

## **A Pentecostal Perspective on The Great Commission and Its Application in Gereja Bethel Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

The Great Commission has been considered as one of the most important commands of Jesus Christ by the church. It has been passed down from the disciples to the early church fathers and so on until today. Many followers of Christ have tried to fulfill it to their best effort. However, the interpretation of such command, and therefore its implementations, in different churches throughout history, have not always been the same. Without saying that these approaches are wrong, more often than not, they are quite pragmatic and therefore they tend to become the end rather than the means to usher the ultimate vision of what Jesus' followers ought to live. Additionally, the crucial role of the Holy Spirit is often downplayed in these missionary efforts. This paper attempts to provide a discussion in relation to the Great Commission from a Pentecostal perspective and to suggest some steps that can be applied in Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI) in its missionary approach as a result of this perspective. GBI was chosen as it is the largest Pentecostal Church in Indonesia.

Keywords: Great Commission, Pentecostal, Gereja Bethel Indonesia, Signs and Wonders, Holy Spirit

### **Introduction**

Right before Jesus ascended into heaven, He assigned a very important task to His disciples. This responsibility is what is known today as The Great Commission. The command has been passed down again from the disciples to the early church fathers and so on until today and therefore many followers of Christ have tried to fulfill it to their best effort. The command is clear as it is written in the Gospel of Matthew 28:19-20. "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*". However, the interpretation of such command, and therefore its implementations, in different churches throughout history, have not always been the same. Hospitals and schools were built to care for the sick and to help the poor. Discipleship and leadership programs were designed and rolled out for the church's members. Missionary groups were sent to reach out to the unreached people groups in rural areas. Without saying that these approaches are wrong, more often than not, they are quite pragmatic and therefore they tend to become the end rather than the mean to usher the ultimate vision of what Jesus' followers ought to live. Additionally, the crucial role of the The Holy Spirit is often downplayed in these missionary efforts. Paul Pomerville who wrote a book called *The Third Force in Missions* called

it “the silence on the Holy Spirit”.<sup>1</sup> This condition does not help the church to become an effective witness. As a result, the church failed to fulfill the Great Commission. As David Barrett notes in his article *Envisioning the Future in World Evangelization*, “the harsh reality [is] that Christians have, throughout history, not obeyed but disobeyed, and are today still disobeying, that Commission.”<sup>2</sup>

Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI) is one of many churches that is still eager to participate in the Great Commission. On 15 October 2019, GBI, under the newly appointed chairman for the 2019-2023 period, Pdt. Rubin Adi Abraham announced its new slogan “SEHATI Menuntaskan Amanat Agung” [meaning: united (as one heart) to fulfill the Great Commission). The slogan also serves as the acronym for their program, that is SEHATI, and also their focus for the next four years, which is fulfilling the Great Commission.<sup>3</sup> Surely, as it happened to the churches throughout history, the 5,430 churches under GBI might also come up with different interpretations as to implementing the command. Again, the different approaches do not necessarily make one right and the other wrong. Yet, as one governing body, and also as the largest Pentecostal Church in Indonesia, GBI might want to provide a clearer framework and guiding principles on how their members can best achieve this shared goal while being true to their Pentecostal heritage. Otherwise, they might follow more contemporary theologies of mission that often neglect the role of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> While in truth, the “relative success of Pentecostal missions is linked directly with the place that Pentecostals give to the Holy Spirit, a place similar to that to which New Testament believers gave to Him”.<sup>5</sup> Such framework and guiding principles are hoped to also produce a greater understanding for the churches’ congregations in their efforts to fulfill the commission. For this reason, the author will discuss the Great Commission from a Pentecostal perspective and suggest some steps that can be applied in Gereja Bethel Indonesia in its missionary approach as a result of this perspective. The discussion will be focused on the Pentecostal-Charismatic perspective as it is the underlying theology, practices, and outlook of GBI.

## Method

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<sup>1</sup>Pual A Pomerville, *The Third Force in Mission* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984).

<sup>2</sup>David B. Barrett, *Envisioning the Future in World Evangelization*, Review and. (Winter, 1993).

<sup>3</sup>Pram, “Ibadah Pembukaan MPL I : SEHATI Menuntaskan Amanat Agung,” *Berita Bethel*, last modified 2019, accessed May 20, 2021 <http://www.beritabethel.com/artikel/detail/2464>.

<sup>4</sup>Pomerville, *The Third Force in Mission*, 17.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

In order to present some discussions on the Great Commission from a Pentecostal perspective and ultimately suggest some steps that can be applied in Gereja Bethel Indonesia in regard to this matter, the author will use different sources such as books and journals. The method that is used is qualitative. Firstly, the paper will present a discussion on how the early church understands the events of Pentecost and the Great Commission. It will move on to discuss the presence of signs and wonders in the church throughout history. Finally, the author will suggest some steps that GBI can take in order to fulfill the Great Commission from the Pentecostal perspective.

## Findings and Discussion

### Event of Pentecost and the Great Commission

The Great Commission must never be interpreted in a vacuum as it was given at a particular time to a particular group of people. Therefore, it is very important for today's readers to understand it as it was intended to be understood back then. Matthew 28:16-20, especially verses 19 and 20, is undoubtedly known as "the Great Commission" verses. However, it is not the only place where the command was given. There are four other reiterations of the Great Commission - one in each of the other Gospels and the Book of Acts (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8). Chuck Lawless draws several common themes from these verses, namely the authority of Christ, the command to make disciples, the primacy of proclamation and the empowerment of the disciples.<sup>6</sup>

In his discussion, Lawless highlights an interesting point that Jesus did not give the command to just anybody. Jesus gave such an important command to some "unworthy and doubting" people. His decision directly puts them at the center of God's plan to spread the Gospel.<sup>7</sup> The command was also given at a specific time. Of course, it was not an easy task, and even more so for them especially after what they had experienced with Jesus on His last earthly ministry days. These factors made Jesus' promise of empowerment through the Holy Spirit for them to be very crucial. "*The men mandated first to carry out the Great Commission were often self-centered. They doubted. They were jealous of others at times. They allowed fear to grip them. They fled. And still, Jesus gave them the responsibility to get the gospel to all people. He did so not because He believed they could get the task done; instead, He did it because He knew what the Spirit could do through them.*"<sup>8</sup> For this reason Jesus did not command the disciples to do the great Commission right after He ascended to heaven. Instead, he asked them to stay in Jerusalem and to wait until they were clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49).

The mention of the Holy Spirit's empowerment can be clearly found in three out of five accounts of the Great Commandment (Luke 24:46-49, John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8). Out of the

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<sup>6</sup>Chuck Lawless, "To All The Nations: The Great Commission Passages in the Gospels and Acts," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2, no. 15 (2011): 16–26.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

three, the command written in Luke's second account (Acts 1:8) is the one closely linked to the event of Pentecost (Acts 1-2). It is written in the context of Luke's testimony which paints a picture of how the disciples of Christ transitioned and continued the ministry of Jesus on earth. The book of Acts ultimately "focuses on world evangelization, or, more specifically, Spirit-empowered evangelism across cultural boundaries."<sup>9</sup> Here, Acts 1:8, which reads, "*but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*" can be read as the epitome of the whole book. Another important section of the book is Acts 1-2, the introductory section of Acts, which serves as the underlining principles of the whole book as it also emphasizes on the empowerment of cross-cultural witness where "Jesus commissioned His disciples to be witnesses ... *to the end of the earth* by the power of God's Spirit".<sup>10</sup> Just as Jesus' mission was inaugurated in the power of the Spirit at His baptism, the disciples' mission was also inaugurated in the power of the Spirit at Pentecost.

The event of Pentecost is therefore especially significant from the point of view of the Great Commission as it transposes the understanding of mission from the Old to the New Testament era. In Old Testament times, or before the event of Pentecost, the activity of the Spirit is restricted to the chosen leaders and is usually given for a certain purpose and divine service. For example, the Spirit of God filled Bezalel as he was appointed to build the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:30-35). However, from the event of Pentecost onward, the Holy Spirit was promised and poured into everyone. Therefore, the vocational gift of the Spirit is potentially universal.<sup>11</sup> In addition to that, the Holy Spirit is now fully personal, unlike in the Old Testament times when there was no personalization of the Spirit of God. The people of God are enabled to be the indwelling of the Spirit (1 Corinth. 6:19). This universality of the distribution of the Holy Spirit echoes Joel's prophecy where God's Spirit was going to be poured out "on all flesh" (Joel 2:28-32). Instead of reserved for several people, mainly the leaders of Israel, the Spirit is now given to everyone – young and old, sons and daughters, and even slaves. The fulfillment of this prophecy at the Pentecost is revolutionary. It is a key sign that the new era has come and that this new era was ushered by Jesus for His people in the last days.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Craig Keener, "The Pentecost Paradigm for Pentecostalism: Power for Witness," *Conspectus Special Ed* December (2018): 6–7, <https://www.sats.edu.za/keener-pentecost-paradigm>.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Roger Stronstad, "The Influence of the Old Testament on the Charismatic Theology of St. Luke," *Pneuma* 2, no. 1 (1980).

<sup>12</sup>Daniel Sutoyo, "Pneumatologi Lukas: Pemberdayaan Pelayanan Kristen," *Jurnal Antusias* 4, no. 7 (2015).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit also brings a new direction of the Gospel from “centripetal” (coming in) to “centrifugal” (going out).<sup>13</sup> The centripetal nature of God’s mission places the Israelites “to be a light to the nations, to live their lives in such a way that the nations see the true and living God and are attracted to their lives and their God.”<sup>14</sup> This tone dominates the Old Testament narratives. It can be seen, for example, at the call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), between Moses, Pharaoh and the 10 plagues (Exo. 11-12), Rahab and the spies (Josh. 2-6), and many other stories. However, the event that took place at the Pentecost shifted such direction outward when the people of God, not limited to the Israelites, were called to go out to the nations. This can be described as the centrifugal nature of the mission. For example, when Peter was called to reach out to a gentile named Cornelius (Acts 10) or at the encounter of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40). As Michael Goheen puts it, this event became “the distinctive turning point, the great change of direction of the Gospel”.<sup>15</sup> Such change furthermore emphasizes the vitality of Pentecost to the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Not only does it tell the story of the Pentecost event where people saw the manifestation of and received the Holy Spirit, Acts 2 also testifies what happened after that encounter to the community of believers as a whole. This new community of 3,000 people was formed after Peter, who just received the Holy Spirit, delivered the message of salvation in Jesus Christ and called for repentance for the forgiveness of sin. Acts 2:42-47 goes on to paint a picture of how they fellowship together as a new family in Christ. Interestingly, in addition to living together in harmony, Luke also testifies that the new community of believers continued to live in a supernatural power as they experienced many signs and wonders (Acts 2:43). The presence of this supernatural power through signs and wonders is important especially in Peter’s understanding of Jesus as the Messiah. In Acts 2:22 (NIV), Peter talked to the men of Israel and said, “Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you know ...”. The word “attested”, translated from the Greek word *apodeideigmenon* (ἀποδεικνύμενον) refers to something that can attest or “show forth the quality of an entity”.<sup>16</sup> It means that for Peter, Jesus’ divinity is validated not only through His words but also through His power and authority demonstrated by the signs and wonders that He performed. The same line of understanding is repeated again as Peter preached to Cornelius that Jesus, with the power of the Holy Spirit, went around healing people “because God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). As Jesus’ earthly ministry is now extended to His followers through the Holy Spirit, the presence of such power and authority among believers

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<sup>13</sup>Trevin Wax, “The Mission of the Church: Centripetal to Centrifugal, and Why It Matters,” *The Gospel Coalition*.

<sup>14</sup>Christopher Flanders, “Book Review: Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues,” *Missiology: An International Review* 44, no. 3 (2016).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Bernard Aubert, *The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse (Acts 20:17-38) Against Its Historical Background*, *The Shepherd-Flock Motif in the Miletus Discourse (Acts 20:17-38) Against Its Historical Background*, 2018.

are to be expected if not necessary. Just as Jesus attested to the Israelites by God with mighty works and wonders and signs, the followers of Jesus were also accredited by God with the same supernatural power through the Holy Spirit. This theme continues throughout the New Testament narratives. The ministry of Peter, John, Paul, Stephen, and Philip as well as many other disciples, deacons, and followers were full of it (Acts 5:12, 6:8, 8:6, 8:13, etc.). “The purpose of signs, of course, is to draw attention not to themselves but to that which they attest, in this case, to the message about the Kingdom of God.”<sup>17</sup>

#### Signs and Wonders, The Church, and The Great Commission

The church of the 1st century was charismatic. As described above, “there are an abundance of supernatural phenomena that characterized its life and ministry, speaking in tongues, prophecy, healings and miracles-and all the other charismata – were common, even anticipated as the norm.” This was happening in the midst of church persecution by the Jews and continued to happen under the hands of the Romans (Acts 4:3-22, 6:8-8:1, 12:1-5, 18:12-17, etc.). The manifestation of the gift continued to accompany the life of the church. There were many early Christian writings that confirmed the presence and manifestation of spiritual gifts in the church. For example, the Didache, as the oldest extant written catechism, recognized the legitimacy of the prophetic ministry and also provided instruction on how to distinguish between true and false prophets.<sup>18</sup> Several early church fathers’ testimonies, at least until A.D. 300, also painted the same picture. Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165), apologist of the early church, wrote how Christians have prophetic gifts and the ability to cast out demons as well as minister healing.<sup>19</sup> Irenaeus (A.D. 125-200), bishop of Lyons, not only testified healing but also spoke of the dead being raised.<sup>20</sup> Tertullian (A.D. 160-240), the father of Latin theology, considered the supernatural gifts of the Spirit as a sign of orthodoxy.<sup>21</sup> However, during Origen’s time (A.D. 185-284), while still pointing out the abundance of supernatural signs and wonders in the apostolic church, he began to note that these signs had diminished. “Origen was the first early church father to indicate that supernatural ministry was becoming less common” although not fully ceasing.<sup>22</sup>

James L. Ash suggests that virtually all historians of Christianity agree that the decline of these gifts and their manifestations was partly caused by the institutionalization of the early

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<sup>17</sup>Walter J. Hollenweger, “After Twenty Years’ Research on Pentecostalism,” *Theology* 87, no. 720 (1984).

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

church.<sup>23</sup> The need for institutionalizing the church mostly came from the attack of heretical sects such as Gnosticism and Marcionism on the Christian faith. The growing emphasis on the church structures was inevitably accompanied by the increasing prestige and power of a certain leadership status. As a result, “spiritual authority was no longer seen as residing in the person with the spiritual gift but instead in the one occupying the ecclesiastical office”.<sup>24</sup> This outlook is further embraced after the amalgamation of the powers of the church and state brought by Emperor Constantine’s conversion and his Edict-of-Milan (A.D. 312-313). The Edict of Milan is a decree that grants freedom of worship to everyone in the Roman empire and in particular gives special favors to the church.<sup>25</sup> The church was no longer the enemy of the empire and began to adopt the Roman political model. The change brought in a major leadership shift to the bishop of Rome as he began to be considered as a first among equals which led him into an effort to increase his influence so that the papacy could be the spiritual counterpart of the political head-of-state Roman emperor. At this point, the church has regulated the administration of church sacraments by the bishops or their appointed representative and declined the involvement of unordained ministers.<sup>26</sup>

By the end of the 4th century, the church was no longer the marginalized community that was poor and oppressed but instead had grown sixfold and became the religion of the empire. A conversation between Thomas Aquinas and Pope Innocent IV perfectly describes the full consummation of the institutionalized Church and its missing supernatural powers. After showing the church’s wealth while he visited Rome, Pope Innocent IV said to Aquinas, “You see that the Church is no longer in an age in which she can say, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’”. To that statement, Aquinas replied, “It is true, nor can she say to the lame man, ‘Rise up and walk.’”<sup>27</sup> It goes to show how far has the church moved away, especially in its relation to the Spirit’s power, since the time of the Pentecost and the ministry of the early church.

As the Roman Empire grew in its dominion, the institutionalized church – that is the Roman Catholic Church, also grew in its size through colonialism. Yet, the alliance of the church and state resulted in an ambiguity in the church’s paradigm of mission. Coercion and political power were placed in the service of their missionary endeavors. The development of gunpowder gave Europe a superior military power which directly resulted in the expansion of conquest, subjugation, and colonialism. This gave a very significant impact on the mission of the church. People were subjugated and compelled to be baptized – either by their blood and die or by water and welcomed to join the church of the empire. “This new situation, often referred to as Christendom or Constantianism or corpus Christianum, has been vigorously criticized because of the ways the church’s mission was compromised by its new position of

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

power ... [and ultimately] they lost a missional focus.”<sup>28</sup> People converted by such an approach often viewed political and missionary activities as two sides of the same imperialist coin. Roger Haight, a Roman Catholic theologian, made a very good observation about the church of Christendom and its mission as he said,

“The word established indicates a theological category which characterizes a church whose mission has ceased; an established church is at peace with society and content with and in its own forms and inner life. The term is negative for it implies the presumption that the missionary task has been completed so that the church is no longer a mission but simply a community. In terms of missionary and pastoral activity. . . an established church assumes only pastoral responsibilities.”<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, it is justifiable to conclude that the church’s mission and paradigm approach during this time has moved so far from the early church’s approach and paradigm especially as they did not involve the Holy Spirit in this missional effort.

The disappearance of signs and wonders from within the institutionalized church continued in the following centuries up to the Middle Ages (A.D. 600-1517). However, it did not totally disappear from the lives of Christians as it was preserved by a group of believers who withdrew from the world and lived their lives together in prayers and complete devotion to God. This group of people is called the monastics. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit now appeared among the monastics or among the church fathers who practiced the monastic lifestyle such as Athanasius, Augustine, and Jerome”<sup>30</sup>. This condition sadly contradicted the charismatic nature of the early Church in the 1st century. It was as if the empowerment of the Holy Spirit through signs and wonders was not available to all believers and became the sole possession of only some, that are the monastics. Another thing that, in some sense, “reverts back” to the times before the Pentecost was the “centrifugal” nature of the church mission. Instead of “going out” to spread the word to the world, the devoted followers of Jesus Christ were cloistered from the world and “called in” to live the monastic lifestyle.

At the beginning of the 16th century, the authority of the Roman Catholic church was challenged. 31st October 1517 was a monumental day. It marked the beginning of the Reformation Era when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses in a church in Wittenberg to question the theology and some practices done by the church. Since then, many things have been restored back to the church including the role of the Holy Spirit. However, it did not reach far enough to reactivate the spiritual gifts in and through the church, as “due to the contextual focus of Reformation theology, the theology of the Spirit was mostly developed along the lines of the

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<sup>28</sup>Flanders, “Book Review: Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues.”

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 54.



Spirit's relationship and function with the Scriptures."<sup>31</sup> In addition to that, the majority of 17th-century theologians as well as the Reformers believed that the Great Commission no longer binds the church as it was completed by the apostle.<sup>32</sup> The discussion about the Spirit also continued to be neglected especially as the world began to move into the Enlightenment period. It pushed the Spirit further in its hiatus as theology was no longer seen as a practical discipline but instead only as a mere scholastic science; which was later challenged by the Holiness Movement.

The Holiness Movement, in turn bringing the Methodist Renewal, brought back the emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit for believers. John Wesley, the founder of Methodist church, (1703-1791) shared his encounter with the Holy Spirit in a meeting on Aldersgate Street, London. He described it in his words,

"I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sin, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."<sup>33</sup>

The Aldersgate experience profoundly affected Wesley's conviction and ministry. This new birth experience is often called the second work of grace. Not only he experienced it personally, Holy Spirit also accompanied his ministry publicly through signs and wonders events. Wesley and his friends such as John Fletcher and George Whitfield often travelled to preach to thousands of people in England. Similar kinds of meetings also became popular in America around 1800. It was known as the Second Great Awakening as the first one in the 1720s that began the event happened in a more personal and local setting. For the first time since the 4th century, the church experienced a newfound openness towards the Holy Spirit again. This attitude became an important factor in setting the stage for the Pentecostal Movement where the role of the Holy Spirit among all believers became the focus. For this reason, John Wesley is often referred to as the father of the modern Pentecostal Movement.<sup>34</sup>

#### The Pentecostal Movement, Pentecostal Church, and the Great Commission

The Pentecostal Movement vibrantly emerged around the 20th century. The movement could be associated with Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929) and Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas. The students received an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that later also occurred in 1906 on Azusa Street. The movement did not only bring spiritual experience to the church but also added a significant contribution to the church's mission. It is even regarded as a modern missionary phenomenon due to its rapid growth, and its international and ecclesiastical scope

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<sup>31</sup>Pomerville, *The Third Force in Mission*.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>33</sup>Hollenweger, "After Twenty Years' Research on Pentecostalism."

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

in a relatively short period in the Christian Church history.<sup>35</sup> Vinson Synan, Pentecostal historian, wrote that between the Azusa Street Revival in 1906 and 1980, the number of Pentecostals and Charismatics in the world reached 75 million members – that is an addition of 1 million souls per year.<sup>36</sup> According to the New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement, that number in the year of 2000 has reached up to 523 million (of these, 65 million are Pentecostal, 175 million are Charismatic and 295 million are Neocharismatics). As they were convicted that divine activity is not a historical memory but an ongoing reality made present by the Spirit, the charismatic manifestations such as tongues, healing, exorcism, and prophecy, presented themselves back in the church life.<sup>37</sup>

Eschatology is the inner logic of the movement. Not only does it give a sense of urgency and focus, their eschatological expectation also influences the Pentecostal worldview. This central theme leads them back to the event of Pentecost and mission. They see the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts as an eschatological sign of God which fulfills God's promises<sup>38</sup> in the last days; referring to prophecy in the book of Joel. In other words, the event was seen as the signal of the inbreaking of God's Kingdom which constituted the Early Church as an eschatological community with power for witness and passion for the Kingdom as it actively awaits the parousia. This was how Luke understood and saw the Gospel. This worldview leads them to hopeful, obedient, and holy lives. However, the Pentecostals did not concentrate "on the conversion of humanity, for which they did not feel responsible, the early Pentecostals proclaimed their missions to the evangelization to the world."<sup>39</sup>

The eschatological expectation as in Acts is well reflected in the Pentecostal fundamental doctrines (both in the "four-fold" or the "five-fold" Gospel) where Jesus is seen not only as the savior and the sanctifier but also as the healer and the coming king. It reflects the very present nature of their belief that God's work continues in the lives of the believers. Tim Hill, general overseer of the Church of God Cleveland, re-emphasis this belief as he addressed the Pentecostal Church saying that,

"Pentecostal church and Pentecost must not be viewed apart from the Great Commission, nor the Great Commission apart from Pentecost. They are inseparably intertwined. We were not filled with the Holy Spirit for our enjoyment but for our employment. That is, we're not Spirit-filled so we can sing louder, feel more goosebumps, or engage in more vigorous worship. We have been filled with the Holy

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<sup>35</sup>Pomerville, *The Third Force in Mission*.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Hollenweger, "After Twenty Years' Research on Pentecostalism."

<sup>38</sup>The difference lies on whether the works of grace (salvation and sanctification) is seen as one or two separate elements. Donald W Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Baker Academics, 1987), 21.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 118.

Spirit to effectively fulfill Christ's mandate in Acts 1:8a: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witnesses."<sup>40</sup>

Back in 1902, Charles Parham also understood the miracles as God's reassurance to the believers and witness to the unbelievers as he said,

"Christ did not leave his believing children without signs of distinction to follow them that the world might know who were Christians and who were not. Neither did he send forth his servants to preach vague speculative theories of a world to come, but with mighty power for the relief of suffering humanity; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked; healing the sick; casting out devils; speaking with new tongues; confirming the word of inward benefit—wrought in Jesus Christ—by these outward visible signs."<sup>41</sup>

The church of today must operate like how it was intended, that is as a charismatic church.

#### Gereja Bethel Indonesia as Pentecostal Church and Fulfillment of the Great Commission

As the largest Pentecostal denomination in Indonesia, GBI is responsible for the shape of Pentecostal churches in the country. GBI has to realize that if it stops caring for and giving attention to its Pentecostal heritage, it might one day stop being Pentecostal. Consequently, the next generations may not even be able to differentiate one church denomination from the others. This tendency must not be seen as not promoting unity in the body of Christ, but instead, as losing the unique contribution from each denomination. For Pentecostals, this contribution is closely related in terms of the church's mission to become an active, effective, and powerful witness to the Kingdom of God.

The newly appointed chairman, Pdt. Dr. Rubin Adi Abraham, with his new slogan for GBI, "SEHATI Menuntaskan Amanat Agung" [meaning: united (as one heart) to fulfill the Great Commission) seems to continue the vision of Tim Hill, the general overseer of the Church of God in Cleveland. It echoes Tim Hill's message before where he shared his desire for the Pentecostal churches to live their lives like the early church. This helped the church to adjust its focus back on the Great Commission. Not only that, the Pentecostal perspective on the Great Commission gives the church a clearer expectation of what the church has to look like. Of course, this does not mean that any other things apart from signs and wonders are supposed to be scrapped. But, it reminds the church to reactivate that power for sharing the Gospel again. Hill says,

"Sure, let's continue to search for and find unreached people groups, intercede in prayer, invest in church planting, and network with others who are effectively advancing God's

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<sup>40</sup>Tim Hill, "Why the Great Commission and Pentecost Are Inseparable," *Charisma News*, January 2019, <https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/75007-why-the-great-commission-and-pentecost-are-inseparable>, accessed on 21 May 2022.

<sup>41</sup>Donald W. Dayton, "Theological Roots of Pentecostalism," *Pneuma* 2, no. 1 (1980).

kingdom. But most of all, let's get back to the simplicity of the gospel—sharing the Good News of Jesus in the power of His Spirit. It's time to get our voice back and proclaim that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17b)."<sup>42</sup>

For this reason, as GBI faithfully carries out its mission and preaching the Gospel, it must not neglect the Holy Spirit or more specifically its power and manifestation. While it is true that signs and wonders alone are not sufficient to make someone believe (Exodus 7:3-4), but as it is seen time and time again in the New Testament, the miracles are necessary to confirm the Gospel. Therefore, instead of only preparing the missionaries in theological, cultural, and linguistic studies, GBI has to equip them to exercise the power that comes with the Word of God.

First, as a Pentecostal church, GBI has to ensure that its pastors and ministers continue to preach the spirit of Pentecost and the work of the Holy Spirit. Preaching the Pentecost event reminds the church of two things. One, the call for mission, and two, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the believers' daily lives. They have to be the distinctive element of the Pentecostal church. Undoubtedly, while Pentecostal worship is also unique from the others, the church has to go beyond that and give more emphasis to the distinction of its worldview and doctrine. Jesus as Healer and Jesus as the Coming King must be something familiar in the ears of the church's members. They define the church's reality. That reality places Jesus as God who is present and still actively working among His church. That reality also heightens the expectation of the church to experience such power in their daily lives. It makes the church's worldview charismatic and pneumatological.

Second, as a Pentecostal church, GBI has to give enough space for its members to exercise their given spiritual gifts. An interpretation of Paul's rebuke to the church of Corinth (1 Corinth 12-14) in regards to exercising the spiritual gifts often limits the church from using the gifts at all. Love, as Paul teaches, becomes the pinnacle of all. This is not wrong. However, it does not mean that the gifts must be forsaken to give way to love. Instead, Paul is teaching that the church must exercise the gifts but in a loving manner that respects everyone. GBI has to ensure that its members are familiar with speaking in tongues, prophesying, healing the sick, and casting demons. Manifestations of the spirit must not become a stranger to the church. In order to do that, GBI might want to consider incorporating them in their church liturgy.

It is very important to note that these suggestions are not intended to be the goal. They are there to become the confirmation of the Word. Therefore, the manifestations of the Holy Spirit through signs and wonders must be guarded with sound doctrines.

## **Conclusion**

The Great Commission must never be interpreted in a vacuum as it was given at a particular time to a particular group of people. Therefore, it is very important for today's readers to understand it as it was intended to be understood back then. The New Testament is clear in

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<sup>42</sup>Hill, "Why the Great Commission and Pentecost Are Inseparable", accessed on 21 May 2022.

showing that the command was intended to be carried out through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit instead of some men's natural abilities. Therefore, it is important for the church to understand this from the Pentecost perspective. This was the case for the 1st-century church.

However, as the church became more and more institutionalized, the role of the Holy Spirit became less and less significant. As a result of this "silence of the Holy Spirit", its manifestations were hardly found in church life. This contradicts the early church's life where the abundance of supernatural phenomena was common and even anticipated as the norm. The situation was changed when the Pentecostal Movement began to emerge and brought back the fire of the Pentecost to the church.

As the largest Pentecostal denomination in Indonesia, GBI is responsible for the shape of Pentecostal churches in the country. GBI has to realize that if it stops caring for and giving attention to its Pentecostal heritage, it might one day stop being Pentecostal. Such a condition might mean that the church loses its call to passionately give active, effective, and powerful witness to the Kingdom of God through the Holy Spirit. To do that, GBI is firstly called to ensure that its pastors and ministers continue to preach the spirit of Pentecost and the work of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, GBI has to give enough space for its members to exercise their given spiritual gifts. It is very important to note that these suggestions are not intended to be the goal but a bridge to share the Gospel and to confirmation of the Word.

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