Introduction

The Pentecostal movement is known for its focus on the power of God at work in the world and in the lives of believers. God’s presence is thus understood as something that is tangibly felt and may be expected to involve a transformative effect on the lives of those touched by it. Pentecostals have been convinced that this focus on the power of God uncovers a neglected theme in the Scriptures and is relevant for missionary contexts. It is the conviction of this essay that this biblical focus on the power of God is one of the reasons why Pentecostalism has been such a potent movement in a variety of cultural contexts. This assumption is especially true in the African context in which “Pentecostal-like” worship and practices are widespread. The African settings seem to involve worldviews that remain especially open to experiencing God’s power in very concrete and tangible ways. In what follows, I investigate the biblical basis for this Pentecostal focus on the power of God and point out

2 The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, in doing this research.
3 For a detailed investigation of the power of God in the New Testament, the reader
that it comprises both the miraculous dimension, as well as the perspective of power in the midst of weakness. This message is very relevant in the context of African religiosity.

**God’s Power in Luke**

**Introduction**

In this brief overview of the power of God in the broader New Testament context the Gospel of Luke has been selected to serve as an example from the synoptic tradition, as the concept of dynamis occurs most in this Gospel. Among the Gospels Luke especially deals theologically with the fact that history went on and that Christ did not immediately return. Through the Spirit the risen Christ is present in the community and the disciples are being thrust into mission. The Spirit is the catalyst, the guiding and driving force of mission. At every point the church’s mission is both inspired and confirmed by manifestations of the Spirit.\(^4\)

Dynamis occurs in the following sections of Luke’s Gospel: the infancy prologue (1:35), right at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee (4:14), his preaching in Capernaum (4:36), the healing (and forgiveness) of a paralyzed man (5:17), the section dealing with the disciples and people coming to hear and be healed (6:19), the healing of the woman with the flow of blood (8:46), the empowerment and sending of the Twelve (9:1), the return of the seventy-two (10:19-20), the section toward the close of the Gospel, dealing with the coming of the Son of Man (21:27), Jesus before Pilate and Herod (22:69), as well as the final section which deals with the empowerment of the disciples to become trustworthy witnesses (24:49).\(^5\)

The dimension of power, therefore, occurs (1) at the beginning of Luke’s narrative about Jesus (already at the inception and right at the beginning of his ministry), (2) in connection with his healing ministry and ministry of exorcism, (3) relating to the empowerment of his disciples, (4) at the conclusion of the Gospel in an eschatological context, and (5) in connection with his instruction to the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the “power from on high.”

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