

PENTECOSTALS AND PEOPLEHOOD IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
PROBING THE PAST PROLEPTICALLY¹

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As Pentecostalism becomes the majority religion in myriad countries and/or a political force with which to reckon, alarm goes off about how Pentecostals will operate in the public arena. Debate rages between scholars ranging from the David Martins, Cheryl Sanders, and Paul Giffords about whether Pentecostals will be authoritarian or democratic, patriarchal or egalitarian, and capitalistic or socialistic. An underdiscussed component to this debate is the ways that Pentecostals will construct their racial/ethnic identities or peoplehood. Will Pentecostal identity employ inclusionary or exclusionary tactics in its construction of peoplehood?

As an historian, this conversation by Pentecostal peoplehood could be advanced through studies of contemporary Pentecostal life, especially in regions marked by racial/ethnic tensions such as Great Britain, Brazil, central Africa, United States or Japan or racial/ethnic harmony such as Belize. As an historian, this paper searches for moments in the past where Pentecostal history anticipated a trajectory in the Pentecostal present or future related to peoplehood or identity formation, a trajectory about constructive ways the Pentecostal peoplehood was imagined.

As we celebrate the revivals in Wales (1904-5), India (1905-7), United States (1906-9), Korea (1905-7) and other countries which participate in the emergence of global Pentecostalism a century and more ago, I would like to focus on the influential, international Pentecostal newspaper, *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles), to explore how the writers collectively who were

¹ This paper is a major revision and expansion of my article, "God Makes No Differences in Nationality:" *The Fashioning of a New Racial/Nonracial Identity at the Azusa Street Revival.*"

published in the paper anticipated a trajectory of Pentecostal peoplehood that supply a useable history for the Pentecostal present and future.²

The *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper offered all races the opportunity to practice wearing a new racial identity or form peoplehood. Readers and participants in the emerging global movement could try on a novel identity that was fashioned out of the new charismatic experiences of the global Pentecostal Revival. Far from being full designed, the identity was a work-in-progress, being crafted during the glow of the Revival. They could imagine this new identity or in some cases model this Pentecostal peoplehood within certain sites of the emerging global movement. The peoplehood that the readers and participants imagined reflected a racial vocabulary, symbolism, and vision that differed drastically from the dominant society. It was an identity that looked beyond the racial divide of the era advanced by colonialism and segregation.

“The ‘color line’ was washed away in the blood” emerged as a radical and bold image that the U.S. Pentecostal pastor Frank Bartleman later attached to the Azusa Street Revival of 1906-9 and painted in the minds of Pentecostals globally. His image captured the social and religious possibilities inherent in the identity-making process of the Revival. As a word- picture, it reflected the significance of the Azusa Street Revival and embodied the aspirations of Christians envisioning a racial identity that rejected the racial symbolics of the era by imagining racial relations beyond the color line that separated the races in various empires and countries of the early 20th century.³

1. Pentecostal Geography of Race

An analysis of Pentecostal spatiality (geography) embedded in *The Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) harbors clues to the contours of the imagined racial identity or peoplehood of early Pentecostals. Such an analysis sketches how Pentecostals “mapped themselves onto the racial and ethnic terrain” of western discourses of identity. For discourses of identity, territoriality is key, focusing on the land which a group possesses connections with socially, politically, historically, or symbolically. For Pentecostal peoplehood, territory is symbolic and historical. The writers published in the *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper by recognizing each

² Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); *The Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) in *Like As of Fire*, collected by Fred T. Corum and Rachel A. Harper Sizelove, republished by E. Myron Noble (Washington, D.C.: Middle Atlantic Regional Press, 2001).

³ Frank Bartleman, *Another Wave Rolls In! (What Really Happened at Azusa Street)* (Monroeville, PA: 1970 reprint), 55.

other as being part of the same movement imagined a Pentecostal geography on which they were all located. The published articles and correspondence published in the paper mapped a Pentecostal geography in which to organize the movement spatially. Earlier this year, the planners of the Azusa Centennial contended that Los Angeles and 312 Azusa Street were major sites on the Pentecostal global map. Scholars such as Allan Anderson offer other sites within the Pentecostal geography as historical connections to territory for Pentecostals.

Within the *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper, the world was mapped linguistically. The paper focused on organizing the people of the world around their languages. The linguistically mapped world of the *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper refused to privilege the languages of the European empires that dominated the world system and that were used in commerce and taught in schools throughout the colonies and the West. The linguistically mapped world of the *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper countered the colonial map and its related racial order. The linguistically mapped world of the *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper organized its geography around the languages of “India, China, Africa, Asia, Europe, and the islands of the Sea” in general terms and specially the recognized languages of Spanish, “Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, German, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Zulu...Hindu and Bengali...Chippewa.” Interestingly, specificity is granted to Asian languages by citing over four languages and to African languages where, in other listings, Cru (Kru), Zulu, and Ugandan are noted. In the linguistically mapped world imagined by the *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper Asia and Africa are on par with Europe and North America geographically and racially. The linguistic mapping of the world provided a means to view humanity in terms other than race. Possibly, glossolalia or zenolalia predisposed Pentecostals to map the world linguistically and challenge the racial order with their Pentecostal geography.⁴

The Pentecostal geography offered an alternative to the dominant ways that the European empires mapped the world. The imperial maps organized the world by the trilogy of races (Causasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid). As if with a color-coded scheme, the world was painted shades of white, yellow, and black. Other imperial maps expanded the trilogy to eight racial categories: four European races (Alpine, Mediterranean, Nordic, and Semitic) and four non-European races (Ethiopian, Mongolian, Malay, and American). While other imperial maps organized the world into 40 races based on nationalities such as Irish, Italians, Syrians, Greeks, Hungarians, Poles, Serbo-Croatians, Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, and

⁴ *The Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) 1:4:1; 1:1:1; 1:1:6, 3.

Negroes. These imperial maps always ordered the racial groups hierarchically, privileging first the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic peoples among the Europeans and the Europeans over the non-Europeans.⁵

Related to the linguistic mapping of *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper was the mapping of the world in terms of nationalities instead of races. The *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper mapped the world around the Book of Acts, the Pentecost text, in terms of languages, as noted above, and nationalities. In Acts 17:26 proclaims “And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth....” Within the discourse of the *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper, this text is recast to refer to nationalities instead of nations, recognizing that “All classes and nationalities meet on a common level,” placing all nationalities and classes on equal footing before God and each other. Nationalities that were listed as being present at the Azusa Street Revival went beyond the black-white racial schema of the United States by citing the Chinese, Mexicans, Ethiopians, North American Indians, and others. By rejecting the hierarchy of nationalities, the geography of *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper contended that the equality of nationalities corresponded to the geography of the linguistic map with its equality of languages (people). Various articles re-enforced this angle by saying in the words of one writer: “God makes no difference in nationality.”⁶

Central to the early Pentecostal geography is the mapping of Pentecostalism as a multi-national, multi-racial, multi-ethnic global movement. The *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper gave a sense that Pentecostalism covered the globe. The focus was on the arrival of Pentecostals on the various continents. Obviously, questions about the durability of the Revival in the different countries would require a temporal (historical) rather than a spatial assessment. Pentecostal geography promoted the movement as having escaped the blending of territory and faith which exemplified Lutheranism in Nordic and Germanic countries, Presbyterianism in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and Waldensianism in Italy. Pentecostal geography disentangled race/ethnicity from territory and faith.

Nearly a decade after the Azusa Street Revival, for instance, William Joseph Seymour, the leader of the Revival and contested founder of global Pentecostalism, wrote that “God’s design in raising up the Apostolic Faith Church in America was to evangelize over these lands. As proof hereof we have seen since 1906 that time of extraordinary work of God extending

⁵ David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

⁶ *The Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) 1:5:1; 1:1:3.

throughout all of the United and Territories, and throughout the whole world.”⁷

Early Pentecostal geography allowed Pentecostals to visually recognize and embrace the variety of races (and ethnicities) as equals. It imagined a peoplehood defined linguistically as well as in terms of nationalities with both espousing equality.

2. Leveling the Hierarchy of the Races

The hierarchically mapped world of European colonialism and North American capitalism marketed a robust rhetoric of racial superiority and inferiority where the racial minority (numerically or politically) or colonized were deemed inferior to the racial elite or colonizers. This rhetoric with its dominance-subjugation aggregated various privileges with racial or ethnic difference.

The early Pentecostal geography or mapping using the categories of language and nationality supplanted race in order to imagine a Pentecostal peoplehood. Pentecostal peoplehood as imagined in the *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper supplied the Pentecostals with an identity that transcended the exclusionary strategies of the superior/inferior schema and envisioned inclusionary strategies of racial equality, seemingly without employing a particular racial or ethnic identity for all to assume. By questioning the “dominance-subjugation dichotomy,” Pentecostal peoplehood disaggregated the alignment of privilege with racial and ethnic difference.

The disaggregation of privilege and racial difference or the disavowal of the exclusionary practices of the superior/inferior schema promoted different “races” sharing power and exchanging culture since all peoples were equal. Pentecostal peoplehood reflected new racial arrangements in various countries by challenging the racial hierarchies of colonialism.

The symbolic and social impact of the Pentecostal peoplehood differed depending upon where the races would have been slotted in the racial hierarchy. For the African diaspora in North America, the *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper advocated their equality with the European race(s) and lodged them as equals on the racial landscape. For the Spanish diaspora in the Americas, especially those who were interracial and multi-racial such as the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, they also found an advocate for their equality within a flattened hierarchy. For Asians in Asia and their various diasporas, a similar advocacy occurred within *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles)

⁷ W. J. Seymour, *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission of Los Angeles, Cal. 1915 with Scripture Readings* (Los Angeles, CA: privately published, 1915), 12.

linguistically mapped world of peoples might fail to achieve the needs of the contemporary Pentecostal identity, there is something important about having inclusionary practices that reject hierarchies of race and color within the Pentecostal construction of peoplehood.

For instance, inclusionary strategies within Pentecostal peoplehood would transform relationships between Pentecostals who are Korean, Okinawan, and Japanese majority and live in Japan or Pentecostals who are of African, Asian, and European descent and live in Canada or Pentecostals of Spanish, Amerindian, and African descent who live in Brazil as well as Pentecostals in various other countries where racial, ethnic, and color differences become translated in differences in privilege and power.

How do contemporary Pentecostals build upon the advantages of the early Pentecostal peoplehood that was imagined in the *Apostolic Faith* (Los Angeles) paper in which linguistic reasoning and discourse allowed early Pentecostals conceptually to recognize and embrace a variety of races and ethnicities as equal without erasing differences and grant them permission to cross boundaries erected by hierarchies of race, ethnicity, and color in order to worship and work together in the ministry?

Pentecostal peoplehood could reject popular perceptions that hierarchies of race, ethnicity, and color are unavoidable and conflict between the groups related to these hierarchies are inevitable by embodying alternative path. Pentecostal peoplehood could demonstrate how conflicts based on race, ethnicity, and color can be mediated, managed, and possibly resolved.

Although, early Pentecostal geography by linguistically mapping the peoples of the world was able conceptually to transcend race, ethnicity, and color, contemporary Pentecostals must decide what type of discourse and rhetorical strategies to employ in order to fashion Pentecostal peoplehood in the early 21st century. Should a contemporary Pentecostal peoplehood entail the transcending race, ethnicity, and color where racial or ethnic particularity is marginalized or erased? Or should a contemporary Pentecostal peoplehood transcend race, ethnicity, and color by embracing particularity in an inclusionary manner rather in an exclusionary way, opening up the particularity of race, ethnicity, and color to the cultures of other peoples? Or should a contemporary Pentecostal peoplehood embrace multi-identities drawn from various races and ethnicities in which specific Pentecostals live and worship? Or should a contemporary Pentecostal peoplehood exhibit a hybridity of the cultures within particular countries and regions in which specific Pentecostals reside and travel? Or should a contemporary Pentecostal peoplehood exhibit a hybridity of races, ethnicities, and colors through the practice of inter-racial, inter-ethnic marriage and formation of a "mixed blood," multi-racial/ethnic group?

Among the current choices are seemingly: non-raciality, anti-racism, multi-raciality, pluri-raciality, and an acculturating raciality. Whether through a single path, which might be improbable, or multiple paths, Pentecostal peoplehood demands the racial/ethnic transformation and the formation of a transcending identity.

As Pentecostalism becomes the majority religion in myriad countries and/or a political force, Pentecostals have an opportunity to advance peace in the world through the way imagine and fashion an inclusionary form of peoplehood a century after the advent of global Pentecostalism.