

**Report on Anglican-Pentecostal Steering Group (APTSG) Consultation on
Pneumatology & Baptism in the Spirit**

Held at the Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Birmingham University,

Tuesday 2nd April 2019, 10am – 4pm

This one-day consultation built on earlier gatherings, including an exploratory 24-hour conference of English Anglicans and representatives of various English and UK-wide Pentecostal churches and networks held at High Leigh in April 2014, a November 2015 day conference on Pentecostalism and ecumenical relations hosted by Churches Together in England (CTE), and a bilateral consultation featuring representatives of the Church of England and the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) at the Focolare Centre, Welwyn Garden City in May 2016.

Thirty-six invitees from Anglican and Pentecostal traditions attended and were split into mixed discussion groups for the duration of the day. These included graduate students from the Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies (CPCS), who had kindly agreed to host the event. The meeting began with Pentecostal-style worship led by the APTSG co-chair Marcus Chilaka from the Redeemed Christian Church of God, and ended with CofE Evening Prayer, led by APTSG Anglican member and co-facilitator of the Consultation, the Revd Dr David Hilborn, Principal of Moorlands College.

Greetings were offered by Professor Wolfgang Vondey, Director of CPCS, who was thanked for his and CPCS' collaboration. Six papers were presented in three pairs, with each pair comprising an Anglican and a Pentecostal contribution. After each pair of papers,

participants considered in their groups the themes covered in those papers, and this was followed by Q&A with the two speakers concerned. The first pair of papers focused on pneumatology and baptism as such, the second pair on the role of the Spirit specifically in water baptism, and the third pair on the pneumatology and baptism in the Spirit.

In her opening paper on 'Anglicanism, Pneumatology and Baptism' the Dean of St David's, the Very Revd Canon Dr Sarah Rowland Jones, stressed the centrality of water baptism in three-fold name of the Trinity in the historic formularies of the Church of England, and in subsequent international Anglican texts such as the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886-88, the Lambeth Appeal of 1920 and more recent Lambeth Conference declarations.

Through these documents she traced 'the deep theological affirmation that all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have been baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, are members together of the body of Christ, the universal Church that spans time and space. Further, the people of God are called and inspired by the Holy Spirit at work among us.' A key part of that calling and inspiration for Anglicans, said Dr Rowland Jones, is expressed in the rite of Confirmation, with its affirmation that 'life in the Spirit is ongoing, continuing and developing', and its enabling of the confirmand to experience the grace of the Spirit in Holy Communion.

Dr Rowland Jones noted that Anglicans' theology of baptism, and of the Spirit's role in baptism, has traditionally been construed in liturgical rather than dogmatic terms, on the ancient principle of *lex orandi lex credendi* (the rule of prayer is the rule of faith). While potentially holistic, this more implicit expression of 'pneumatology through liturgy' had sometimes meant that Anglicans could be 'rather amnesiac, or asleep, about the enormity

of our language about the Spirit’ – a result of the ‘comfortable familiarity’ that scripted liturgy can instil, by contrast with the typically more instinctive and extemporary Pentecostal response to the Spirit that ‘blows where it will’. Citing Annie Dillard, Dr Rowland Jones observed that many Anglicans thus effectively domesticate divine dynamite – that instead of wearing hats to church they should be ‘wearing crash helmets’.

Approaching the same overall brief from a Pentecostal perspective, the Revd Dr Caleb Nyanni (Birmingham Christian College and Elim Church, Sparkbrook) emphasised the fact that ‘all authentic Christians believe in the deity of the Holy Spirit and his works’, so that study of distinctively Pentecostal pneumatology would need to focus on how those works are construed within the life of the individual believer and of the Church. Although this was not made easy by the ‘polynucleated’ character of Pentecostalism, common threads could nonetheless be discerned in most Pentecostals’ focus on the Spirit’s being given not only in water baptism but also in a tangible ‘subsequent’ experience of baptism or filling which conferred ‘power for service’ and *charismata* or gifts – and, most distinctively in this case, supernatural or extraordinary gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, words of knowledge and healing/deliverance.

Particularly stressing Luke’s connection of Spirit-baptism with power (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8), Dr Nyanni related this understanding to Pentecostals’ often palpable sense of cosmic conflict between good and evil, God and the devil, and angelic and demonic spirits. Indeed, he suggested that mission and evangelism are typically conceived within the same cosmic/supernatural framework by Pentecostals, as combining salvific preaching and teaching with miraculous ‘signs and wonders’ which confirm that teaching. This, they

believe, is closest to the apostolic practice of the early church. Spirit-empowered mission of this sort will also entail church planting as a norm – as, again, in the church of the New Testament. In that sense, said Dr Nyanni, Pentecostals have resonated with the Anglican Fresh Expressions initiative of the past 15 years, to plant or re-plant churches. Referencing Keith Warrington’s definition of Pentecostal theology as a ‘theology of encounter’, Dr Nyanni noted that in more recent times this has come to include greater awareness of the need to engage in social and civic concerns alongside personal evangelism – i.e. encountering God in the poor and homeless and in the political sphere, areas in which Pentecostals might potentially gain wisdom from Anglicans’ longer-term inclusion of these imperatives in their missiologies.

Concentrating more specifically on the role of the Spirit in water baptism, the Revd Dr Andy Lord acknowledged the significant challenges posed to that vast majority of Pentecostals who practice believers’ baptism as the norm by Anglicans’ adherence to paedobaptism. Although Anglicans have been increasingly ‘happy to baptise adults who express faith...much as may be found in Pentecostal settings’, their disavowal of re-baptism for those previously baptised (or ‘christened’) as infants, and their historic tendency to baptise children on the basis of residency in a parish, have represented a ‘critical difference’ from Pentecostal practices, said Dr Lord. He further noted that Anglican approaches to water baptism are more often rooted in the Spirit’s role in creation (Gen. 1:1; 2:7) than Pentecostal approaches, which tend to focus more exclusively on salvation and sanctification. While this accounts for Anglicans’ typically ‘broader’ conception of who might be eligible for baptism, Dr Lord nonetheless stressed that the response required of

baptizands or their parents and godparents in Anglican liturgy is squarely soteriological and Christocentric – i.e. turning away from sin and towards Jesus.

Dr Lord recognised the difficulty that most Pentecostals have in accepting Anglicans' inheritance of Catholic and Protestant construals of creation and covenant that allow parents to express faith on behalf of a child until the child can express faith for themselves at Confirmation. Yet he questioned what a Pentecostal theology of childhood might look like in the absence of infant baptism, and more specifically how old a child might need to be to qualify for an authentic profession of faith leading to believer's baptism in a Pentecostal context. Then again, Dr Lord admitted that Anglican liturgies are flawed in their 'omission of reference the fulness of the Spirit's working in the baptism service, let alone mention of Spirit baptism' – something only mitigated in part by the option in more recent Anglican liturgies to anoint the baptizand with oil. Either way, Dr Lord proposed that Anglicans and Pentecostals alike would benefit by exploring together how their various tendencies towards individualism in baptismal theology and practice might be balanced by greater stress on its evidently communal and missional dimensions.

Revd Marcel Simpson spoke on Pentecostal pneumatology and water baptism from his perspective as Youth and Discipleship Director of the New Testament Church of God. He underlined that water baptism for Pentecostals critically evokes the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4), and the believer's identification with that death and resurrection as the ground of their redemption. The Holy Spirit works in water baptism to affirm this redemption, just as he was present in the form of a dove at Jesus' own baptism, to affirm Jesus as the Redeemer. Even before baptism the Spirit has already been active in convicting

the baptizand of 'sin, righteousness and judgment', just as the world is convicted by the Spirit of these things (John 16:8). Water baptism then also effects the full incorporation of believers into the family of God (Eph. 2:2-3), so has a corporate as well as an individual dimension. As such, it is inextricably linked to Spirit baptism, which is first experienced by disciples communally, on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Occasionally baptism in the Spirit can actually precede water baptism (cf. Acts 10), but Mr Simpson emphasised that the communal dimension nonetheless remains key.

The Anglican paper on Spirit-baptism was provided by the Revd Dr Chigor Chike, Vicar of Emmanuel, Forest Gate. An immigrant to the UK from Nigeria, Dr Chike had viewed Pentecostalism through Anglican eyes both in a West African and an East London context. Historically, he noted that Anglicans have tended to equate reception of the Spirit with the start of Christian life, whether than has been linked to water baptism, conversion, or both. John Stott was cited as offering a classic Evangelical Anglican 'conversionist' view in this regard. By contrast, while Pentecostals might see the Spirit at work in water baptism, they tend to distinguish this from a discrete later 'coming of the Spirit in to the believer's life in a very focused way', with an overt 'empowerment for life and service' and the blessing of tongues and/or some other spiritual gift. Thus, as Dr Chike went on to note, 'much as pneumatology is important to Anglicans, it is usually considered together, if not within, other doctrines...Anglicans are unlikely to give Spirit Baptism, a pneumatological phenomenon, the distinctiveness and profile it has within Pentecostalism'. Even so, Pentecostals' more distinctive focus on it could provide a counterbalance to Anglicans' tendency towards an over-implicit approach, while Anglican approaches might help

Pentecostals to reposition their pneumatology within a fuller narrative of regeneration, justification, sanctification, discipleship and incorporation. Both emphases can enhance the ‘montage’ of ecumenical theology and mission, said Dr Chike: neither has an epistemic monopoly.

The second paper on pneumatology and baptism in the Spirit, and the last paper of the conference as a whole, was presented by the Revd Dr Simo Frestadius, an Elim pastor and lecturer at Regents Theological College, Malvern. Citing Frank Macchia and J. Rodman Williams, Dr Frestadius referred to the historic tendency of Pentecostals to see baptism in the Spirit as ‘the crown jewel of Pentecostal distinctives’. All the same, there had been tensions, he said, between ‘restorationist’ Pentecostals who had regarded it as something reintroduced by God a century or so ago for the era of the ‘latter rain’ prior to Christ’s return (cf. Joel 2:23), and ‘continuationists’, who argued that it had been ‘an ongoing reality throughout church history’. In both cases, however, there had been a stress on God’s ‘renewing’ work in Spirit-baptism, and in British Pentecostalism especially, a strong convergence around the idea that it was distinct from conversion – ‘a separate work of God to empower believers for Christian witness and ministry’ (Acts 1:5, 8)’. While earlier on this was often taken to have been definitively evidenced in tongue-speaking, the early Anglican Pentecostal advocate Alexander Boddy, his supporter Cecil Polhill and others including the Elim and Apostolic Pentecostal churches came to disavow a necessary connection between the two, whereas the Assemblies of God maintained it.

For Dr Frestadius, a helpful summation of the distinction between conversion and baptism in the Spirit across these different Pentecostal traditions was Macchia’s gloss that ‘in

conversion believers are turned from the world to Christ, whereas in baptism in the Spirit believers are empowered by Christ through the Spirit to turn back to serve the world.’ More specifically still, Dr Frestadius emphasised that ‘it is not enough for one to simply claim to have been baptised in the Spirit; there need to be perceivable results and visible effects to demonstrate the validity of the experience’. In this respect, he added, Pentecostals could be characterised by ‘pragmatic rationality’.

While Anglicanism has not formally shared the particular ‘two-stage’ pneumatology to which the phrase was applied by Dr Frestadius, ‘pragmatic rationality’ might well be taken to describe Anglicanism’s historic willingness to absorb insights and influences from other Christian traditions in order to achieve greater effectiveness in its ministry and mission – whether that has been from medieval Catholicism, Continental Protestantism, Pietism and Revivalism or, indeed, Pentecostalism. This Birmingham consultation was a preliminary attempt to explore how the ‘pragmatic rationality’ of Anglicans and Pentecostals might gain richer theological substance through mutual interchange on key questions of pneumatology, baptism and initiation. More work will be needed on where to take the dialogue next, but since baptism in water and the Spirit have come increasingly to be understood by both constituencies in communal and missional terms, ecclesiology and missiology would be obvious topics for two further such bilateral events.

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