

To ask for Pentecostal/Charismatic perspectives may take us across the landscape of Barrett's five umbrella categories first used in his World Christian Encyclopedia (Nairobi/Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1982):

a. Classical Pentecostals (with North American/European roots),
b. Neo-Pentecostalism (mainline Protestant),
c. Catholic Charismatics,
d. Independent Charismatic Churches, and,
e. Indigenous non-white Pentecostals/Charismatics in the Southern World (especially Africa).

Obviously, with this backdrop, it is difficult to bring a monolithic, homogeneous view but the following seven perspectives would be generally representative of Pentecostal/Charismatic missiology.4
