In memory of

Dr. Teresa Chai

beloved friend and colleague at APTS
EDITORIAL

Dave Johnson 1-4

Streams of Pentecostal Thought: Theology, Theological Education, Spirituality, Ecumenism, Hermeneutics, History and Mission

ARTICLES

World Communion of Reformed Churches / Classical Pentecostal Churches 5-41


Giang Son 43-61

A Brief Look at the Activity of the Holy Spirit and the History of the Assemblies of God in Vietnam

Jason Morris 63-87

Exploring Biblical Theology as a Contextualization Method in Countries with a Semi-Established National Church

Amos Yong 89-105

Theological Education between the West and the “Rest”: A Reverse “Reverse Missionary” and Pentecost Perspective

Julie Ma 107-122

Influence of Pentecostal Spirituality to Asian Christianity

Craig S. Keener 123-146

The Spirit and Biblical Interpretation: Spirit Hermeneutics
Robert Danielson 147-168
The Pentecost Bands in India: Radical Holiness Revivals and the Mukti Revival

BOOK REVIEWS

Joel Tejedo 169-173
Stefan, Robert J. Business in Islam: Contextualizing Business and Mission in Muslim-Majority Nations

Stephen Yeem 174-177
Lalsangkima Pachuau, World Christianity: A Historical and Theological Introduction

Dave Johnson 178-181
Kevin George Hovey, Guiding Light: Contributions of Alan R. Tippett: Toward the Development and Dissemination of Twentieth-Century Missiology.

Monte Lee Rice 182-185
Collins, Paul M. and Barry Ensign-George. Eds. Denomination: Assessing an Ecclesiological Category

Adrian P. Rosen 186-188
Alan Mann, Atonement for a Sinless Society

Adrian P. Rosen 189-192
Matt Waymeyer, Amillennialism and the Age to Come: A Premillennial Critique of the Two-Age Model

Lora Angeline Timenia 193-195
Nimí Wariboko and Amos Yong, eds., Paul Tillich and Pentecostal Theology: Spiritual Presence & Power

CONTRIBUTORS
Editorial

Streams of Pentecostal Thought: Theology, Theological Education, Spirituality, Ecumenism, Hermeneutics, History and Mission

We begin this edition by dedicating it to our late colleague and dear friend, Dr. Teresa Chai, who went to be with the Lord in March, 2020. Her love for the Lord, missions and theological education touched all who knew her well and we feel the pain of her untimely passing at the age of only 57. We miss her dearly. She served as a member of the faculty for seven years and also as the academic dean for two years. She also served as the book review editor for the journal and was part of the manuscript review team for APTS Press. This is one way that we can acknowledge her excellent service.

I am also pleased to announce that Dr. Adrian Rosen, one of our faculty members here at APTS, has replaced Dr. Chai as the book review editor. He has recently completed his PhD in New Testament at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, MO, and has been teaching here since 2014. He brings a great deal of passion for academic excellence to the job.

I am also pleased to announce that we have installed a new Board of Reference (formerly known as the Editorial Board) that will begin its work in the next couple of months. They are Dr. Wonsuk Ma, Korea, Dr. Simon Chan, Singapore, Dr. Roji T. George and Dr. Josfin Raj, India, Dr. Robert P. Menzies a long-term worker in Northern Asia, Dr. Sang Yun Lee, Korea, Dr. Jacqueline N. Grey, Australia, Dr. Edwardneil Benavidez, the Philippines and Dr. Olga Zaprometova, Russia. They bring a wealth of experience and a great variety of perspective to the task and I am really looking forward to working with them. Our thanks to those who have served previously.

This edition reflects the ever-widening stream of Pentecostal thought and practice. A couple of these streams may be a surprise to some. To begin with, we continue our reflections from the last edition, Pentecostals and Ecumenism (see www.aptspress.org) with the final report the Third Round of the International Dialogue Between Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches And
Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 2014-2020, who concluded their discussions on our Baguio campus on October 23-30, 2019. This round, entitled Called to God’s Mission, reflects the manner in which these traditions have approached the Missio Dei. In reading this, you will find a number of points of agreement and a number of points in which they diverge. The goal here is not to determine who is right and who might be wrong. The goal is to listen and learn from those who might have a different perspective.

The second article is by Giang-Son (pseudonym), a global worker in Vietnam, on the history of the Assemblies of God in Vietnam represents on of the great hallmarks in Pentecostal theology and missiology, the role of the Holy Spirit. Beginning with the early Catholic and Protestant missionaries to the current Assemblies of God movement, Morris traces the thread of how the Holy Spirit moved in each generation, including the era of the Vietnam War.

The third article, by Jason Morris, is a natural consequence of the first. When missionaries first came to Vietnam, the message they brought was cloaked in Western form. As the church grew and took root, the need arose to take another look at the message preached and how the understanding and the communication of the greatest story ever told needed to be recast in a way that would be understood, valued and accepted by the Vietnamese. This process of contextualization, while now a well traveled road, is just beginning to be looked at in Vietnam, according to Morris, who proceeds to lay out a framework through which it can be done.

Next, Amos Yong reviews the current situation of Pentecostal Theological Education, noting its Eurocentric orientation even in Majority World schools and asks if it will retain this orientation as the Pentecostal Movement moves forward into its second century. Then he proposes a new model of theological education that will not only address the needs of the Pentecostal Movement but also engage the broader Body of Christ as well. He begins by describing the “reigning western paradigm, then he sketches the general contours of our Pentecostal paradigm and will conclude by explicating some of the implications of this vision for Pentecostal theological Education in the Majority World.

Julie Ma’s article follows. Here, she probes the impact of Pentecostal spirituality on churches outside of the Pentecostal tradition, specifically as it relates to the manifestation of divine healing, ministries of social concern and other things. As the discussion progresses, she probes as to whether there is an increasing openness between the various Pentecostals and other traditions.

Craig Keener’s article, “Spirit Hermeneutics,” is a reprint of an original article published in the Spiritus Journal of ORU and is reprinted
here with the permission of Spiritus and the author. The original article was entitled “The Spirit and Biblical Interpretation,” from Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology: Vol. 4: No. 1. Here, Keener argues that we should seek to understand the biblical text according to how the original audience would have understood it, adding in the dangers of ignoring the original meaning of the text. Between these discussions, however, he emphasizes at fuller length an aspect of interpretation that typically receives much less emphasis in academic settings by considering hearing what the Spirit may be saying to churches today.

Finally, Robert Danielson, concludes this edition with an article focused mainly on the work of the Pentecost Bands in India. This group was initially a part of the Free Methodist Church, but had become independent by the time they arrived in India. However, their leader, Rev. Frank C. Hotle joined forces with Free Methodist missionaries Ernest and Phebe Ward to promote holiness through the Harvest Home Camp Meetings in India. They also functioned through their social work in caring for and educating orphans. This paper will conclude with some considerations about the relationship between the Pentecost Bands in India, the Wards, and the Pandita Ramabai’s Mukti Mission.

I would likely to close this editorial with a few thoughts on Covid-19. The reasons for why God may have allowed this to happen are probably as numerous as the people who have expressed them. For me, I found great comfort in studying the book of Habakkuk, where the prophet railed against God as the Babylonian army tore Judah and Jerusalem apart, destroying the temple and taking most of the Israelites captive. God is neither bothered by Habakkuk’s anger nor does he answer all of his questions. But in the end, the prophet responds with worship, trust and faith.

The impact of Covid-19 will be felt for months and perhaps even years to come. It may be that life as we have known it may be radically different from the past. We have a choice to respond with faith or fear. Most will likely experience some of both. Whatever the future looks like, God never changes and we can trust him.

With the current and future challenges that Covid-19 has and will bring upon us, it seems that many of us will be forced to rethink the way we do ministry. Many have already discovered new, creative ways of doing ministry, much of it online, and this trend will likely continue. May God bless us all as we continue to minister in ways that God has called us. Remember, the Covid-19, as bad as it is, is not the greatest crisis of our time. The greatest calamity of our day is that a substantial part of the world’s 7.7 billion people have never had access to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let’s stay focused on that.
As always, please feel free to contact me through the website, www.aptspress.org. I would enjoy hearing your thoughts on this edition.

Warmly,

Dave Johnson, DMiss
Managing Editor
Called to God’s Mission:  
Between Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders  
2014-2020

Introduction

Scripture:

16For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.  17“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)
14But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? 15And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:14-15)
18And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

1. We live in exciting times! Many are responding to the gospel and many more are engaged in God’s mission (missio Dei) among all people. How can we engage in God’s mission authentically? What constitutes mission today? How does mission engage people in our communities? How do we read the signs of our times in a way that helps us respond to God’s call to mission? This document is a

1All citations of Scripture used throughout this report are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.
testimony to how Pentecostal and Reformed Christians respond together to God’s mission into which we have been called. We are exploring together what we think is important for the mission of the Church today.

2. The Reformed and Pentecostal representatives, meeting from 2014-2020, are grateful to God and are encouraged by what we share in our vision of God’s mission and how we respond to it. Through these years, the Rev. Dr. Karla Ann Koll served as the Co-Chair for the Reformed team, while the Rev. Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. served as Co-Chair on behalf of the Pentecostals. Given the topic of “Mission,” the dialogue members thought it was essential to experience something of different parts of the world where mission is an ongoing reality. As a result, they met at the Reformed retreat center, Megbékéles Háza, in Berekfürdő, Hungary, 16-21 November 2014; at the St. Paul Cultural Center in Antalya, Turkey, 1-7 December 2015; at the Latin American Biblical University in San José, Costa Rica, 2-6 December 2016; at the Alphacrucis College in Parramatta, Australia, 1-5 December 2017; in Legon, Accra, Ghana, 29 November-4 December 2018; and at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines, 23-30 October 2019. On two occasions, drafting groups met, first from 18-22 August 2019 at the home of Jean-Daniel and Susan Plüss, in East Booth Bay, Maine, to begin a draft for use in Baguio, and then at the World Communion of Reformed Churches office in Hannover, Germany, 5-8 March 2020 to complete the drafting process.

3. Participants have wrestled with their differences and engaged in a process of discovering commonalities regarding their participation in God’s mission. As we have spent several years together on our common journey, we have been surprisingly encouraged by the realization that we have sensed the Holy Spirit moving among us. The Lord of the Church prayed that his followers should be one for the sake of the one mission. Yet very often, what the world experiences is our divisive tendencies in mission, leading to confusion and apathy. In addition, religious sentiments have often been drawn into conflicts and violence in the world today in a manner which beckons us to come to new understandings of engagement in God’s mission. With so much at stake, the different Church families in the world cannot afford to engage in mission in a manner that promotes division and competition.
4. This report builds upon the work of the first two rounds of the Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue, “Word and Spirit: Church and World (1996-2000),” and “Experience in Christian Faith and Life (2001-2011).” Both of these reports briefly mention the importance of God’s mission in the world (missio Dei). This document takes the focus on mission further.

5. Reformed and Pentecostal churches have a rich history of engaging in mission. They have responded in their own ways to the task to which they were called and the challenges they have met. Much has changed in the field of mission over the past century. For instance, mission no longer originates largely with professional missionaries. Mission is no longer viewed according to a “sender-recipient” paradigm. It originates everywhere and it goes everywhere. Like much of the Church, the centre of gravity for Reformed and Pentecostal churches now lies in the Global South. Today, the whole church is involved in mission, which is multidirectional. Since the world of the 21st century is interconnected, Pentecostal and Reformed churches increasingly face similar issues. With such changes in mind, participants in this third round of our dialogue decided to offer a more globally inclusive and theologically nuanced understanding of mission that takes seriously these and other recent changes in mission thinking and practice.

6. At its best, all theology, including a theology of mission, needs to be dialogical. By recognizing this fact, we become more aware of how we use words to describe our theological understandings. In listening carefully to one another, sometimes we find that we use words differently, often leading to different practices. Thus, participants have tried to engage each other’s theological language with great care and mutual respect. Each Christian and each church perceives God’s call to mission within a particular context, a particular theological tradition, and within a particular ecclesiastical structure. Reformed and Pentecostal Christians have sometimes perceived God’s call to mission differently and have acted accordingly. At times, this has generated tensions between them. Even within both church families, the understanding and practices of mission may vary widely. Yet, we realize that God’s mission is one because God is one. This dialogue process has offered us the opportunity to explore different understandings and practices of mission. It has allowed us to identify points of convergence as well as tension, to ask questions of one another, and to encourage one another to greater faithfulness.
7. We began our work together, reading the signs of the times as we thought about the mission in which we are engaged. This led to the formulation of the following questions, which guided the discussions and that appear in the four sections of this report:

- How does our understanding of the nature and scope of salvation influence the way we think about and practice mission?
- How do we view the issue of power and the role of the Holy Spirit when we speak about mission?
- In what way does the unity of the Church impact the nature and effectiveness of mission?
- How do our views of eschatology affect our practice of mission?

8. Since both traditions embrace a diversity of missiologies, we have tried to formulate a vision of the mission of God (missio Dei) that Pentecostal and Reformed Christians can live out together. We wish to encourage other Pentecostal and Reformed Christians to join us and engage with this vision. We need one another and we want to encourage further dialogue and common witness as we live toward the Kingdom of God.

I. Mission and Salvation

Scripture:

9… you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 10Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

13You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. 14You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 15No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your
good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)

Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. (Mark 16:15)

19For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; 20for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; 23and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:19-23)

16When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 18“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” 20And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16-21)

Question: How does our understanding of the nature and scope of salvation influence the way we think about and practice mission?

Affirmation of Fundamental Principles

9. We believe that salvation and mission are at the heart of Christian faith, which has led us to raise the following questions: Do we mean the same thing when we talk about salvation? What role does evangelization play in our understanding of mission? Is mission limited to ensuring the salvation of people?
10. Both the Reformed and Pentecostal participants agree on the following: Salvation comes to us by grace through faith. It is the work of God, accomplished through the redemption of Christ, and its completion or application by the Holy Spirit. This means that it is always God who takes the initiative in creation and in salvation. Salvation is something that God does in and for us, but also through us for the sake of the whole world. Once we have received this free gift of salvation, our gratitude is expressed in faithfully responding to God’s mission to witness in life, word, and deed “the mighty acts of God who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). This means that mission is primarily the activity of God, and not merely a human response to God’s wonderful deeds. Such mission leads to discipleship and human flourishing. By participating in God’s mission, we are fulfilling our Lord’s call on us to be the salt and light to the world. (Matthew 5:13-16)

11. God’s mission has always been done in particular cultural, economic, political, religious, social, etc. contexts. Many of these contexts have greatly changed, having been shaped by newer global and local realities. These changes hold implications for the mission of the church: it is challenged to read the signs of the times, understand them, and take seriously the changing contexts, in order to remain faithful to its engagement in God’s mission.

12. Mission has often been done in a context of survival, which has been expressed in different ways historically, geographically and culturally. Older fears and anxieties of survival have sometimes found new forms and ways of expression. Today, in some contexts, survival means dealing with difficult economic challenges, as well as climate change, and other ecologically related challenges. In other contexts, survival is defined by persecution or suffering for the faith. In still other contexts, survival means wrestling with dwindling church membership in the midst of secularization and challenges posed by social issues.

13. The mission of the church is first God’s mission, the missio Dei. It is to embody and proclaim the gospel, the “Good News” about the restoration of God’s rule over all human life and all of creation. The Church is a sign, a foretaste, and a servant of the Kingdom of God in the world. While realizing that the Kingdom of God is God’s initiative, the Church can testify to its nearness in its life, words, and deeds. When the Church strives to reflect the community of love, justice, freedom, and peace, it lives up to fulfilling its mission.
14. God’s plan of redemption embraces all humanity and all creation (Mark 16:15; Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 49:6; 52:7-10; John 3:16; 12:32; Colossians 1:19-20; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:9). Because salvation relates to all of life, mission is best understood as an all-encompassing life ministry, an invitation to life in Christ. “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). In other words, the mission of God is holistic and comprehensive; it takes care of the totality of life—including human life and that of all creation. This means that salvation has individual, communal, and cosmic dimensions. To emphasize one over the others leads to serious errors in our understanding of salvation and in the way we conduct mission. Salvation is a spiritual reality that impacts life as a whole. As a divine intervention into the world, it has material, physical, social, economic, and political consequences. Salvation cannot be understood only in this-worldly terms, only in otherworldly terms, or only in future terms. Salvation has a past, present, and a future reality. The mission of God embodies and mediates that reality in the world. The purpose of mission is not only the salvation of all humanity and all creation but above all serving God’s glory. (Romans 11:33-36)

Misunderstandings and Stereotypes

15. The reconciling love of God moves us in our response to the mission of God, which has many dimensions in different contexts. Evangelism in its different forms is one dimension of mission. It includes proclaiming verbally, the Kingdom of God, the “Good News” of the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16) to people who have not heard, or who have heard but have not yet accepted, or who have been alienated from God, and inviting them to participate in God’s marvellous light. It means being contextually aware and being sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 11:1-18; 15). Paying attention to the contexts must give room for openness to imagination inspired by the Holy Spirit in Christian witnessing that takes seriously the cultures and realities of the different communities of the recipients of the gospel. If the gospel of the Kingdom of God is to address real needs and to be heard as “Good News,” it needs also to challenge and confront every idol in all of our societies (e.g. mammon, Matthew 6: 24) and invite people to conversion in Christ.

16. Evangelism of individual people, that is, proclaiming the message about the gift of being “born again” (John 3:5-8) is part of the
mission of the church, but it cannot be limited only to that. *Evangelization* includes evangelism, but it is more than evangelism. Evangelization also includes proclaiming the message about God’s rule or reign over the whole of human life, and the message about the possibility of human flourishing as a gift from God in the midst of suffering, weakness, poverty, and illness. It also includes the call to act responsibly for our fellow human beings and for all of creation.

17. In both of our traditions, there have been misunderstandings of salvation and misguided practices in mission. We have often reduced the gospel to individual and future salvation, separating soul and body, the spiritual from the physical, time and eternity, history and Kingdom, salvation and social action, earth and heaven. We have tended to label particular evangelizing attitudes and practices too quickly, as otherworldly and indifferent to social concern, just as we have tended to label concepts of holistic mission and forms of social concern and care too quickly, as merely social or ideological programs. Both of our traditions should avoid such dichotomies, any dualism that separates the various aspects of human life.

18. Both of our traditions point towards a need to confess and repent from our stereotypical misreading of each other’s concepts and practices by which we have tried to justify our own concepts and practices as superior to those of the other. We are able to confess together that all of human life arises from creation; all of human life has been overwhelmed by sin; all of human life is being restored in Jesus and by the work of his Spirit. Thus, the Church proclaims this comprehensive restoration in its life, words and deeds.

19. Witnessing to God’s justice is an essential dimension of mission: mediating life and contributing to life-giving and life-flourishing initiatives and structures. In many communities, people have very little opportunity to experience the fullness of life for which Jesus Christ came, often because of the selfish or uncaring actions of people in their locality or nation, and sometimes from faraway lands. The pattern for mission follows Christ as “Prophet,” “Priest,” and “King.” Thus, God’s mission always includes the prophetic activity of exposing the injustice, oppression and violence that rule in all domains of human life, and of challenging societal values and realities that go against God’s will and therefore contradict life. Following the Lord Jesus’s reading of the Isaiah passage in Luke 4:16-21, God’s mission always includes generating justice,
freedom, peace, and life-flourishing vision and the priestly activities of forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing. God’s mission always includes the royal activity of being a protector and advocate of the weak and lowly, of the powerless and the marginalized. This entails commitment to transformation in educational, health, and other social spheres.

**Differences in Emphasis**

20. While Reformed and Pentecostal Christians affirm the understanding of salvation and mission together, in our dialogue it became clear that at times, our traditions express themselves using different vocabularies. Christians in the other group do not always understand this. In the course of this dialogue, we encountered the richness of both traditions and learned a great deal from each other. We believe that these different emphases can enrich one another’s perspectives in their common witness.

**Justification and Justice: The Reformed Understanding of Mission and Salvation**

21. For the Reformed, there is an integral relationship between justification and justice. This has been prominently expressed in the association with the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.² Reformed Christians express the strong conviction that the renewal of life (sanctification) that accompanies justification strengthens us to live (more fully) in gratitude and joyful obedience to God. This is a gift of God’s grace at work in our lives. We may have confidence that the good work that God has begun in us, will be brought to completion (Philippians 1:6). We have nothing that we have not received. Even our capacity to respond to God is God’s gift to us. So also is our perseverance in faith. Good works reflect the effect of God’s grace in us, faith that is active in love.

22. Justice is not simply the ethical outworking of justification as a kind of second step; rather it is already entailed theologically in

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²In the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) the Roman Catholic Church, Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed, and Anglicans express a fundamental consensus on one of the most contentious theological conflicts of the Reformation. In the letter of association with that document, the World Communion of Reformed Churches laid out the integral connection of justification, sanctification, and justice according to Reformed understanding. Their ecumenical partners welcomed it. See [http://wcrc.eu/jddj](http://wcrc.eu/jddj) (accessed March 7, 2020).
justification, as such. Justification is both a “declaring righteous” and a “setting right.” This insight may be at the root of John Calvin’s insistence that justification and sanctification are inseparable (Institutes, III.2.1); they are to be thought of as a two-fold grace (duplex gratia).3

23. In their emphasis on the sovereignty of God, Reformed believers affirm that God is sovereign over all of life, not just the narrowly religious or spiritual aspects of individual lives. They assert with the Psalmist that, “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it” (Psalm 24:1). God has entered into covenant with all of creation (Genesis 9:8-12), and God’s covenant of grace intends a “setting right” that is world embracing, including even political, economic, and ecological realities. All of God’s covenantal acts are acts of justification and justice.4

24. We acknowledge that justice, like justification, is God’s work in and among us. Our understanding of justice has been obscured and our enactment of justice hampered by our sin. It is God, who will bring about the fulfilment of justice. Even so, we understand ourselves to be called to join in God’s world-transforming work. This has been underscored in such modern-day confessions as the Accra Confession (Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth) and the Belhar Confession.5

Holistic Salvation: The Pentecostal Understanding of Mission and Salvation

25. Pentecostal thinking regarding salvation leads to the view that the saving of souls is the most urgent and priority task of mission. This includes an emphasis on salvation, sanctification, Spirit baptism, divine healing, and the in breaking of the coming Kingdom. Believers are constantly urged to experience the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, as well as to become committed evangelists instrumental in the conversion of others. Healing and miracles play a significant role in mission and point towards a holistic understanding of salvation, which has been labeled an example of the “materiality of salvation.” What this means is that for

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3WCRC JDDJ Association §16.
4WCRC JDDJ Association §17.
5WCRC JDDJ Association §§ 17, 20. The Accra Confession was adopted in 2004, while the Belhar Confession was developed in South Africa during the Apartheid era. Both are faith-based confessions intended to counteract injustice.
Pentecostals the body is significant, hence, the emphasis upon divine healing, and this points toward their holistic understanding of mission.

26. Pentecostals employ the term holistic salvation to refer to the spiritual-bodily-social-political-economic dimensions of the abundant life. Grounded in the love of God, holistic salvation takes seriously the plight of the “least of these,” that is, the most vulnerable among us, as central to Christ’s message of hope and healing. As we are called to feed the hungry and house the homeless, we seek to empower them to provide for themselves and their families as well as to join with those who are most marginalized and vulnerable in ending hunger and homelessness (Luke 4:18-19; Matthew 25:34-40).

27. As the Church lives out its mission in the world, it engages in ministries of compassion, serves others, and participates in works of justice that seek to transform the societal structures by the power of the Holy Spirit. Committed “not only to the task of making prophetic denouncement,” the Church is called fully to “support and encourage those among us who are attempting change” in and social transformation of the society towards a just order. Social holiness and just compassion are terms that capture the multiple dimensions of holistic salvation. “Social holiness” is a phrase that holds together “righteousness and justice” (Proverbs 21:3). “Just compassion” refers to how compassion and justice are interrelated, as expressed in Jeremiah 9:24, which links compassion or “kindness, justice and righteousness.”

Common affirmation

28. These differences in emphases on mission and salvation among Reformed and Pentecostals are not issues that divide us. They are sources of mutual enrichment of our understanding of salvation and mission, and they lead us towards a future together in which we can be more faithful witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ. Both Reformed and Pentecostal Christians recognize and affirm God’s grace in salvation, and the way we understand justification and justice and holistic salvation point in the same direction. It is clear that we have more elements that we can affirm together. Many Pentecostal and

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Reformed Christians may not be as aware of this fact in the communities in which we live and engage in mission. Therefore, the way ahead includes sharing these affirmations widely and in formats that can communicate our understanding of our calling into mission and our common witnessing.

II. The Holy Spirit and Mission

Scripture:

He said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. (Zechariah 4:6)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ (Acts 1:8)

17 “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. 18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.” (Acts 2:17-18)

4 My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)

For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. (1 Thessalonians 1:5)

The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let everyone who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift (Revelation 22:17).

Question: How do we view the issue of power and the role of the Holy Spirit when we speak about mission?
Affirmations

29. As members of Reformed and Pentecostal churches, we affirm the following claims together:

30. The work of the Holy Spirit needs to be understood within the context of the Triune God. God is one, and the mission of God cannot be divided. The highest way to affirm the work of the Holy Spirit is to acknowledge that it is the Spirit of Christ that is revealed, the Lord and Giver of Life (John 16:14; 1 Corinthians 12:3). Just as God has been self-giving in the incarnation of Christ, so also is God self-giving in the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Just as Jesus Christ was given to the world (John 3:16-17), the Spirit of God is promised to be poured out upon all flesh (Acts 2:17). The Holy Spirit is the gift of God for the reconciliation of the world (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) so that in the end God may receive all glory.

31. “Life in the Spirit is at the core of the Church and is the essence of its mission.”7 The Holy Spirit is sovereign over mission: the Spirit pursues the mission of the Triune God in space and time and calls “Christian communities to respond with personal conversion, and […] discipleship” that collaborates “with God for the transforming of the world (1 Thessalonians 3:2).”8 When the disciples met Jesus Christ as their risen Lord, he promised (Acts 1:5, 8) and gave them the Holy Spirit as the gift of God, an advocate and enabler to be witnesses to the end of the earth (John 16:7-15; 20:22, Acts 2). The account of the first Christian Pentecost reveals God’s Spirit as a gift to the church and to the life of the world.

32. It is in Christ and through the Spirit that believers receive God’s loving grace as a gift (Romans 5:5; Ephesians 2:8). Gratitude for salvation received calls for a response. This is how God sent the disciples out into the world to God’s mission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13-15). As the priesthood of all believers, we are called to proclaim the mighty acts of God in word and deed (1 Peter 2:9; Acts 2:11).

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7Together Towards Life, §3.
33. One can describe both of our theologies as theologies of *encounter*. In the Spirit, people are called to an encounter with God through Jesus Christ, which is life transforming. The transformation to a life that enables us more and more to become Christ-like continues in the process of discipleship, experiencing and practicing reconciliation, the call to be faithful witnesses, and the call to serve others, as we follow Jesus in God’s mission. Pentecostal and Reformed Christians emphasize their personal relationship with God in their confession of Jesus Christ. They also underscore the importance of a communal relationship with God. Reformed Christians express this in the language of the covenant that is professed in baptism and deepened in the life of the communion of believers. In each case, discipleship is affirmed as communities of believers hold that the Holy Spirit nurtures them through the life of the Church. 

34. Pentecostal and Reformed Christians acknowledge individual and collective responses to the Holy Spirit’s leading. Either of these Christian families would want to state that both aspects are important. The individual response recognizes the Spirit’s leading in the experience of a personal calling and gifting by the Triune God. At the same time, the collective response sees the individual believer as a member of a community of faith that is formed by discerning, confessing, and witnessing God’s will, and by striving to be reformed together according to the Word of God. We see that both responses are provoked by the urgencies of the call to mission. They are part of the larger conversation of the Church, which draws upon the narrative of the Holy Spirit’s mission in history. Through the Holy Spirit all believers are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses in heaven and on earth, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of their faith (Hebrews 12:1-2; Acts 5:31).

35. When God sends, God also gifts. Gifting is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, an act of God, gifting us to the world. In the mission of God (*missio Dei*) all followers of Christ are gifted in one way or another, and like “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” we serve others (1 Peter 4:10-11). We agree that all gifting comes from

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10The second round of the Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue focused on “Experience in Christian Faith and Life” and referred to the work of the Spirit guiding the church in worship, Section I, § 32-43.
the self-giving God, and we receive it for service to all creation and for the glory of God.

36. Even as God sends and gifts, God also empowers (Acts 1:8; Romans 15:17-19; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11). Our churches speak about empowerment in mission. However, we also call for caution, since power can be corrupted in the actions of believers, or even confused with very selfish human claims of power. Power is expressed in various dimensions, such as spiritual, ecclesial, emotional, psychological, cultural, political, economic, and military. Hence, we believe that we need careful discernment (Romans 12:2)\(^\text{11}\) (a) of the understanding of empowerment, (b) of the social context of empowerment, and (c) of past shortcomings. This discernment regarding power is guided by God’s authority (1 Corinthians 12:10), as a self-emptying power that brings wholeness to life (Philippians 2:5-11).

37. All claims to empowerment require discernment in connection and keeping with God’s mission. The Holy Spirit empowers the community of believers to live out the Christian life in witness and service in the Church and in the world. Empowerment is reflected in a spirituality that grows out of the ongoing encounter of the believers with the Triune God, taking seriously the presence and the authority of the Holy Spirit at many levels. The encounter with the Holy Spirit provokes a profound transformation wherever the people of God gather in Jesus’ name (Matthew 18:20). The Holy Spirit has the power to change how one lives one’s life and how one ministers to others, both inside and outside the believing community. In consequence, the spirituality of encounter lives out the priesthood and prophethood of all believers for mission.

38. God has given gifts to all Christians. They are empowered both as individuals and as Christian communities. In becoming empowered, individual believers and communities of faith learn to become attentive and sensitive to the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit in areas where they do not necessarily feel at home. The mission of God empowers believers to enable contextualization. God has been self-emptying in the coming of Jesus Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit, so also the Church in mission is to be self-emptying; it does not attempt to impose its own cultures on others

\(^{11}\)See “Experience in Christian Faith and Life” § III, ¶ 73-116.
(Zechariah 4:6). The mission of God transcends all cultural and political identities.

39. It would be a fallacy to understand empowerment in an exclusively individual way. Likewise, all discernment of this power will take into account the social context in which this power is exercised. God invites Christians to participate in God's mission, which aims at the transformation of the life of the world in its entirety. Christians are empowered to be witnesses, to proclaim the gospel in word and deed. They evangelize, engage those with means to share power and resources, and cry for justice. They care for the vulnerable. They educate, and make space for those whose voice is muted. The context shapes the way Christians are called, respond, and participate in God's mission. In impoverished communities especially, whether rural or urban, ministries of empowerment often serve as lifelines. Empowerment is informed by the reading of biblical texts that proclaim the imminence of radical transformation, such as Acts 2:17-21; Luke 4:18-20; or Matthew 25:31-46. Ministries of healing, deliverance, and liberation allow new communities of life to come into existence, embracing relationships between those who are hungry, ill, incarcerated, or homeless and those who are not. Ministries of empowerment proclaim the hope of Christ and the hope of God’s world-to-come to those who are marginalized. The Holy Spirit fosters hope-bearing and life-giving practices of faith for individuals and communities, where God’s wonder is displayed.

40. The Holy Spirit empowers individuals and churches to engage in advancing justice, reconciliation and peace. As witnesses to the life affirming and reconciling work of the Holy Spirit, communities of faith offer glimpses of God's Kingdom. Within large parts of global Christianity, churches address unjust social, racial, economic, and political systems. They challenge racial, ethnic, gender, and class exclusions (Galatians 3:28). When the congregations participate in God's mission in the world, the Holy Spirit works through these believers and the community of faith on their life-affirming pilgrimage toward the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). As Pentecostal and Reformed Christians, we encourage others to join with us in these actions.

41. It is always important that we take the time to discern our past shortcomings: Although we see the Holy Spirit leading God’s mission in the world, we must confess that our mission endeavours
have often fallen short of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Missionary zeal does not automatically sanctify either its means or ends. The colonial entanglement of the Western churches has sadly marred the Church’s mission by the political, economic, and cultural ambitions of the Western churches in which the power exercised was not God’s power (Matthew 6:10, 13). Similarly, any self-centered accumulation of wealth or power (social, political, personal, etc.) by Christians and their leaders must be addressed critically. When power appears in new guises, such as in neo-liberal capitalism or in cultural or even religious imperialism, the Church is called to vigilance.

42. When “empowerment” language is used in the pursuit of mission, we must carefully discern whether we refer to human power or are embracing the power that is a gift from God for the life of the world (John 6:51). As the Pentecostal and Reformed participants of this dialogue, we affirm together God’s authority as a self-emptying power to bring wholeness to life.

Differences in Emphasis

43. While there is far-reaching consensus on the understanding of mission, there are still differences of emphasis that affect the practice of mission. Pentecostal and Reformed Christians follow distinctly different traditions to discern God’s guidance for the work of mission. While Pentecostals tend to cherish gifts as imminent expressions of divine power, exousia (Mark 6:7), Reformed Christians take a more critical perspective on power. For both traditions, the final authority rests with God. Any form of human power must, therefore, be carefully scrutinized to determine whether it is really ordained by God, because power can be corrupted and can even become an exercise in human idolatry.

44. This difference of emphasis has led to differences in the ways that we conduct mission. Historically, Pentecostal mission has been much more fluid than their Reformed counterparts have; it still allows for many more initiatives that are spontaneous. Even when Pentecostal churches have established mission boards, they still emphasize the urgency to proclaim the gospel. Where there is a possibility to proclaim the gospel, the opportunity should be used. Pentecostals embrace the expectation that something extraordinary will happen because of their encounters with God. They know that these experiences can inspire spontaneous mission work by
individuals as well as entire congregations. Such “faith mission” is often borne by personal initiative, and, at times, it has demonstrated astonishing and positive results. The Reformed members of the dialogue team realized that Reformed congregations also respond to the encounter with God spontaneously, and they saw how the too scrupulous weighing of pros and cons could jeopardize opportunities for mission.

45. In some situations, however, such activities, borne out of the sense of urgency, demonstrate limited sensitivity to cultural and political contexts. They may also display limited accountability with regard to the use of resources and the implementation of programs. Here, the Pentecostal members of the dialogue joined the Reformed members who call for the need for greater discernment by the larger Church. The mixed experiences of the history of mission have led both traditions to increased scrutiny of their own mission work. Even so, discernment has become broader and deeper. Reformed missions today aim at processes of global discernment that privilege the voices of those who, in the history of mission, have not been heard. People must not anymore be seen as “objects of mission.” They must be heard and recognized as partners. These processes of discernment are demanding and often conflictual. They slow down decisions and may appear to delay the progress of the Kingdom. Likewise, the Pentecostal participants encourage their churches and mission boards to increase their engagement in such processes of discernment and the God-given transformation they enable.

46. The Pentecostal and Reformed participants in this dialogue wholeheartedly rejoice over the consensus they have achieved around the subject of mission. Both traditions see their churches as collaborators in the mission of the Triune God. The Holy Spirit calls into discipleship and empowers individuals and communities to witness the coming of the Kingdom in words and deeds. God has been self-emptying in the coming of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit empowers us toward a self-emptying mission, which forsakes our own interests and overcomes all cultural, political, and religious prejudices. Both Pentecostal and Reformed participants acknowledge God’s presence in the advancement of justice, reconciliation, and peace, and in their mission, they strive to overcome unjust social, racial, economic, and political systems.

47. In the dialogue, we have discovered that the two approaches are not contradictory and they can even become mutually enriching. The
Pentecostal sense of urgency that is prepared to take risks for the advancement of the Kingdom often excites Reformed Christians. At the same time, Pentecostal Christians understand that there is a serious commitment in the Reformed processes of discernment that might be worth exploring. Here Pentecostals and Reformed can learn from and correct each other.

III. Mission and the Unity of the Church

Scripture:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:20-23)

Question: In what way does the unity of the Church impact the nature and effectiveness of mission?

Both the churches of the Reformed family and those that are part of the Pentecostal family have long histories of evangelization and of mission. Jesus linked the unity of his followers, the Church, and its mission to the world, in his prayer to the Father recorded in John 17:21-23. All participants in this dialogue are motivated by the instructions that Jesus first gave to his disciples. They were told,
“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). Mark’s account expands the scope of our mission, when it records Jesus’s command, “Go into all the world and proclaim the “Good News” to the whole creation (Mark 16:15). Shortly thereafter, the Holy Spirit gave the Church the power necessary to fulfill the divine mission that God gave to them (Acts 1:8). The transformation of their lives provided strong evidence of the power that the “Good News” of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection had brought to them. As a result, they became compelling witnesses to what Jesus had done. They began in Jerusalem, moved through Judaea and Samaria, traveling in ever expanding circles, while turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

49. Our churches, therefore, believe and teach that our engagement in mission is central to our own discipleship. As a result, we have sent missionaries everywhere. Our message, the “Good News,” which is the actual meaning of the term “gospel,” is a message of reconciliation. God has provided for our reconciliation to God as well as with each other, through the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet almost from the time they came together, followers of Jesus found differences among them that threatened their unity and the mission to proclaim the “Good News” to the world. The apostles reminded the followers of Jesus repeatedly how important their unity was to their message. They urged love, patience, gentleness, and humility as characteristics intended to preserve and nurture their unity (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:1-3). Still, the history of the Church through the centuries has all too often stood out in stark contrast to the message of reconciliation. For a variety of reasons, our churches, Reformed and Pentecostal, have had little to do with one another. The task before us, then, asks us to reflect on the nature of the Church, and to determine whether, or to what extent, our actions that seem to exclude one another have an impact on the message of reconciliation that we proclaim in word and deed.

50. The Greek word ekklēsia, translated “church,” derives from the verb kaleō, meaning “to call.” Thus, the word ekklēsia refers not primarily to a static structure or to an institution. It refers to all those who God calls out from the world through Jesus Christ, and by the one Spirit, places them into the one body, a dynamic body called the
Church (1 Corinthians 12:13), before sending them into the world. As a result, the Church is sometimes described as the “Body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12; Romans 12:4-5). It is like a living body with many members, each of whom play a specific or unique role. Collectively these members are also called the “people of God” (1 Peter 2:9). Christ expected the Church to live and work together as one body, that is, as one people, with all of them working together with Christ’s one purpose in mind. As such, the Church is made up of reconciled people who now follow Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22), for Christ alone is head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18).

51. Jesus, the head of the Church, calls his followers to be alert to the many biblical signs that surround them (Luke 21:25-36), including false and deceptive messianic claims, wars and rumors of wars, pestilence, famines, and earthquakes (Matthew 24:4-8). Today the world is experiencing things that have not occurred before within human memory—issues like the recent and extraordinary changes in the worldwide climate, the most massive migration of people the world has ever seen, and the spread of newer nationalisms, just to name a few. Jesus calls upon us to discern such phenomena, to ask ourselves what their meaning might be, and to make appropriate responses. All too often, people respond to these challenges by retreating into the “safety” of their own cultural groups, which isolates them from one another, yielding fear and mistrust between them. It is the missionary calling of the Church to reflect and act against such isolation in the light of the coming Kingdom of God.

52. Within this new or current context, the Church has a powerful, alternative message to proclaim. It is a message of “Good News!” While the world responds to these challenges with division and animosity, God calls the Church to proclaim with a single voice and purpose, the “Good News” of God’s reconciliation supported by their transformed lives, which has brought them together as the one “people of God.” It speaks to the deepest needs, hopes, and dreams of people who are in crisis. As the Apostle Paul wrote, Christ Jesus “has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us . . . that he might create in himself one new humanity . . . thus making peace . . . ” (Ephesians 2: 14-15). In Christ, we are all children of God—“neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free nor is there male and female”—we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26-28). This is the “Good News” of the gospel, a foretaste of the coming Kingdom of God.
53. The prophet Isaiah rejoiced over those “who bring good news, who announce salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isaiah 52:7). Jesus claimed that “the Spirit of the Lord” was upon Him, and the Spirit “had “anointed him to bring good news to the poor,” “to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). As a result, Jesus went throughout Galilee, “proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness among the people” (Matthew 4:23). This message, given to the Church, is surely “Good News,” a refreshingly new message to be proclaimed to the world through word and deed.

54. The Church was born on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41). The earliest followers of Jesus quickly recognized that Peter’s proclamation on that day, the “Good News” he brought regarding Jesus, had transformed them, and the Holy Spirit had formed them into a new community, empowered and sent throughout the world as witnesses of the “Good News.” They wanted to be with one another and learn together at the feet of the apostles, in preparation for the missionary task. They found it important to break bread together (Acts 2:42). They engaged in prayers and in mutual sharing; they found themselves strengthened by one another in unity. They were a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and a new people (Ephesians 2:15) who lived under a new commandment, the commandment of love (John 13:34; 1 John 3:23-24) that compelled them to move out and into the world. Jesus had passed along to his followers both the message of salvation that caused Isaiah to rejoice, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:4) such as he received, to proclaim the “Good News” to the “poor.” “Go into all the world and proclaim the “Good News” to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15; cf. Matthew 28:19), Jesus commanded them. Now it was their task, and the Spirit gave them the ability to proclaim that message through their words and actions. They took the “Good News” to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

55. This important account regarding the birth of the Church reveals the simplicity that marked the Church when it began. Their earliest confession became “Jesus is Lord,” made possible only by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). They had the Torah, the prophets, and the teachers of wisdom on which to draw, but they gathered at the feet of those who had walked, lived and worked with Jesus. They worshiped and lived together. They sang and embraced the charisms
of one another (1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:17-20). While all of these things remain essential to the Church, many of them have become sources of division. Baptism serves as a sign of incorporation into the community of faith, into the one Body of Christ, yet disagreements over issues of practice obscure its intended purpose. Likewise, the Lord’s Supper or Eucharist, which was intended to serve as a visible sign of corporate “communion” marked by grace as they “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes,” often acts as a wall of separation (1 Corinthians 11:20). It is little wonder that we find many believers today yearning for the rediscovery of our unity in forms that challenge us to greater faithfulness, and add to the integrity of the “Good News” that God has made possible, our reconciliation to God and to one another.

56. We may be separated from the earliest disciples by 2000 years, but through their faithfulness and perseverance in bringing the message of “Good News,” the Church has spread around the world, and come to us. Jesus’s command to “Go” has now come down to us, his followers today. We still have the “Good News” to impart. It is the message of God’s love, grace, peace, hope, and justice, a proclamation that the Kingdom of God is coming, indeed, that it has begun to penetrate the world through the Word and Spirit, and in signs and wonders. From that perspective, God calls the Church to bear witness to the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God. The Church is God’s means to carry out his mission to reach the world with this amazing news! We have a privilege and a challenge before us. Either we are missional or we are not. The question is, “Are we up to the task?”

57. If Scripture teaches us that there is only one Church, it also suggests that within that one Church there is great diversity. One way the Apostle Paul described the Church was as a single body, with Christ as the head. He noted that we are each members of that body with different roles to play, different functions to fulfill, and that we possess the Holy Spirit’s power to fill those roles appropriately and effectively (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 4:11-15). On a larger scale, we see that the Church spread across the world as seen through the eyes of the biblical writers, just as it continues to spread today. It encountered different cultures in the ancient world, Jewish, Greek, Roman, Ethiopian, and Egyptian. The followers of Jesus engaged with men and women, rich and poor, slave and free, and the “Good News” transformed all of their cultural
58. Although the simplicity of the gospel was intended to bring freedom and newness of life, it was compromised by setting up boundaries of communion that need review. Through the centuries, we have divided into many thousands of churches, thereby denying both the unity and the catholicity of the Church. We have too easily become satisfied to live as the Church in division. We have grown so used to living this way that we have lost the common memory of the oneness of the Church and the urgent need to resolve our differences. Jesus prayed for the oneness of those who follow Him (John 17:21-24). Paul repeatedly addressed disunity in the Church (1 Corinthians 1:13; Galatians 2:11-3:5; Philippians 4:2-3, etc.). John addressed the issue (3 John 9-11). Moreover, the writer to the Hebrews exhorted, “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many (Hebrews 12:14-15).

59. Through the centuries, the growth and power of the institutional Church came under increasing scrutiny and suspicion. In spite of the efforts that the Reformers made to renew the one Church, even their work has fragmented over time. The Apostle Paul celebrated diversity in the Church as a positive feature, when all members worked together for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Ephesians 4:11-16). Together, we recognize that institutional or denominational boundaries are often helpful because they provide accountability. Yet, we have seen a growing movement into various forms of diversity that are completely independent of one another. We have seen the spread of individualized forms of spirituality designed for different age groups, different educational backgrounds, different cultures, races and ethnicities, different liturgical preferences, different economic levels, and the like. Today, instead of recognizing one Church working together in multiple congregations, a form of unity in reconciled diversity, each “church” justifies its own raison d’être. The result is that we have become isolated from one another in our discrete and unconnected ecclesial cultures in much the same way that the world has gone.

60. Recent decades have seen phenomenal growth among the churches, especially in the Global South, with many churches and agencies
engaged in mission. On the one hand, mission has been a uniting force, bringing Christians with different doctrinal perspectives and forms of ecclesial organization together in common witness, as was experienced in the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, and in many subsequent gatherings, as well as local endeavors. On the other hand, many times mission efforts have been carried out in ways that deny the unity of Christ’s Church. Some groups have spent more energy attacking the beliefs and practices of other Christians than in announcing the “Good News” of the gospel.

61. The Reformed participants in this dialogue reminded the Pentecostal participants that the unity of the Church is both a gift and a calling from God. It was purchased through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God has given this unity to us freely. The Pentecostal participants noted that many early Pentecostal leaders, such as William J. Seymour, yearned for unity between all the People of God, claiming, “The Apostolic Faith Movement (an early self-designation for Pentecostals) stands for the faith once delivered unto the saints . . . and Christian unity everywhere.” Yet, all of us have allowed this unity, this gift, to be mutilated by our actions and our inaction. The result is that we have compromised both the mission that we are supposed to carry out, and the message that Jesus gave us to proclaim and embody, the “Good News” that reconciliation is now here and available to all who will accept it! That is the message of the gospel. Yet, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin pointed out long ago:

The disunity of the Church is a denial of the promise and a contradiction of the purpose for which the Church is sent into the world. How can the church give to the world the message that Jesus is able to draw all men to Himself, while it continues to say, “Nevertheless, Jesus is not able to draw us who bear his name together”? How will the world believe a message, which we do not appear to believe ourselves?

62. Jesus prayed for our unity “so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John

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17:24). We recognize that in Christ, we share a unity that many describe as spiritual. Still, we believe that while our life “in Christ” provides the basis for our unity, we are called to manifest that unity before the world. This is why we work toward a growing collaboration with one another, engage in theological dialogue, and cooperate on missional projects from, with, and between local congregations. Together, we support those groups that organize to provide aid to the needy, work to end world hunger, support the care and nurture of children, work in peace-making endeavors, provide for the care of God’s creation, and many other things. We are grateful for the improving relationships that makes cooperation and partnership in such ministries possible!

63. Together, we realize that the Spirit of God is at work in the world, calling people to follow Jesus, gathering them, sometimes in new ways that we do not always understand or appreciate. The Bible itself is deeply contextual. It is received and applied in consistent ways and manifested through thousands of cultural expressions. The Word of God goes its own way and creates new contextual churches, and expressions of worship and spirituality. It has the power to transform lives, and it calls each of us to participate in the lives of one another, to love one another in ways that stretch us (Leviticus 19:18; Luke 10:27; 1 John 4:20-21; James 2:15-16). In so doing, it encourages us to recognize the significance of the ongoing transformative work of the Spirit that brings the gospel close to the hearts, communities, and cultures of humankind.

64. Today, we observe the development of Christian expressions in wide variation. There are historic churches with well-developed forms and rituals. There are churches that appear to be freewheeling, though the insider can explain the order that may look like chaos to others. There are large churches and small churches, cathedrals, and house churches, emerging and emergent churches, churches without walls, growing numbers of migrant churches, legal churches and those neither recognized, nor allowed, persecuted churches, networks of Christians concerned about the same issues, digital churches, churches focused on evangelization or healing or creation care or peace making. Different contexts demand or result in different manifestations of the one Church. In many places, especially where churches represent a minority religion, where laws exclude them, even where they are explicitly persecuted, they may organize themselves in different ways, but they still bear witness to the power of Christ in their lives, making them one people. They
often bear witness to the “Good News” in surprising and creative ways. In short, there are a multiplicity of churches, in any number of formats through which Christians desire to do the will of God.

65. These myriad manifestations of the gospel are contextualized and the movement of the communities of God’s people may at times make it difficult for us—as a part of the variety of Christians in the world—to recognize, accept, and feel at home among all these manifestations of the Body of Christ. They challenge us to learn to be cautious in our condemnations and aversion against the broad spectrum of churches, and to discern where the Spirit of God is at work and active, empowering the people of God to declare in word and deed the “Good News” of the gospel. More than ever, we need the gift of the Spirit to recognize our sisters and brothers, to help each other in a common way of discipleship, and to be able in a pastoral attitude to build each other up in communion. Thus, we will be able “to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:18-19).

66. What do we have when everything is said and done? Does the unity of the Church affect the effectiveness or the nature of mission? Absolutely! All of these expressions of the Church, working together come under the mandate, “Go and make disciples.” Everyone is to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God. All of us are calling people to be reconciled with God and with one another. As Reformed and Pentecostal followers of Jesus, we are part of the “All.” Our common task is to carry the “Good News” to everyone, informing them of the reconciliation that Jesus paid for, through his death and resurrection, and demonstrating the power that we have received through the Holy Spirit, to make a difference in the lives of all with whom we come into contact, and beyond. By bearing witness to our unity, we will make a difference in the world.

IV. Mission and Eschatology

Scripture:

18He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20and through him, God was pleased to
reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:18-20)

18I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:18-25)

36 “But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Matthew 24:36-37)
11 Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? 13 But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. (2 Peter 3:11-13)

Question: How do our views of eschatology affect our understanding of mission?

67. God’s purpose, the missio Dei, is to reconcile all things on heaven and on earth (Colossians 1:20). Eschatology, the study of the last things, attempts to describe the actualization of God’s intentions toward creation, the future reality of God’s salvation. The vision the Church proclaims of God’s future determines the way the Church understands its participation in God’s mission. How the Church perceives what God has done, is doing, and will do, shapes how the Church lives out its role in God’s mission today. Indeed, mission engagement needs an eschatological horizon that communicates
hope in a world marked increasingly by fear and despair. We affirm that the future belongs to God and this affirmation allows us to engage confidently in mission.

68. Jesus entrusted the mission to his followers and he promised to return (Matthew 28:19-20; John 14:3; Acts 1:11). The context of mission today is marked by contrasts. More people from more cultures and in more places in the world are followers of Jesus Christ than ever before. A larger percentage of the world’s population claims the name of Jesus than at any point in the past. At the same time, violence of different kinds continues to cut lives short. Millions flee their homes and their countries in search of refuge. In many parts of the world, people are suffering because of their faith. In secular societies, meaninglessness plagues young and old alike. Changes in climate are yielding devastating consequences for the earth’s inhabitants. All of creation is, indeed, groaning with the sufferings of this present age. Yet we know that God’s liberating work continues and we are called to be a part of it (Romans 8:18-25).

69. The first Christian communities lived, expecting Christ’s imminent return. The only New Testament book written in the apocalyptic genre is Revelation. It begins with the words, “The Revelation (apokàlypsis) of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1). Yet, an apocalyptic worldview infuses the entire New Testament. In this worldview, often expressed through an array of figures, symbols, colors, and signs, hope is focused upon a transcendent reality beyond time and space, from which God will ultimately act in a dramatic way to set all things right. Believers looked through and beyond calamities and current sufferings to God’s promised future. Within the New Testament, it is possible to trace theological shifts as communities wrestled with the delay of the expected Parousia and learned to live their faith in the resurrected Christ into the future. Those who were watching for the return of the Son of Man in the clouds were admonished also to see the Son of Man in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, and the prisoner (Matthew 24:30, 25:31-46). Communities suffering persecution were admonished to hold fast and await God’s coming by leading lives of holiness (2 Peter 3: 11-12). Followers of Jesus carried the “Good News” of the gospel to other peoples and places, making disciples and forming communities (Matthew 28:19-20).
70. The social upheavals in Europe at the time of the Protestant Reformation raised fear and anxiety about the coming end of history as well as expectations of dramatic interventions by God. Calvin, himself a refugee, preached in the context of this apocalyptic fervor to a congregation in Geneva composed of many refugees and the Christians who had welcomed them. Calvin assured those fleeing persecution that their eternal destiny was in God’s hands, not under the control of any political or ecclesiastical authority. Trusting in Christ’s return to bring the fullness of God’s Kingdom, Christians would be able to persevere through any hardship. In the meantime, the Church was to focus on the preaching of God’s Word and caring for people’s well-being, offering hospitality, and organizing the community to protect and promote the common good. In subsequent centuries, among members of Reformed churches in many places who gained positions of political and economic power, the focus on transforming culture remained, while the longing for Christ’s return faded. Other Reformed Christians, especially those who lived in marginalized communities, continued to look for Christ’s second coming.

71. Pentecostalism was born at the beginning of the twentieth century with a heightened expectation of the Lord’s imminent return. They viewed the outpouring of the Spirit, evidenced by gifts such as speaking in tongues, as one of many signs of the latter days. Early Pentecostals understood themselves as a Restorationist movement living as the earliest followers of Jesus did in New Testament times. The brevity of time remaining before the end of history made the work of mission an urgent necessity to reach as many as possible with the word of God’s salvation, following the risen Christ’s command to preach the gospel to all creation (Mark 16:15). Indeed, Pentecostals soon organized beyond the level of the local congregation to engage in global mission efforts. Many early Pentecostal congregations were multi-ethnic and multiracial communities that included immigrants who were often instrumental in spreading the Pentecostal messages to their home countries and beyond.

72. Today, both church families find their concepts of God’s time being challenged. After the first generation, Pentecostals began to navigate the tension between their belief in the imminent second coming, the biblical command to evangelize the world, and their willingness to join society with biblical convictions. With a firm belief in the “Blessed Hope,” Pentecostals engage increasingly in holistic
missions, from building schools, colleges, rescue shelters, and hospitals, to establishing ministries that serve and empower people on the margins of society as Christ rebuilds new lives. The notion of intensifying crises throughout the world have led the Reformed to a rediscovery of the apocalyptic worldview of the New Testament. The Accra Confession states that we “live in a scandalous world that denies God’s call to life for all” (§7). As increasing economic inequality demonstrates, economic systems defended and protected by political and military might, are matters of life or death. The confession therefore responds with a sense of eschatological urgency and rejects any claim of economic, political, and military power which subverts God’s sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God’s just rule (§19).

73. Eschatology attempts to describe the points of continuity and discontinuity between the present and the future. Jürgen Moltmann has used the Latin term *futurum* to describe the future that develops out of the dynamics of the present, whereas *adventum* refers to that which is completely new and breaks into the present from the future. For Christians, the completely new thing that God has done is to raise Jesus from the dead. The surprise of Easter is that God raised not just any man, but this Jesus, condemned and crucified by the imperial power of Rome. The risen Christ, as the first fruit of the new creation, comes to us from the future that God has for all of creation (I Corinthians 15:20).

74. The surprise of Easter is followed by the surprise of Pentecost, when the disciples spoke in tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:4), and people from many places and cultures heard the manifold deeds of God preached in their own languages (Acts 2:11). This inbreaking of God’s Spirit created a new community that broke bread together and shared all things in common (Acts 2:42-45). All participants in the dialogue agree that the Holy Spirit was sent to empower the Church to witness to Christ as they go to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). We are called into mission by God, and commissioned by the risen Christ, to preach the “Good News” of God’s salvation to all nations by the power of the Spirit.

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75. We recognize that, at times, eschatological theories have played an important role in our respective traditions. However, Jesus reminded his followers that only the Father knows the day and hour of his return (Matthew 24:36). Our dialogue stressed our need for an eschatological vision that shapes how we are to live out God’s mission in the world today as we await Christ’s coming. Like the first Christians, we are asking how we should live in a world filled with uncertainty and missed expectations. We are called both to lead lives of personal holiness and to challenge both personal and corporate sin as we wait for the new heavens and the new earth (2 Peter 3:8-13), striving to be light and salt in the world (Matthew 5:13-14). In Christ, we are already part of the new creation that God is bringing about (2 Corinthians 5:17).

76. Our traditions have understood the relationship between eschatology, God’s judgment and mission in different ways. The Church is called to remain faithful to the end and to share the “Good News” of God’s salvation through Christ with all who will hear. Thus, Pentecostal mission efforts have focused mainly on evangelism even as they have pointed to the return of Christ. Pentecostals understand that as they follow Christ, they are to take note of their lives, measuring them by the expectations that God has revealed in Scripture. In this way, they walk daily along a path of self-discernment and judgment, so as not to live and act in a manner unworthy of their calling (Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:27; 1 Corinthians 11:27). At altar calls and during times of self-examination before communion, Pentecostals repent, knowing that Christ “who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Furthermore, they understand that Christ condemns all corporate sins and systemic evil (Colossians 2:8-15). As a result, they also remind us of the final judgment and the separation that will occur when Christ returns (Matthew 7:21-23, 25:31-46; Luke 13:22-30).

77. Reformed churches have emphasized that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The focus for Reformed Christians is on the judgment that has already taken place on the cross of Jesus, God’s “no” to human endeavors. In the resurrection of Jesus, God’s new life breaks into the world. In the expectation of the second coming, we anticipate the triumph of God’s justice as we engage in mission. Every move toward justice is an inbreaking of God’s life, a foretaste of God’s just Kingdom that will come in fullness when Christ returns. Thus, a commitment to justice is at the
heart of a Reformed understanding of mission. In spite of our differences in emphasis, together we look for the triumph of God’s justice.

78. As followers of Christ, we share one hope. We pray together to God, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The Kingdom of God has come near in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through Christ, we have been reconciled to God and are now ambassadors of reconciliation and agents of healing, inviting others to share our hope in Christ as we work for justice. As in Jesus’s ministry, we look for signs of God’s Kingdom wherever the sick are healed, captives are freed (Luke 11:12), and the “Good News” is preached to the poor (Luke 4:18-19). With joy and thanksgiving, we participate in God’s mission, knowing that our efforts alone will not bring the Kingdom of God to fruition. We trust in God’s promises and his trust opens us up to be surprised by God as we wait with patience for that which we cannot yet see (Romans 8:25; 1 Corinthians 13:12-13).

79. God is faithful! Christ is coming! To live eschatologically is to celebrate God’s new creation of which we are a part. As ambassadors of God’s future, we work ceaselessly for transformation in our confidence that God’s justice will triumph. We invite others to place their trust in Jesus and to live their lives in service to God’s coming Kingdom to participate with us in fulfilling our call to the missio Dei.

V. Where Do We Go from Here?

Commitments on the Way Ahead

80. The Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 brought together Protestant and Anglican ecumenists, theologians, and missionaries from much of the world to review the current state of mission and the Church and to plan for the twentieth century. One of their significant emphases was their call for unity in mission. While Pentecostals were not present in that conference, we who participated in this round of dialogue believe that our respective Church families would do well to follow the hope of those conference participants, and work together as mission-oriented churches, wherever possible. All Christian ecclesial families have learned much from this important missionary conference, lessons that may be used as we work together to spread the “Good News.”
81. As Pentecostal and Reformed brothers and sisters, who have come to know and respect one another, together, we commit ourselves:

- To encourage and promote dialogue among Reformed and Pentecostal Christians in different contexts.
- To follow the Holy Spirit in embracing God’s mission as God gives it to us, and not expect the Spirit to follow us, or our ideas.
- To learn from others regarding what the Holy Spirit is doing among them, in order to obtain a more holistic understanding of mission.
- To discern the work of the Holy Spirit together, within the context of the broader Church (1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 John 4:1-6) in order to discover where God is leading us in accord with the Divine mission.
- To discern and study issues surrounding injustice and the exercise of power, in order to distinguish more clearly between the authority or power that originates with God, and the claims to power that human beings sometimes make, especially when they abuse power in the name of God.
- To be more faithful to God in our engagement in mission for transformation as both Church families agree that the way we understand justification and justice, and holistic salvation point in the same direction.
- To participate together in a Holy Spirit related mission that relies upon:
  1) Relationship building. We are only one Church if we are consciously in relationship with each other;
  2) Integrity in discipleship (being one in Christ; as a spiritual practice as well as in submitting to the teachings of Christ);
  3) Serving one another and others through God-given gifting, our histories (experiences) and common witness/action.

**Opportunities for Further Agreement**

82. While the time that the dialogue teams spent together in this round of discussions allowed them to address a number of important issues related to the subject of mission, we are well aware that we have only scratched the surface. There are many issues which we believe would offer rich and worthy opportunities for further agreement. We
note, for example, the following four items that emerged from our discussions, but which were beyond the present scope of our dialogue.

- God’s sovereign rule over history.
- The discernment of manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the public square.
- Issues of justice, especially the points where it is more important to obey God rather than any human authority.
- The vision of society, religious freedom, and fundamental values.

83. We agree that while we did not address these issues substantially in this document, at times only mentioning them, we believe that had these issues been discussed, they could make a substantial contribution to our understanding in future conversations between our Church families or in discussions that might take place at local, regional, national, or global levels.

Thanksgiving

84. During our final year together, Professor Teresa “Tess” Chai—who contributed substantially throughout these years, presenting a paper that helped to set the stage for our initial discussions, and offering occasional devotionals, wisdom, and humour—passed away. We wish to thank God for Tess’ faithfulness among us and commend her to God’s care.

85. We also wish to glorify and to proclaim our praise to Christ Jesus, who has called us together to work on this project. As we spent time together in prayer, Bible study, and discussion, we enjoyed a level of fellowship that we had not anticipated. As we reflected theologically on our subject, we found much more in common than we had expected. Even where we disagreed with how the other understood things, we enjoyed a level of respect that we did not foresee. We believe that these experiences were gifts that God gave to us as we worked to follow his leading. Our prayer is that the Lord will now quicken the hearts of our readers, as they join us in following the mission to which he has called all of us.
APPENDIX

Pentecostal Participants

Rev. Dr. Teresa Chai, 2014^p-2015, 2017-2018 (Malaysia/Philippines)
Rev. Dr. Shane Clifton, 2017^p (Australia)
Bishop Dr. David Daniels, 2016-2020 (USA)
Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Grey, 2014-2018, 2020 (Australia)
Rev. Dr. Harold D. Hunter, 2014-2017 (USA)
Rev. Dr. Van Johnson, 2018^p (Canada)
Rev. Dr. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, 2015^p (Finland/USA)
Rev. Dr. Wonsuk Ma, 2016^p (South Korea/USA)
Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss, 2014^p-2020 (Switzerland)
Rev. Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., (Co-chair) 2014-2020 (USA)
Dr. Olga Zaprometova, 2014, 2016-2017, 2019 (Russia)

Reformed Participants

Rev. Dr. Carmelo Alvarez, 2014, 2016 (Puerto Rico)
Rev. Dr. Dario Barolin, 2016 (Argentina)
Rev. Fundiswa Kobo (WCRC Intern), 2014^p (South Africa)
Rev. Viktória Kóczián, 2014 (Hungary)
Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing, (WCRC Staff) 2017-2020
Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, 2015^p-2020 (Ghana)
Rev. Dr. Bas Plaisier, 2014-2019 (Netherlands)
Rev. Dr. Anna Quaas, 2014 (Germany)
Rev. Dr. Douwe Visser (WCRC Staff), 2014^p-2015 (Netherlands)

^p Presented the position paper on behalf of their team in that year.

The process for this round of dialogue began with papers that were presented and discussed each year from 2014-2018. In August 2019, Karla Koll and Gabriella Rácsok, representing the Reformed team, and Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. and Jean-Daniel Plüss, representing the Pentecostals, met to develop a preliminary draft for the third round of the dialogue. In October 2019, all participants met to discuss the draft, make amendments, and determine that another drafting session was necessary. To that end, Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., Jean-Daniel Plüss, and David D. Daniels met in Hannover, Germany, for the Pentecostals with Karla Koll, Setri Nyomi, and Hanns Lessing. They revised the draft, and in March
2020, sent it to both teams for final review before making final edits and publishing it.

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A Brief Look at the Activity of the Holy Spirit and the History of the Assemblies of God in Vietnam

by Giang Son

Introduction

The country of Vietnam and its people have without doubt made their mark on history and a name for themselves on the world stage. From Chinese rule to French colonization to Japanese occupation during WWII to reunification of the North and South under communism in 1975, the Vietnamese people have proven their resilience and ability to preserve their cultural heritage. However, less well known is the activity of the Spirit of God in Vietnam, especially over the past century. Despite intense persecution from family and government, as well as unrelenting opposition from the kingdom of darkness, the Holy Spirit has used the people’s near unbreakable spirit and tenacity to build the Church and advance God’s Kingdom throughout the nation.

In this paper, we will look at how the Spirit of God has worked powerfully in bringing redemption, deliverance, and healing throughout Vietnam as the Gospel has been preached and the Church established. First, we will look at how the Spirit used the earliest Catholic and Protestant missionaries to drive back darkness and plant seeds of the Gospel, as well as the revivals he sent that have helped form, prepare, and sustain the Church. Next, we will look at the formation of the Assemblies of God and how the war involving Vietnam and America affected the Church after 1975. Lastly, we will explore how, in 1989, the Spirit blew upon the embers of spiritually desperate believers and caused the Vietnamese Assemblies of God (VAOG) to be fanned into flame once again and how he has used the VAOG over the past twenty-five years.

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1Giang Son is used as a pseudonym
Early Years of Catholic Missionary Work (1533-1900)

The earliest record of any gospel presentation in Vietnam dates back to 1533, when a Christian named I Ni Khu attempted to preach in several villages along the nation’s northern coast. According to Phan, “I Ni Khu was probably a Christian pastor who was sailing from Malacca to Macao along the coast of Vietnam and decided to enter the country to preach the Gospel.” The first convert “could have been Do Hung Vien, the son of a court official by the name of Do Bieu, under King Le Anh Ton (1556-73).”

From 1533 to 1624, a splattering of missionaries attempted to establish a work in the north and central parts of the country, but very little resulted from their efforts. However, in 1624, six Jesuit Catholic missionaries landed in Cau Han (present day Da Nang) and successfully established an ongoing work in the area. In that group was Alexander de Rhodes, who had a deep desire to preach the Gospel and see the Church established. He declared,

My sole ambition in my travels has been the glory of my good Captain Jesus Christ and the profit of the souls He conquers . . . Through God’s mercy, I sought no other pearls than those Jesus Christ glories to set in His diadem . . . no other amusement beyond giving joy to the angels by converting not a few sinners.

Within twenty-five years of de Rhodes’s arrival in Vietnam, believers numbered in the hundreds of thousands. According to Reimer, their success was marked by these key factors:

De Rhodes’ journal and other writings make clear that the spiritual power of the priests in working miracles, healings, and exorcisms played a major part in this growth. It also attracted local shamans and Buddhist monks, who were confronted by

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5Sunquist, 876.
6Phan, 45.
God’s superior power. . . . These European priests also believed that their [teachings] had been invested with divine power to perform miracles, restore sight, and even raise the dead!9

From 1624 until the early 1900s the Catholic church grew but also encountered great persecution. Conservative numbers suggest that at least 130,000 believers were martyred for their faith during the 1800s. Some were strangled, drowned, sawn in two, hacked to death a limb at a time and trampled to death by elephants.10

First Protestant Missionaries and Early Years of the Protestant church (1900-1945)

Whether by neglect, difficulty of access, a lack of missionary burden, or mere ignorance of need, the Protestant missionaries did not make their way to Vietnam until nearly 1,900 years after Jesus has given the Great Commission and nearly 300 years after the Catholic missionaries established their first work in the nation. In 1887 A.B. Simpson, a Canadian who was to found the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), in his magazine Word, Work, and World, wrote,

The southeastern peninsula of Asia has been much neglected. The great kingdom of Annam should be occupied for Christ. Why should it not be one of the first fields for a new aggression by the people of God? Finally in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the first protestant missionaries set foot on Vietnamese soil.11

Although Protestant missionaries had visited Vietnam in 1897, it wasn’t until 1911 that the first ones took up permanent residence there. During their early years, God confirmed his word with many conversions plus signs following the preaching of the Word. Thus, within that first decade of missionary activity, “They had seen revival. . . . especially right after World War I when the church doubled itself each year . . . God confirmed their ministry with signs and wonders and many converts.”12

One of the pioneer missionaries was E. F. Irwin. In his book, With Christ in Indo-China, he often referenced the power of God during those early years:

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9Ibid.
11Ibid., 25.
They [the Vietnamese people] had believed in demons; they still believed in them, but they learned that Jesus had conquered Satan... They expected interpositions of divine power on their behalf, and they received them. Miracles similar to those recorded in the book of Acts were enacted before our eyes, not because of the faith of the missionaries, but because of the faith of these ‘babes in Christ’ who expected from their newly found Savior greater power than they had thought belonged to their old enemy the devil. The child of one of the students of the Bible school at Tourane was taken sick. He was unconscious and apparently dead. The father called the Vietnamese pastor, who was led to kneel at the bedside and ask God to raise him up. In a few minutes the boy say (sic) up. Within a couple of hours he was playing outside with the other children. Such answers to prayer were common in the church.13

From 1925-1932, many people were saved and churches planted throughout central and southern Vietnam. Reimer notes that,

... Scores of converts were also attracted to the Christian way because they witnessed the power of Christ in healing diseases. They found in Christianity a release from the depressing and binding fears of the animistic beliefs. The exorcism of demons and spirits was common... People were delivered from opium addictions. Sorcerers were converted and became evangelists. It was a New Testament kind of movement in many respects.14

In 1938, as a result of two years of prayer meetings by a group of students at the Bible School in Da Nang, a great revival broke out among the churches through the ministry of a Chinese Evangelist named John Sung.15 When Sung began preaching in Vietnam, the people did not know what to think of his demonstrative and exuberant style. However, as Reimer notes,

The Holy Spirit broke through! The result was an outpouring of God’s power to purify and renew His people. Leaders and lay people alike experienced deep conviction of sin... The powerful preaching of Dr. Sung also burned residual animistic

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14Reimer, Reg, 33.
15Steinkamp, Orrel N., 15.
beliefs and practices out of the lives of believers. Missionaries reported that they had never seen such power.\textsuperscript{16}

It seems that via this great revival, God was preparing his people for the extremely dark decade that lay ahead; for just two years later, the Japanese would invade Vietnam and soon make a bold advance on Hanoi. That invasion plus World War II, a great famine, and increased persecution made the 1940s incredibly dark days for the Church.\textsuperscript{17} Over that time, many missionaries in the northern part of the country had to make a difficult decision between their work and their families’ well-being. Some stayed, but many left.\textsuperscript{18}

Not only did the Church face difficulties from 1940 through 1945 due to heavy-handed Japanese rule, but as soon as they were defeated, the French returned, which led to another conflict in northern Vietnam, this time between France and Ho Chi Minh’s communist troops. That war ended in the defeat of the French at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Those eight-plus years left the Protestant church battered and bruised and caused a major division in the body of Christ due to the communist curtain that would separate the north from the south for the next several decades.\textsuperscript{19}

However, despite the significant trials for the Church during this time, God continued to stir his people with the fires of revival. For instance, in March 1950, God used Rev. H. E. Nelson to deliver a powerful, Spirit-filled message at an annual conference in Da Nang. After his sermon, the church building was filled with people weeping and confessing of sins.\textsuperscript{20} Duong describes the outcome of this revival thusly: “Revived children became God’s vessels to reach their backslidden parents, and many young people devoted their lives to full-time service.”\textsuperscript{21} In 1951, a spirit of revival continually consumed the national evangelical church of Vietnam, the pastors again becoming passionately evangelistic after many years of spiritual dryness. As a result, the first class of students graduating from the Bible School in Da Nang entered the ministry and brought the first revivals to the tribal people.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{16}Reimer, Reg, 33.
\textsuperscript{17}Steinkamp, Orrel N., 16.
\textsuperscript{19}Reimer, Reg, 38.
\textsuperscript{20}Orr, Edwin J. \textit{Evangelical Awakenings in Eastern Asia}. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 140.
\textsuperscript{21}Duong, Mary. “History of Revivals In Vietnam.” (An unpublished research paper by the daughter of the current VAOG general superintendent), 4.
\textsuperscript{22}Duong, 5.
Although South Vietnam would enjoy a five-year period of relative peace, another war was in the making that would have an unfathomable impact on the nation and its Christians. In 1962, Ho Chi Minh and his troops began their southward march in an attempt to ‘unify’ all of Vietnam under the communist government he had established in North Vietnam in 1945. During this time, many missionaries were killed by the Viet Cong and many others taken captive. Steinkamp notes that “Vietnamese Christians and pastors suffered, but always their resilient faith bounced back. Their exploits for God amid the ravages of war would fill volumes.”

Season of Growth, Revival, and Growing Persecution (1962-1975)

As the war between the North and South continued to escalate and the communist troops advanced southward, God once again visited his Church with a powerful move of the Holy Spirit. It began in the mid 1960s as a group of mostly C&MA missionaries sought God for personal renewal in their lives. As the Spirit moved among them, he also ‘broke out’ among the students at the C&MA Bible School in Nha Trang during a class on the History of Revival being taught by Orrel Steinkamp:

As the Christians repented, confessed their sins and got right with God, the Holy Spirit fell anew and afresh on the believers. This visitation of the Spirit empowered the believers “to be witnesses” just as Jesus had told his disciples to wait until they would “be baptized with the Holy Spirit” who would give them the power to be witnesses. Not only were the Christians in Vietnam empowered to be witnesses, they were also given many gifts that demonstrated the indwelling power of the Spirit, gifts of tongues, of healing, of prophesy, of evangelism, of helps, of apostleship, of teaching, and of many more signs and wonders. Living in the Christian community in Vietnam in those days was like walking through the pages of the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

Mirroring that which occurred in 1938, the revival sent to the Vietnamese church in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a gracious act of God to ready his people for the dark days of persecution that would

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23Steinkamp, Orrel N. 16.
24Ibid, 17.
25Reimer, Reg. 50.
26Hall, Penelope, “Stories from the Revival In Vietnam.” An unpublished paper the author gave me in 2014.
A Brief Look at the Activity of the Holy Spirit and the History of the Assemblies of God in Vietnam

come with the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. Says Stienkamp, “I always felt it [the revival of the early 70s] was a preparation for the church just prior to the difficult days of trial after the war of reunification. I, with other missionaries, was evacuated from Vietnam. But the Christians suffered greatly.”

Starting in Nha Trang, the revival quickly spread throughout the central highlands, up to Da Nang, and down to Saigon, the Church being set on fire by the Holy Spirit to live holy lives and preach the Gospel with power and authority.


It was during the time of this revival, which had begun among the C&MA missionaries and Bible School students, that God saw fit for the Assemblies of God in Vietnam to be brought forth. As has been the case with authentic Spirit-birthed revivals throughout church history, this one was likewise marked by a renewed sense of God’s holiness, repentance from sin, evangelistic fervor, and various Pentecostal manifestations of the Spirit. These manifestations included divine healing, casting out evil spirits, prophetic utterance, words of knowledge, and speaking in tongues.

Although the revival was initiated by hungry believers within the C&MA fellowship, the theological and organizational position of the Vietnamese C&MA church would not allow for a sustained movement of God punctuated by Pentecostal manifestations and workings of the Spirit. Thus, in God’s divine plan for the Full-Gospel message to go forth with power, he was not willing for the fire of this revival to die out. In his providence, God called to Vietnam a number of Spirit-filled Assemblies of God missionaries who would be instrumental in stoking that fire and establishing a beachhead for Pentecostal ministry. Through these missionaries, the revival would embrace the Pentecostal power harnessed into a Book of Acts-type of evangelism and church planting. As a result, the Assemblies of God was the first Pentecostal/Full-Gospel fellowship to officially be established in the nation.

Around 1969, Dr. John Hurston, who at that time was serving as a U.S. Assemblies of God missionary in South Korea, became increasingly burdened for Vietnam. Therefore, he made an exploratory trip to Saigon to seek permission from the South Vietnamese government to establish a mission that would be based in the city. Between Hurston’s

28 Reimer, 69.
29 Hurst, Wesley. Vietnam Update: An interview with John Hurston in the early 70s. (Article taken from the AGWM archive files on Vietnam).
exploratory trip in 1969 and his return in 1972 as a resident missionary to South Vietnam, another Assemblies of God couple—Don Warren and his wife—(although not officially appointed missionaries) began relief work among orphans and refugees in Vung Tau:

According to the presentation of Paul Ai, the Vietnamese Assemblies of God (AG) or the Pentecostal church was first started through the relief ministry of Don Warren and his wife in 1970. Together with Cao Than Phat who was an elder of [the] Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA), they started an orphanage. . . . Cao Tan Phat was later baptized in the Spirit. The group grew so fast that they themselves could not meet all the needs of the ministry.30

As a result of what God began doing through the orphanage work and the surrounding ministry in Vung Tau, the Warrens sent a request to the U.S.-based Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions (AG DFM) asking for additional workers. Between 1971 and 1974, the AG DFM responded by sending John and Maxine Hurston, Glen Stafford, Aaron and Linda Rothganger, and Robert and Ginny Tripp.31 The Hurstons, who led this missionary effort, were the first official Assemblies of God missionaries commissioned to live in Vietnam.32

Within three short years, as the fire of the Spirit continued to ignite the hearts of believers for the sake of the Gospel and God’s power was being manifested through salvation, deliverance, healing, and baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Assemblies of God was given a license to operate as an official religious entity in Vietnam:

On June 23rd, 1973, The Interior Department of the then Saigon Government issued License #326/BNV/KS 14b signed by Deputy Minister Le Cong Chat, permitting the AG/VN to start operation, then under Rev. Prof. and Dr. John Hurston as The First Superintendent General.33

Just two months after that official licensing, the first Vietnamese Assemblies of God church was opened in Vung Tau. “On August 30,
1973, our first Assemblies of God church was organized and set in order with 67 charter members—forty of those being Spirit-filled. . . Brother Cao Tan Phat was elected as pastor along with four deacons.34

During the next two years, the Vietnamese Assemblies of God (VAOG) began to grow quite rapidly—from a few hundred people, a central office, five churches, and a small Bible School in 197335 to 10,000 adherents and more than 40 churches in 1975.36 According to Ginny Tripp, over that time, powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit were often experienced as the missionaries preached the gospel:

In the summer of 1974 we were having special services at the AG chapel at the base of the mountain outside of Da Lat on the road to Phan Rang, which is the area where we were serving as AG missionaries. The AG had built a school, a clinic and a chapel at that location to help with the relocation of the Ra Glai tribal people. With the chapel packed full of people, during one of the services, a lady came to the front for prayer, and she was literally hemorrhaging like the lady who touched helm of Jesus’ garment and was healed. She was prayed for and God did a total miracle for her and healed her body. As a result of that, the people kept coming up for prayer; first for salvation, then for healing and then the third time to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It was wonderful to see God powerfully working in the hearts and lives of people who had previously not heard the good news.37

During these early years, the VAOG continually experienced the mighty working of the Spirit of God through salvation and signs following the preaching of the Gospel. “Miracles, signs, and wonders were the normal experience in those days, as should be the case with any truly Pentecostal ministry.”38

Season of Purification and Persecution (1975-1988)

On April 30, 1975, when the communist troops captured Saigon “unifying” Vietnam under communism and bringing the war to an end,
most of the religious freedom enjoyed in South Vietnam also came to an end. Soon after, on order from the American Embassy to evacuate, John and Maxine Hurston, who had been the first Assemblies of God missionaries to live in Vietnam, were among the last Americans to leave.39 As the communist government established itself in South Vietnam, by 1976, the newly formed Vietnamese Assemblies of God (plus almost every other religious entity) had its sovereign status revoked and its church properties confiscated.40

At that time, almost all Protestant believers and church organizations, including the VAOG, were forced to come under the Southern Chapter of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN-S), which essentially was the general counsel of the C&MA church. Says brother Dao Van Hoa, an early local church leader and translator for the missionary team, “If the leadership team of the newly formed VAOG had included some Vietnamese senior leaders, rather than being almost exclusively made up of foreign missionaries, we might have had a chance to salvage the VAOG after 1975.”41 Unfortunately, as a result of the forced merger of Protestant denominations, along with a drastic increase of Christian persecution and political oppression, the Assemblies of God and the fires of the Pentecostal revival seemed to be ‘snuffed out.’

During what historians on Vietnam call the “dark decade” (1975-1985), the Church struggled to maintain its focus and fulfill its mission.42 One leader describes his experience during this time:

Immediately after the events of April 30, 1975 many of the young VAOG local church leaders were either arrested or felt forced to flee. At that time I was leading churches in Da Lat and Phan Rang and felt that I needed to go to Saigon to check on the well-being of our young church leaders and see if they were keeping the faith in the absence of the foreign missionaries. Twenty days after arriving in Saigon, I was arrested by the communist officials on the faulty accusation that some of the foreign missionaries had been holding firearms at the AG printing press in Saigon. I spent two months and 18 days in prison and was then sentenced to spend 10 years in a

40Joshua, 316.
41Dao, Van, Information obtained via personal interview by the author of this article, August, 2015.
42Reimer, 75.
A Brief Look at the Activity of the Holy Spirit and the History of the Assemblies of God in Vietnam

reeducation camp, but I must say during my years in the reeducation camp God blessed me greatly.⁴³

Although many other Christians in Vietnam could tell many similar stories of the hardships that they faced, nevertheless even in these incredibly dark years, God faithfully graced his people with a touch from Heaven, which Reimer summarizes as follows:

In the early 1980s, following a time of sifting and purification, God visited some churches in Saigon with unanticipated blessing and revival . . . God used many means, including children, to convict Christians and their leaders of their lack of faith and courage . . .⁴⁴

During this unexpected revival among those churches in Saigon and various ethnic minority believers, God showed his power through miracles of healing and deliverance from evil Spirits.⁴⁵

Then in 1988, some thirteen long years after the fall of South Vietnam and dismantling of the VAOG, God once again visited his people with a fresh outpouring of the Spirit as a result of a group of C&MA pastors (many of whom had been part of other denominations before the forced merger) fasted and prayed for ten days. Recalls one church leader concerning that move of God:

With the desire to have the power of the Holy Spirit, about 100 believers fasted and prayed in Saigon, as Jesus’ disciples did in Jerusalem. In a fantastic way, the Holy Spirit visited the church, poured out his power, and baptized many spiritually thirsty Christians, giving them spiritual gifts for the service of the Lord.⁴⁶ Among those who experienced this outpouring of the Spirit was Tran Dinh Ai [Paul Ai], one of the original members of the Assemblies of God executive committee when it was formed in 1973.⁴⁷

In 1988, during the days of God The Holy Spirit’s visitation to His Church in Vietnam, Pastor Tran Dinh Ai shared with those spiritually touched Christians about [the] baptism of The Holy Spirit, explaining and guiding them into the Pentecostal Faith

⁴³Dao, Van. Interview.
⁴⁴Reimer, 60.
⁴⁵Ibid.
⁴⁶Duong, 6.
⁴⁷Ngo Trung Can, 5.
Everybody enjoyed receiving what had been promised in Acts 1:5 by Our Savior Lord.48

As a result of this outpouring, many of those who experienced this touch of the Holy Spirit were put on probation then expelled from the ECVN-S for “tolerating the practice of speaking in tongues” 49 and other Pentecostal manifestations. Ngo Trung Can continues:

In those days of revival, The Holy Spirit baptized believers not only received the gift of praying in new tongues but also put into practice other granted gifts [such] as: to prophesy, to perform healing miracles, and to expel evil spirits. They boldly went out to remote and dangerous areas to spread the Full Gospel for salvation of many people. They paid a high sacrificial price for the Lord, in terms of strength and energy, of money and time, and even of their own lives when necessary. Numerous children of God were persecuted and put into jail. However, no matter what happened to them, they still proved faithful and kept on going on the difficult but blessed road The Lord had called them to.50


This re-visitation of the Holy Spirit marked a distinct turning point for the Church in Vietnam, namely for those who had personally experienced the Pentecostal blessing. With more and more people thirsting for revival and being baptized in the Spirit, together with many having been expelled from the C&MA church, the need for re-organization among the Spirit-baptized believers quickly became apparent:

This was the turning point for the explosion of the Pentecostal movement in Vietnam. During that time, God used Tran Dinh Paul Ai, an AG minister who also served as General Secretary of AG before 1975 and many other pastors to restart the Assemblies of God of Vietnam.51

48Ibid.
49Reimer, 70.
50Ngo Trung Can, 5.
51Joshua, 318.
Thus in 1989, a Vietnamese Assemblies of God General Council meeting was held and an executive committee elected, with previous general secretary Tran Dinh Paul Ai chosen as general superintendent (garnering 95% of the vote) and Duong Thanh Lam as assistant superintendent.52

Additionally, two years before, following four years of negotiations with the Vietnamese government and twelve years absence from the nation, the U.S. Assemblies of God Department of Foreign Missions (DFM) was granted permission to send a delegation, led by Robert Houlihan, to discuss with government officials the possibility of the Assemblies of God re-entering Vietnam for the purpose of relief work.53

Finally in 1991, Ron Maddux, DFM’s area director for Peninsular Asia) received the first visa issued to an AG missionary since the end of the war.54 By the next year, through various forms of relief work (including drug rehabilitation programs and orphanages), Assemblies of God missionaries were able to re-enter the nation for the purpose of doing relief work.55 And by 1994, there were teams of AG missionaries living in both the northern and southern parts of the country.56

On January 16, 1997, at VAOG’s General Council meeting, Paul Ai joyously reported that this fledgling group of Spirit-filled believers had grown from 100 spiritually hungry believers (including about twenty pastors) in 1988 to a movement of 180 churches57 with around 18,000 adherents.58 Also at this meeting, general superintendent Ai stepped down and Duong Thanh Lam was elected to the position.59 (Rev. Duong continues to serve as VAOG’s general superintendent.)

New Season and New Leadership for the Assemblies of God
(1997-2019)

Since 1997, the Assemblies of God in Vietnam has continued to grow despite periods of intense persecution and other major setbacks. According to an article by general superintendent Duong appearing on

52 Ibid.
53 Pentecostal Evangel, February 28, 1988, pg 24 (Article taken from the AGWM archive files on Vietnam).
54 Pentecostal Evangel, November 24, 1991 (Article taken from the AGWM archive files on Vietnam).
55 Pentecostal Evangel, November 29, 1992 (Article taken from the AGWM archive files on Vietnam).
56 Pentecostal Evangel, April, 5 1998. pg 11 (Article taken from the AGWM archive files on Vietnam).
57 Ngo Trung Can, 6.
59 Ngo Trung Can, 8.
the VAOG’s official website, following much prayer and fasting and many years of waiting, on October 19, 2009, the VAOG received a one-year probationary permit from the Vietnamese government. After successfully completing the requirements of that one-year temporary license, on October 20, 2010, it held its first General Council in Ho Chi Minh City as a semi-legal religious entity in post-1975 Vietnam.

Although the 2010 registration marked a significant step forward for the Vietnamese Assemblies of God, it proved to be only a partial registration. It wouldn’t be until nine years later that the government’s Department of Religious Affairs would officially grant the VAOG full permission to operate as a legal entity in Vietnam in full view of the government. According to the Department’s news outlet, “The Assemblies of God of Vietnam held, on October 23, 2019, a solemn ceremony to receive the certificate recognizing its legal entity by the Vietnam government.”

Communicating his excitement and gratitude in an email to various friends of the Vietnamese AG, general superintendent Duong wrote,

After 30 years existing and working as an unrecognized denomination, and after 10 years of operating with a partial recognition, we are now being recognized as an official religious organization. Praise the Lord! This is a wide open door that allows us to have church buildings, establish Bible schools, and other activities as an officially organized entity.

In an recent interview, he shared that the Vietnamese Assemblies of God fellowship now had nearly 300 churches and over 34,000 adherents throughout the nation—about 17,100 in the south, 6,600 in the central highlands, 800 in the central region, and about 9,600 in the north. He also reported that about 40% of VAOG adherents come from ethnic minorities groups and that, after conversion, over 90% of all Assemblies of God believers had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, as was the norm for the early church.

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63 Duong, Thanh Lam. Email received by the author of this paper in November 2019.
64 Duong, Thanh Lam. Information given to the author of this paper in November 2014.
65 Duong, interview.
Vietnamese Assemblies of God and Bible School Training

In the early 1970s, one of the priorities of the first AG missionary team was to establish a Bible School for the training of pastors and church leaders. Directed by Rev. Glen Stafford, from 1973 until 1975, the VAOC had a Bible School in Vung Tau. In addition, it also carried out an extensive training program through International Correspondence Institute (ICI). Under direction of AG missionary Aaron Rothganger, by June 1974, the ICI program had enrolled over 22,000 students.

As a result of the legal status achieved by VAOG in 2009, the General Council was able to open a resident Bible School in Ho Chi Minh City that same year. Superintendent Duong and the executive committee firmly believe that this School is key to the future of the Assemblies of God of Vietnam. On June 9, 2015, the School celebrated its second graduating class and marked the end of its sixth year of operations. Over that time, it had enrolled eighty students and celebrated fifty-two graduates from its two- and four-year programs.

In conjunction with the 30th anniversary celebration, mentioned above, on October 25th 2019, the VAG celebrated 10 years of the operation of the resident Bible School. It was a grand celebration where friends and partners of the school along with most of the alumni as well as current students came together to celebrate all that God has done through the school in its first decade of operation. Superintendent Duong, who also served as the school’s director for the first ten years, announced that during the first decade of operation the school had seen about 150 students trained and that an overwhelming majority of the graduates have gone into ministry. The celebration was punctuated with praise, worship and joyous celebration, as well as vision casting for the future. The celebration concluded with superintendent Duong announcing that Miss Huyen (Bee) Nguyen would assume the position of school director, stating that he believed that God had called her to move the school into the next season of training and equipping Vietnamese men and women for Kingdom work. The VAOG also continues to maintain several continuing education programs, carried out in various locations throughout the country, for pastors and church leaders who are unable to attend the resident Bible School.

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66Silas Ya, Personal interview in 2015 with one of the Vietnamese interpreters who worked with the AG missionary team in the early 1970s.
68Duong, Thanh Lam. Email to author in April 2015.
69Duong, Thanh Lam. Information emailed from the superintendent’s office to the author of this paper.
Vietnamese Assemblies of God and Humanitarian Involvement

In addition to church planting, evangelism, Bible School training, and leadership development, the Assemblies of God of Vietnam has continued to make humanitarian relief a priority. Throughout the country, there are endless opportunities for the Church to extend a hand in the name of the Lord. God has blessed and used these humanitarian efforts from the very beginning. As already mentioned, the Assemblies of God’s very first activity back in 1970 (headed up by the Warrens) centered on addressing the needs of the forgotten and neglected.

From 1970 to 1975, the VAOG gained considerable recognition from the South Vietnam government by caring for orphans, helping refugees, and establishing Teen Challenge drug rehabilitation programs. In the early days of AG missions work during the war, the missionaries recognized that addressing felt needs was one of the major areas where the Church needed to help. In 1971, U.S. missionary John Hurston stated, “Although our mission is not just to give material relief, I wouldn't want to go to Vietnam if I couldn't extend to them a helping hand in their desperate situation.”

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Vietnam finally began to open back up to western activity in the country, humanitarian relief was again the door that God used to bring AG resident missionaries back into Vietnam. Said Bob Eberling, one of the first such missionaries to re-enter northern Vietnam after the war, “Government restrictions prevent us from preaching and sharing our faith openly, but we share God’s love by caring for children and helping meet peoples’ needs.”

By partnering with numerous NGOs and other entities, the Vietnamese Assemblies of God continues to address various humanitarian needs throughout the country. According to superintendent Duong, the VAOG is still working with a number of government agencies to provide medical equipment, wheelchairs, rice, basic housing, and emergency relief during natural disasters.

In cooperation with the VAOG, Assemblies of God missionaries from numerous countries, including the U.S, France, New Zealand, and Australia, remain involved in various social and humanitarian relief and development projects throughout the country. These projects range from

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71Ibid.
73Duong, Thanh Lam. Information given to this paper’s author by superintendent Duong in November 2014.
long-term livelihood development initiatives to human trafficking rescue and rehabilitation efforts for women to water purification and educational assistance for remote tribal people.

By helping to address these and other social and humanitarian needs, the VAOG is building bridges between the Church and unreached people, as well as between the Church and the government. Through the collective efforts of these projects by missionaries and the VAOG, felt needs are being addressed and relationships of trust established between the Church and the communist government, who has long been skeptical of the Protestant churches.

Conclusion

It would seem that, in light of the persecution that ensued in the wake of establishment of the communist government, especially after the “reunification” in 1975 and continuing up to this day, the Vietnamese Church would have shriveled and died. However, the Gospel is like a seed, and its fruit is the church. Thus, when buried in persecution, that seed doesn’t die. Instead, its power is released, and it springs forth with unrestrainable life.

In 1975, at the beginning of country-wide communist rule, there were about 160,000 evangelical believers in Vietnam. But despite four decades of opposition and persecution, today, according to the Vietnamese Census Bureau, there are about 1.4 million evangelical believers in Vietnam—a more than 900% increase.\(^\text{74}\) To God be the glory! Furthermore, according to secret government documents obtained by the Center For Religious Freedom, Vietnamese government officials have been quoted as saying about the Christian church, “The more we press, the faster it spreads and grows.”\(^\text{75}\)

Through the faithful labor of selfless, Spirit-filled Vietnamese pastors and believers as well as foreign missionaries, God is continuing to write the story of revival, redemption, and transformation throughout the nation. And although still riddled with political challenges from the communist government,\(^\text{76}\) cultural difficulties, and deep-seated strongholds of spiritual darkness, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the ripe fields of Vietnam will continue to be harvested and the fire of revival will continue to burn until all have heard the saving message of Jesus Christ.

\(^\text{74}\)Reimer, 1.
\(^\text{75}\)Ibid, 107.
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Leave a Legacy: Increasing Missionary Longevity
Russ Turney

Pentecostal Pioneer: The Life and Legacy of Rudy Esperanza in the Early Years of the Assemblies of God in the Philippines
Dynnice Rosanny D. Engcoy

The Old Testament in Theology and Teaching: Essays in Honor of Kay Fountain
Editors: Teresa Chai and Dave Johnson

Understanding the Iglesia ni Cristo: What They Really Believe and How They Can Be Reached
Anne C. Harper
Exploring Biblical Theology as a Contextualization Method in Countries with a Semi-Established National Church

by Jason Morris

Introduction and Thesis

The Protestant Church of Vietnam, just over 100 years old (Austin, Grey, and Lewis 2019, 153) exists primarily as the product of God’s Spirit working through various dedicated missionaries from North America, Europe, and Asia. Unfortunately, the nascent missiology of these missionaries failed to consider the issue of contextualization. They believed that all the local community needed to establish and grow the church was a translation of the gospel message and some basic creedal works in Vietnamese. The theology of the works proved sound, but the philosophical construct and hermeneutical methodology did not fit the Vietnamese thought process. The Confucian-influenced educational mindset of Vietnam, which strongly discourages questioning teachers, buttressed the transfer of western theological ideas and approaches. Consequently, Vietnamese theologians have developed little credible theological work from their own cultural perspective and understanding of Scripture. In addition, the dominance of this western theological perspective has crippled the church in its mandate to relate the gospel to its culture in an organic way. This has impeded discipleship, as believers struggle to understand scriptural concepts taught through a western framework.

It seems that in order for the Vietnamese Church to more effectively evangelize and disciple, it needs a contextualized theology that addresses the real-life dimensions of the Vietnamese culture and Church. If the Vietnamese Church embraced a robust biblical theology, it could see more clearly, through its own worldview, how and what God has revealed about himself in Scripture (Mead 2007, 242). Once the Vietnamese Christian community understands biblical themes through its worldview, believers can develop a subset of systematics that will move them closer to a contextualized theology.

Sadly, much of the literature that addresses developing a contextual theology fails to adequately address the theological needs of Vietnam for
two reasons. First, while excellent material exists describing the need for contextualization, locating a tenable method for developing a context-sensitive theology has proven difficult. Second, the material that does provide some methodological insight focuses on helping people groups receiving the gospel for the first time. Vietnam, in contrast, has a 100-year-old Christian community, with denominational Bible schools and pastors, but no clearly defined contextualized theology. The literature remains silent regarding retro-correcting this overly Westernized theology.

I propose that to develop a contextual theology faithful to the global and historic Christian community, and at the same time understandable and applicable to the Vietnamese mindset and context, the Christian Church and Vietnamese theological educators must first look to biblical theology. In this paper, I will (1) make a case for the need for a contextual theology, (2) examine the nature and function of biblical theology and systematic theology and offer some preliminary reflections on their usefulness in cross-cultural contexts, (3) look at an example of contextualized biblical theology from Scripture, and (4) explore some practical implications of using biblical theology as a contextualization method and what that could mean for the local church.

Theology, Contextualization and The Bible

To capture the scope and importance of the topic addressed in this article, clarifying first what is meant by “theology” and “contextualization” as well as why one must do theology in context remains crucial. At the beginning of this process must be a clear understanding of what the Bible is and why its truths must be contextualized. Oftentimes a church’s theology from a particular era becomes “enshrined” as sacred and authoritative—even on par even with the Scriptures themselves. Intercultural missions means a plurality of ethnicities sharing the Christian faith. Consequently, it stands to reason that a multiplicity of theological expressions must exist. As David J. Bosch points out,

a plurality of cultures presupposes a plurality of theologies and therefore, for Third-World churches, a farewell to a Eurocentric approach (cf Fries 1986:760; Waldenfels 1987:227f). The Christian faith must be rethought, reformulated and lived anew in each human culture (Memorandum 1982:465), and this must be done in a vital way, in depth and right to the cultures’ roots (EN 20). (Bosch 2011, 445)
Lest unaware missiological practitioners be guilty of committing theological imperialism, there must be attention given to the development of a contextually nuanced theology in every place where the Holy Spirit is redeeming the lost. This can only happen when one understands that the Bible is the authoritative revelation of God that must be understood and applied to the lives of local people, that makes sense through their worldview lens and communicated in a way that is consistent with their own philosophical framework.

The Bible

In the quest for developing a contextualized theology, the nature and authority of Scripture must remain in high view. “If there is one defining characteristic of evangelical models [of contextualization], it is the normative nature of the Bible (Lausanne 1978) in the contextualization process—the “unchanging word in the changing world” (Espiritu 2001, 280)” (Moreau 2012, 59). This high view of Scripture remains central to the contextualization process, as it provides an authoritative guide for everything done within that process. “God’s word in the form of the Bible in an inspired record of events and truths of divine self-discloser. . . . [it] Speaks with God’s authority directly to the individual” (Horton 2015, 81-82). As the self-revelation of God, Christian leaders remain tasked to understand, contextualize, and communicate the Bible in located theological terms. “Evangelicals see the Bible—rooted in God’s own normative nature (Howell 2001, 31)—as central in all of our theological task” (Moreau 2012, 57). The authoritative message of the Bible is the content that must be understood by the local people and thus necessitates a contextual rendering. Scripture, as God’s Word, becomes the guide, authority and objective for developing a contextual theology (Hesselgrave 1995, 139). The Bible as God’s authoritative self-revelation is intended by God to be the vehicle through which humanity understands God and thus it must be contextualized, not just translated, for that to happen.

Theology

In contrast to God’s self-revelation, the Bible as authoritative and forever settled in the heavens, “theology itself is a human activity and discipline, and thus it is subject to and reflects the characteristics of those who do theology” (Ott and Netland 2006, Kindle: Loc. 179). The Church often accepts and exports the theological reflections of theologians from a past era and particular theological camp as though those reflections remain divinely inspired and forever settled in the heavens, such as
Scripture itself. Missiologists must realize that “All theology is contextual theology, from the creeds of the early church to the modern ‘Four Spiritual Laws’” (Flemming 2005, Kindle: Loc. 3813). Therefore, theology is seen as necessary, but not static, thus requiring ongoing theologizing. Theology functions as the product of reflection upon what God has revealed about himself through Scripture, how he has acted and continues to act in the world today as seen and understood through the cultural and worldview of the theologizer in a particular era. Developing a local theology, one must simultaneously take into consideration the history of the World Christian movement. “One of the fundamental tasks of the subject of intercultural theology/mission studies is to take into account the broad scope of world Christianity” (Wrogemann 2016, 20). If one does not consider the broad scope of world Christianity in the development of a context-sensitive theology, that individual would run the risk of developing a theology neither truly biblical nor orthodox.

Faithful theology should communicate the constant message of Scripture in alternative forms as seen from the perspective of the theologizer (Kraft 2005, 291). This does not mean that the gospel has no central message or objective meaning. As Allan Anderson (2004, 103) quotes from Lesslie Newbigin, “the gospel is not an empty form into which anyone is free to pour his or her own content.” Benno van den Toren (in Cook 2010, 93) affirms that the need to develop local theologies does not mean no “supera cultural core” exists within the Scriptures. Central to this supra cultural message of God’s self-revealed testimony stands the call to allow Jesus to remain the Lord of one’s life and to experience the liberating freedom that comes through placing one’s belief in the one living and true God. While the culture in which the gospel is contextualized colors much of what Christians teach and how they understand following Jesus, the culture cannot define the central claims of the gospel. While culture and worldview impact every expression of the gospel, including the original writing of Scripture, it is not culture that determines the central core of God’s self-revelation. In addition to scriptural and cultural exegesis, developing theology and seeking to remain true to the central message of Scripture requires dependence upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. “Theologizing must be led by the Holy Spirit, who instructs us in the truth. We need also to recognize that the same Holy Spirit at work in us is also at work in the lives of believers in other contexts” (Engen 2016, 75). Theologians and Christian leaders must develop this central core of God’s self-revelation, the message of Scripture, into theological statements that humans can quantify and that provide clarity, guidance, and understanding for the Christian community.
Contextualization

In order to develop this type of locally nuanced theology, faithful to the revealed Word of God and in step with what the historic global Church has understood about God, a process—contextualization—must take place.

Contextualization has to do with how the gospel revealed in Scripture authentically comes to life in each new cultural, social, religious and historical setting. . . . it refers to the dynamic and comprehensive process by which the gospel is incarnated within a concrete historical or cultural situation (Flemming 2005, Kindle: Loc. 49, 114).

Although there are not various truths nor a different revelation of God for each ethnic group, humanity is so enmeshed in their context and bent by their surroundings that “faithful theology must be profoundly situated” (Cook 2010, Kindle: Loc. 250). Contextualization of the gospel and theological concepts, then, not only exists as a good idea, but remains essential to understand, accept, and live out the message in a manner pleasing to God. “The Christian message [and theology] must be proclaimed in the framework of the worldview of the particular people to whom it is addressed, it must emphasize the parts of the message that answer their particular questions and needs, and it must be expressed through the medium of their own cultural gifts” (Anderson 2004, 104). Though opting to use the term “translation” in lieu of “contextualization,” Lamin Sanneh (1989, 36) says:

Translation [contextualization] involves a degree of cultural decentralization—or, at least cultural retrenchment, on the part of the translator [theologizer] . . . translation [contextualization] commits to the bold, radical step that the receiving culture is the decisive destination of God’s salvific promise, and as such has an honored place under “the kindness of God.”

Van den Toren (in Cook 2010, Kindle: Loc. 262) argues that “although the supra-cultural core of the gospel surely exists, one can never explain that core without using the categories and language of a specific culture,” and this is what is meant by “contextualizing” theology:

It is the task of theology, then, to discover what God has said in and through Scripture and to clothe that in a conceptuality
which is native to our own age. Scripture, as its terminus a quo, needs to be de-contextualized in order to grasp its transcultural content, and needs to be re-contextualized in order that its content may be meshed up with the cognitive assumptions and social patterns of our own time. (Cook 2010, Kindle: Loc. 3203)

This understanding of contextualization is vital as it provides an understanding of the responsibility that cross-cultural worker have in doing contextualization. This view of contextualization does not compromise or bring a low view to the authority of God’s revealed word, but rather, sees the Word in such a high view that it justly demands a contextual rendering of its theological truths.

A Biblical Basis for Contextualization

One can make a biblical basis for contextualization from many different angles. When looking closely, one can easily see that each of the four Gospels stand as contextualized documents for a specific audience. Furthermore, each of the Apostle Paul’s letters serve as stellar examples of his ability to do theology in context. Maybe, however, the most profound and convincing example and validation for the need for contextualization exists not in the writing of the Scriptures, but in the “Word” made flesh, in the Incarnation of Jesus, as well as the manner in which he taught. “The incarnation of Jesus makes contextualization not just a possibility but an obligation. It establishes a paradigm for mediating God’s redeeming presence in the world today. The Incarnation of Jesus serves as a key paradigm for a contextualized theology” (Flemming 2005, Kindle: Loc. 126. 146). Through his Incarnation, Jesus took on a robe of humanity, becoming fully man while still being fully God, in a divinely devised plan to contextualize the eternal plan of salvation in a manner that could be understood by humanity. Andrew Walls, using the word translation rather than contextualization says, “Christ for Christians, . . . is the word translated. Incarnation is translation [contextualization]. When God in Christ became man, Divinity was translated [contextualized] into humanity, as though humanity were the receptor language” (Walls 1996, 27). The Incarnation of Jesus Christ set forth not only a biblical precedent for contextualization, but also a biblical example of how to do it. Jesus lived humbly in a specific place, with real people, became a part of human culture, and divinity embedded in a local human context. “Paul describes Jesus’s radical identification with humanity as a ‘self-emptying,’ a ‘self-humbling’ and a ‘self-enslavement’ on behalf of those he came to serve” (Phil 2:6-8). In C. Rene Padilla’s words (in Flemming 2005, Kindle:
Loc., 133), “It may be said that God has contextualized himself in Jesus Christ.”

From this position as the incarnate contextualized God-man, Jesus profoundly expounded the principles of the kingdom of God, theologizing, using human terms and examples from the place where he lived and taught. Dean Flemming states it well:

. . . When Jesus did theology, he consistently used local resources. Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God, his teaching on the law and righteousness, and his use of life-specific parables drew upon language, thought categories and rhetorical traditions from the Jewish culture of his clay. He communicated to people not in theological abstractions but through familiar, concrete forms-miracles, illustrations from common life, proverbs and stories, master-disciple dialogue and the example of his life among them. Although he offered a radically new teaching he did not coin a new language to express it. Instead, he used the earthy images of everyday rural life. Fishing and farming, weeds and wineskins, soil and salt became the "stuff" of his theological activity. From the beginning the gospel was voiced in local, culturally conditioned forms. What is more, Jesus' message and method of doing theology were context-specific. He mediated the good news in ways that were appropriate to particular people and occasions. (Flemming 2005, Kindle: Loc. 140)

This example of contextualization is more than merely a captivating stroke of divine genius, but rather a compelling call and a biblical pattern for cross-cultural workers to be guided by in their quest for developing contextual theology.

Summary and Clarification

From understanding theology as a contextually sensitive articulation of God’s authoritative self-revelation, to a particular people in a particular place and time in history, this paper moves forward in seeking a viable methodology, as laid out above, for accomplishing this task in a semi-established church context such as Vietnam. Achieving this end, a contextually sensitive local theology for in particular people, for a nation with a semi-established church, requires a different approach than developing such theology for a people group just receiving the gospel for the first time.
As mentioned above, in order to develop a context-sensitive theology in keeping with the understanding of contextualization and theology outlined above, a systemic shift in the approach to teaching theology in countries like Vietnam must take place. This approach must respectfully correct previously-understood, overly-westernized doctrinal creeds and theological tenets, while at the same time introducing a method of theologizing that provides latitude for developing and maintaining a contextually-appropriate theology that addresses the needs of the people and remains faithful to Scripture (Cook 2010, Kindle: Loc. 104). Again, I propose that foundational to this conversation remains the implementation of teaching biblical theology first in Bible schools and seminaries throughout Vietnam and then from that, developing systematics specific to the Vietnamese context.

**Understanding Biblical Theology**

Unlike systematic theology, which often reflects the dogma of a particular theological persuasion, biblical theology exists as more of a methodological process for discovering the theology of the text and how it fits into the whole of Scripture. To be sure, within the world of biblical theology, there are various methodologies, each prioritizing a unique scope and focus, however fundamentally biblical theology considers the broad narrative with Scripture, and takes its primary information from scripture.1 Graeme Goldsworthy (n.d., 1; cf. Vos 2014, 13) states that “Biblical theology is not so much about identifying fixed theological truths, as it is about a process by which theological truth is revealed. At its simplest, it is theology as the Bible reveals it.” While it may be impossible for the theologizer to remain completely objective during the process of developing theology, as Goldsworthy points out above, the theological discipline of biblical theology provides a theological methodology that allows one to discover theological truths as recorded in Scripture. “In effect, Biblical theology suggests that there is a basic hermeneutical principle implicit in the biblical text and priority is given to that embedded hermeneutic” (Hesselgrave 1995, 27). Biblical theology engages the biblical texts while giving careful consideration to the historical setting in which it originated, seeking to “locate and relate the contributions of the biblical documents along the lines of the continuum of God’s salvation-historical program centered in the coming and salvific work of Christ” (Bock and Köstenberger 2012, 19). To

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1This paper primarily focuses on “Biblical theology as history of redemption,” as seen in Klink & Lockett’s work on “Understanding Biblical theology.” For a further understating of various lenses through which to do Biblical theology, see Klink & Lockett, “Understanding Biblical Theology.”
further understand the focus of this, G. K. Beales’ (2011, 9) working definition of biblical theology provides clarity:

Biblical theology, rightly defined, is nothing else than the exhibition of the organic process of supernatural revelation in its historic continuity and multiformity. In this light, a biblical theological approach to a particular text seeks to give its interpretation first with regard to its own literary context and primarily in relation to its own redemptive-historical epoch.

Biblical theology intentionally allows humanity to see the historical progression of God’s revelation, the centrality of God’s redemptive plan, and other major foci of Scripture come to light. As such, the divine emphasis that God has placed on certain issues throughout his interaction with humanity takes precedent in the theologizing (Vos 2014, 17).

The practice of doing biblical theology as an official academic theological discipline can seem fairly uncommon and maybe even new to the modern theological field, at least in post-Reformation and Enlightenment era theology done from the West. One of the leading biblical theologians of the modern era, Darrell Bock (Bock and Köstenberger 2012, 19), even states, “Biblical Theology is a relatively new academic discipline. . . . [yet, this field of theology is] one of the most promising avenues of biblical and theological research today.”

From the earliest church history, however, key leaders have viewed biblical theology, though maybe not officially dubbed as such, as a necessary component for understanding the big picture and unity of the Bible. As John Easter (2019, PPT 1-Biblical Theo) highlights, the Early Church fathers employed the interpretation methods used in biblical theology in countering what they viewed as false teaching. Irenaeus, for example (“a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John the disciple of Jesus”), devoted considerable energy to developing a biblical theology that demonstrated the unity of the whole of Scripture (Wingren 2004, 34). Additionally, Irenaeus

formed the “rule of faith” (what we call the “analogy of faith”—“Scripture interprets Scripture”) principle that was thereafter readily employed and developed by the Church . . .

He also Defended the fourfold gospel as inspired by the Holy Spirit, and wrote extensively towards a biblical theology that demonstrated the unity of the whole of Scripture as he integrated the Christian understanding of the OT with a consistent interpretation of the Gospels and epistles. (Easter 2019, PPT 1-Biblical Theo)
Much later, in the 1780s, J. P. Gabler (in Klink and Lockett 2012, 14) began disusing the need to differentiate between biblical theology and dogmatic (systematic) theology, on the basis that biblical theology allows the theologizer to understand and see the meaning of Scripture, without imposing the biases of a particular church tradition. In the late 1890s Geerhardus Vos (2014, 16-17), of Princeton Theological Seminary, drew great attention to the purpose and value of doing biblical theology, explaining it as a way of understanding both how God has spoken—and what he has said to humanity throughout the course of history—as he addressed humanity’s spiritual needs.

In seeking to understand how the discipline of biblical theology can serve as a systemic contextualization methodology for semi-developed national churches with an “overly westernized theology,” one must understand how biblical theology works, as well as see its practical uses in the life of the church. Biblical theology as practical and prescriptive, suits the “action motif” of God and the mission of God well. Vos (2014, 17-28) highlights six practical uses of biblical theology that are germane to this discussion:

1. Biblical theology exhibits the organic growth of the truths of special revelation.
2. Biblical theology supplies us with a useful antidote against the teachings of rationalistic criticism.
3. Biblical theology imparts new life and freshness to the truth by showing it to us in its original historic setting.
4. Biblical theology can counteract the anti-doctrinal tendency of the present time . . . by bearing witness to the indispensability of the doctrinal groundwork of our religious fabric.
5. Biblical theology relieves to some extent the unfortunate situation that even the fundamental doctrines of the faith should seem to depend mainly on the testimony of isolated proof-texts.
6. Biblical theology’s highest practical usefulness is that it finds its supreme end in the glory of God.

These six practical uses of biblical theology remain important to understand, as they highlight the usefulness of this theological discipline in developing a theology for the local context that addresses real-life issues of the people. Overly rationalistic theology or, worse still, mere theological theory formulated by academic theologians, remains of little to no use in showing how the God of the Bible has spoken and interacts with the needs and concerns of humanity.
When thinking about developing a contextualized theology, one must make room for the local theologizer to discover for himself or herself what God has said and how he has said it. Biblical theology attempts to provide that space:

Rather than allowing traditional church teaching to control the formulation of Biblical theology, Gaber argued that biblical theology should be a historical concept—that is, that it should proceed from historical argument. This biblical theology could and should be pursued quite independently from the church’s dogmatic biases (Klink and Lockett 2012, 15).

Biblical theology thus provides a foundational approach to understanding Scripture that allows for authentic theological reflection from the worldview of the theologizer while at the same time prioritizing the divinely ordained themes found in the authoritative self-revelation that God has given to humanity, the Bible.

**Understanding Systematic Theology**

Systematic theology, on the other hand, refers to a set of theological presuppositions or doctrinal statements. Systematics exists fundamentally as a theological position determined by synthesizing a collection of verses throughout the Bible on a particular topic (Lawrence 2010, 89). As Easter (2019, n/a) clarifies, “Systematic theology uses a proof-text method, and seeks to classify in logical order the cardinal doctrines of the Church.” Typically, systematic theology organizes these theological nuggets in a logical manner clearly defined for a particular part of the world and that suits the thinking of a particular theological camp. As such, “systematics is dogmatic in that it is the orderly arrangement of the teachings of a particular view of Christianity. Dogmatics involves the crystallization of teachings as the end of the process of revelation and as ‘what is to be believed now’” (Goldsworthy n.d., 26). Geerhardus Vos states, “In biblical theology the principle is one of [following] the historical [development of biblical themes as revealed in Scripture]; in systematic theology it is one of logical construction. Biblical theology draws a line of development. Systematic theology draws a circle” (Vos 2014, 16). As Darian R. Lockett (2012, 9) further explains, “Biblical and systematic theology equally construct their individual projects by extracting data from the biblical text. . . . systematic theology relies heavily on logic or philosophy as an abstracting aid, while biblical theology relies heavily on history as an equally abstracting agent.”
Systematic theology further seeks to formulate its theological findings into precise and accurate summaries that articulate doctrine and define the boundaries between truth and error, and between orthodoxy and heresy. “It seeks to make “normative” statements. . . . Systematic theology goes beyond general summaries to precise and detailed doctrinal formulations” (Lawrence 2010, 90). Part and parcel to systematic theology’s emphasis on precise doctrinal statements involves the fact that Biblical scholars generally formulate those statements as relevant to a particular culture during a particular era in history. D. A Carson (in Alexander et al. 2000, 101) states, “systematic theology that is worthy of the name . . . seeks to articulate what the Bible says in a way that is culturally telling and culturally prophetic.” Michael Lawrence (2010, 91) further emphasizes these time- and culture-bound characteristics of systematic theology: “Systematic theology has a strong concern for contemporary relevance. Its goal is to teach us not just timeless truth, but what it means to believe and obey that timeless truth today.” This applicable dynamic of systematic theology proves highly valuable, pragmatic, and even necessary. At the same time, however, it makes its adaptability to a different era and context, difficult and often artificial.

Although, as mentioned above, systematic theology can prove helpful in organizing biblical truths in an understandable way, it can also inhibit the local theologizer’s process of seeing the naked truth of Scripture. As Walter Kaiser (1978, 11) states, “Systematic theology as well as some other methods of theology, in a sense, select certain theological data that suits our fancy or meets a current need.” It can have further undesirable effects when cross-cultural practitioners translate systematic theological works and introduce them to a developing church in the form of fixed theological tenets. This process fails to account for the worldview or philosophical framework of the host culture and assumes that the ones who developed the original set of systematic statements covered everything and did so in a manner understandable to everyone. This methodology not only allows little room for the local theologizer to reflect on biblical truths, but it can also can miss entire themes of Scripture irrelevant to the western theologizer yet integral to the host culture and its spiritual development. Systematic theology, when misapplied or simply translated from one language into another, can thus serve as a “theological straight jacket” for the local church. When this happens, it hinders the church from developing a context-sensitive theology that actually reflects their own understanding of Scripture and that addresses their daily needs.
The Relationship between Biblical and Systematic Theology

Seeking to explore biblical theology as a methodology for developing context-sensitive theology requires one to understand the nature of both biblical theology and systematic theology. Both methodologies remain necessary, but in our estimation of what is required in order to develop a context-sensitive theology, one needs to understand not only how each discipline works, but also the sequence in which one develops and implements each theological methodology or discipline. As Klink and Lockett (2012, 16) note, “the two disciplines are siblings both participating in the abstraction in order to reach an understanding. . . . Both kinds of abstraction are necessary for a theological understanding of scripture.” As Vos (2014, 15) says, both biblical theology and systematic theology take the truth deposited in the Bible and seek to apply it to the spiritual needs of humanity. In this sense they are alike and have the singular purpose of helping humanity understand the Word of God so that it can be appropriately applied.

Biblical theology tends to be more foundational, while systematic theology deals with the fruit of biblical theology and is determined by the parameters or horizons that biblical theology establishes. As Carson (in Lawrence, 2010, 91) states, “systematic theology is not so much a mediating discipline as it is a culminating discipline.” Biblical theology then, when understood from this perspective, serves as a hermeneutical guide to help the local theologizer extract the naked truth of Scripture. One can then formulate those truths into contextually sensitive statements that apply the truth of God’s Word in a manner that makes sense to the local people. Those truths would then be the beginning of their systematic/dogmatic theology. Lawrence explains the relationship this way:

. . . here is the proper work of systematic theology. Undergirded and surrounded by biblical theology throughout, systematic theology applies the truth of God’s word to the specific contemporary situation. . . . without Biblical theology one might be tempted to merely give rules and moral guidelines . . . without systematic theology one might be only able to tell a story that the audience is unable to relate to their problem. (Lawrence 2010, 97)

This clarification of the relationship between biblical and systematic theology further moves one toward understanding how biblical theology can be used and is needed in developing contextual theology.
Summary

One should not view biblical theology and systematic theology, then, as mutual enemies, but related, more like a tree and its fruit. Biblical theology provides a minimally-enculturated approach to understanding Scripture so one may apply it and live it out in context in a manner faithful to the historic Christian faith (Goldsworthy, n.d., 29). Biblical theology allows the local theologizer to discover the “supra-cultural core” (Cook 2010, 156) of the gospel, from his or her own worldview and philosophical framework, and then articulate it in a manner that local people can understand. “Biblical theology as a discipline, not only provides the basis for understanding how the text in one part of scripture relate to other text, but it also serves as the basis in underpinning for all theologizing” (Lawrence 2010, 89). Biblical theology thus empowers the interpreter to view Scripture in a context-sensitive way that can lead to the development of contextually-appropriate dogmatics.

A Biblical Example of Biblical Theology

One of the distinguishing elements of biblical theology is that it allows the metanarrative or big story of Scripture to reveal the central theological themes of the Bible as the biblical authors present them in the unfolding revelation of God (Goldsworthy, n.d., 26). Creation, the fall of humanity, and God’s redemptive plan provide three of these major theological themes that surface repeatedly within Scripture. This section briefly highlights how the Apostle John, in John 1:1-18, uses these “images and categories that are anchored in Judaism but that also speak to an audience with a broader cultural and religious background . . . [to recontextualize] the story of Jesus for a new audience and a new generation” (Flemming 2005, Kindle: Loc. 3275). Clearly, both from the text as well as from historical data, Gnostic teaching deeply impacted the Jewish audience to whom John was writing. As Sanneh notes, “. . . the Gospel of John was the most ambitious attempt in Scripture to assimilate the Gnostic system. . . . The inclusion in the Christian canon of the Johannine corpus, so different in tone and temper from the Synoptics, shows the lengths to which the community of believers went in its practice of translatability [contextualization]” (Sanneh 1989, 21-22). The Apostle John’s writings, and specifically John 1:1-18, remains thus, in effect, a biblical example of contextualized biblical theology.

First, John states at the end of his Gospel his purpose for writing—so that his audience “may know and believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that through believing they might have life in his name”
John brilliantly accomplishes his stated objective of showing this part (who Jesus is) within the whole (the metanarrative of Scripture) by employing a biblical-theological approach in context. Within the first twenty-four words of John 1, he ties his story of Jesus and Jesus’s divine identity to the historical creation narrative: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” Words such as “in the beginning” (1:1-2), “the Word,” “light,” “darkness,” “made,” and “the world” evocatively echo the genesis of the metanarrative of Scripture. By introducing the creation narrative at the very beginning of his Gospel, he can tether his story and explanation of Jesus’s identity to this familiar and foundational text. John bridges his statements to the past to help his Jewish audience understand this Logos as the eternal creator, God, and their long-awaited Messiah.

John contextualizes his claims about Jesus by employing the term Logos to identify Jesus. Logos had rich religious and philosophical meaning for both the Jewish and Greek audiences to which he was writing (Flemming 2005, Kindle: Loc. 3288). John, as a biblical theologian, seeks to tie his propositions to the big narrative of Scripture in a context-sensitive manner; his interpretation proves thus both faithful and creative. It expounds on and adds new dimension to previous understanding. As mentioned above, biblical theology not only identifies the major themes of Scripture, but it also allows the divinely-embedded and progressively increasing dimensions of God’s revelation on that topic to be emphasized as it is naturally emphasized in Scripture.

In addition, John brings to the surface another major biblical-theological theme in the opening section of his Gospel by highlighting the falleness of humanity and its relational separation from God. In verses 12 and 13, John makes an indirect statement to the Jewish community that appears as an intentional contextualization move: he states that those “who believe” will receive the “right” to be called the children of God. This statement underscores to the Jewish community the pervasiveness of humanity’s falleness. John indirectly asserts that simply existing as a descendant of Abraham did not give them the “right” to be called a child of God, as they had assumed. Taking the biblical-theological theme of the Fall of humanity from the Genesis story, and showing that it applies to not only “everyone else” but also to the Jews, again ties the big picture of humanity’s condition to the audience itself.

What John takes away with his left hand, he offers anew with his right as he focuses on God’s redemptive plan. John begins to introduce the idea of being spiritually born into the family of God through God’s

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2 All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version.
divine initiative and belief in the Messiah. Craig Keener (2014, 234) notes the familiarity both Jews and Gentiles would have had with this birth terminology, as: “Jewish teachers spoke of converts to Judaism as starting life anew like ‘newborn children,’ just as adopted sons under Roman law relinquished all legal status in their former family when they became part of a new one.” The Jewish community to which John writes would also have had awareness of the “child of God” terminology from the Old Testament, which points again to John’s intentional contextualization of a biblical-theological theme. John here allows his contextually-informed writing to intentionally grate against the commonly-held position of his Jewish audience. He boldly asserts that membership in God’s family requires not human bloodlines, as the Jewish community commonly believed, but belief in Jesus as the Messiah.

John 1 provides an example of how biblical theology ties a specific text to the major themes and overall narrative of Scripture, and how he contextualized Old Testament truths for his contemporary audience. Furthermore John 1:19-34, with John the Baptist’s preaching and the ensuing response of the people, provides an example of how the truths of biblical theology pulled from the grand narrative of Scripture come to bear on the daily lives of the people who believe it. While this might not qualify as a “fully developed” systematic theology, it serves as a movement toward an applicable dogmatic that flows out of biblical theology.

**Implications and Application**

Having reviewed the aims and methods of biblical and systematic theology and provided a biblical example, this section now extends the implications of these efforts to the context of the Vietnamese Protestant Church. I aim, as previously stated, to propose that teaching theology from a biblical-theological approach first remains a valid, if not necessary, foundational component to the development of a contextual theology within a semi-established national church. While biblical theology has made a decisive comeback over the past few decades in the theological academy, missionaries and other cross-cultural practitioners seem slow in seeing biblical theology as a fundamental component in developing contextual theology. This is the case in Vietnam, where missionaries involved in theological training work with a generation of Vietnamese church leaders who received a subset of either non-contextualized or minimally contextualized systematics developed through a western philosophical and theological framework:
The Church [in Vietnam] has shown little evidence of having a specific Vietnamese contextual theology. In other words, the Church has not “nurtured” or “expressed” itself theologically in the cultural context in which it has existed. Its architecture, liturgy, music, homiletical style and organizational structure have all reflected the foreign culture of the missionary, thus being completely discontinuous from Vietnamese cultural patterns. The Church remains to this day, for the most part, a western church, . . . in Vietnam, rather than a contextualized and culturally appropriate [church]. (Nguyen 2019, Kindle: Loc. 222)

Across the board in the major evangelical denominations in Vietnam, Bible schools and seminaries struggle with this reality as they seek to raise up new ministers and church leaders who are faithful to Scripture and authentically Vietnamese.

Early Catholic Jesuit missionaries who came to Vietnam in the seventeenth century, such as Alexander de Rhodes, gave remarkable attention to the need for contextualization and enculturation, but Protestants seem to not have done well in this area. De Rhodes was particularly careful about not wanting to establish Christianity as a culturally separate group within Vietnam. (Phan 2006, 81). He had a deep conviction that the Vietnamese people should understand the Bible and apply its theological truths. The Jesuits’ efforts at contextualization in the seventeenth century, which included learning the local language and culture, provided a significant foundational component for the Catholic Church’s survival in Vietnam (Nguyen 2019, Kindle: Loc. 240).

Conversely, Protestants have seemed much more comfortable with translating theological materials than with developing culturally sensitive materials for the Vietnamese mind and way of life. While theological training has served as the significant part of the Vietnamese Protestant history in Vietnam since its beginning in 1911 (Thai Phuoc Truong 2019, 32), to date no credible contextual theology has been developed for the Vietnamese people. “French and American Protestant missionaries in early twentieth-century Vietnam seemed to be intent on making the native Vietnamese a more western Christian, overlooking perhaps, that in the process, they were also making [them] less Vietnamese” (Nguyen 2019, Kindle, Loc. 240). Perhaps out of zeal to do as much as possible as quickly as possible, or more probably out of ignorance regarding the necessity, both Protestant missionaries working in Vietnam as well as Protestant believers in Vietnam, have seemingly failed to develop a true context sensitive theology. “Protestant
missionaries have struggled to communicate the gospel in a way that is relevant and indigenous to the Vietnamese people. Essentially the [Protestant] church is but another American denomination, [with a branch in Vietnam]” (Nguyen 2019, Kindle: Loc. 260). At least one contributing factor to this tragic reality, is that the majority of the missionaries have promoted their denominational dogmatics/systematic theology, giving little attention to the theological and philosophical framework through which they were developed. A commitment to biblical theology as a preliminary way to teach and understand Scripture could provide a counter measure to begin addressing this issue.

Although making this shift in Vietnam, where the church has existed for a little over 100 years, may not prove easy or a “fix all” for its theological problems, doing so warrants serious consideration in the spirit of helping the church mature and move forward in a manner that facilitates faithful living out of the call of God on the life of the Vietnamese Church. As Vince Le (2019, 73) suggests, to have a genuine “Vietnamization of faith” in Vietnam will require development of a contextual theology for Vietnam that takes into account the actual needs of the people who live in the Vietnamese context.

Christian education in Vietnam must be concerned with what is happening to the people who actually live there and deal with their needs, including poverty, fear, hopelessness, loneliness, disease, and discrimination. The gospel of salvation must prove that its power can liberate them from such situations (Dung Le 1994, 134-36)

Doing biblical theology as a preliminary step for developing a contextualized theology should provide the Vietnamese Church with some interpretive latitude that systematic and dogmatic theology does not. If the church embraces biblical theology as the primary theological method for introducing theology to Bible school students and church leaders, it should nurture context-sensitive theological reflection. This will, in turn, produce a contextually-nuanced theology that speaks to specific issues within the culture from a worldview that makes sense to the local Vietnamese Christian community. As Craig Ott (2006, Kindle: Loc. 181) states, “Theology is rooted in God’s authoritative revelation . . . however, [developing] theology is a human activity and discipline, and thus it is subject to and reflects the characteristics of those who do theology.” Contextualized theology must indeed take seriously the revealed Word of God, the Bible; but in order to develop theological statements and systematics, theologizers must understand the Bible
through the cultural lens and worldview of local people (Cook 2010, 157).

While practitioners should not abandon western Enlightenment-era systematic theology, there does need to be discernment in evaluating its strengths and weaknesses (Douglas Hayward, n.d., 39). Western theologians have long inferred that once a set of systematics are developed, using good historical-grammatical exegesis, they may simply translate the resulting theological nuggets and subsequent creeds into various languages without further contextualization. While historical-grammatical exegesis is foundational to both Biblical and Systematic theology, it does not negate the necessity of contextualization.

When contextualization is ignored, multiple undesirable effects occur. First, the philosophical and theological framework through which the truths were developed do not mesh well with the local worldview. In addition, the foreigner’s theological grid does not allow for him or her to see certain biblical truths and realities that need addressing within the theology of the local people. As Cook (2010, 157) discerns, theology will always reflect the worldview and cultural surroundings in which it was birthed. Although cross-cultural theological teachers often have the best of intentions, they inevitably inject more of their home culture into the theology than they realize. This causes an unnecessary hindrance to the gospel (Anderson 2004, 110). Further efforts to equip local theologians with an approach to Scripture that provides sufficient latitude for them to develop a context-sensitive theology remain imperative.

The implications and fruit of a contextual theology faithful to the historic Christian faith are far-reaching and essential to the maturation of the church in a local area. In an article entitled “The Missionary Role in Developing Indigenous [Contextual] Theology,” Lois Fuller (n.d., 406-407) identifies four central reasons why a contextualized theology remains necessary. The following sections utilize these four general categories, with some modification, to highlight the implications of a contextual theology.

Personal Spiritual Growth

First, contextual theology proves necessary for personal spiritual growth. If the version of theology that missionaries hand a local people does not address local spiritual and everyday life issues, it will stunt spiritual maturity and possibly lead to their abandoning the Christian faith altogether. In some case it has been noted that when there isn’t a contextual theology that addresses the real life needs of the people, there is a tendency to bifurcate one’s life into spiritual and natural, thus leaving the impression that he Bible doesn’t speak to the whole of life. As
Flemming (2005, Kindle: Loc. 112) notes, contextualization enables “the people of God to live out the gospel in obedience to Christ within their own cultures and circumstances.” A contextualized theology allows the people to understand what God has said about himself in his word and thus provides them with the biblical information necessary to grow into mature disciples. Paul Hiebert (1985, 196) suggests that if cross cultural workers do not allow the developing church to engage in theological reflection, they will be guilty of stunting the spiritual growth of the people. Contextualized theology allows the gospel to become real to the people we serve (Ott and Netland 2006, 245). People knowing Christ and growing in their faith stands as the first and foremost reason for finding a contextualization methodology that allows for genuine indigenous theological reflection.

Self-Propagation

Second, the Church as a whole cannot operate in a truly indigenous and self-propagating manner without a contextualized theology. Indigenous church principle missiology has long held that the local church must be self-propagating. Melvin Hodges (2009, 49) says, “A church that does not propagate itself will die. New Testament churches were self-propagating churches.” If no one allows or teaches the church to do theological reflection on its own, it will not develop into a truly self-propagating or self-missionizing entity. A contextualized theology allows locals to understand and embrace God’s redeeming grace (Flemming 2005, Kindle: Loc. 142). This idea of the local church taking responsibility for the mission of God and seeking to advance the kingdom of God through the winning of the lost, requires the church to know who they are and how the Bible speaks to their culture. When the local church has a contextualized theology that allows them to see God’s invitation and command to take the gospel to the lost, that self-propagating activity can then begin to flow from a position of obedience to God rather than obedience to the missionary.

Systemic Cultural Peculiarities

Third, in order to address deep systemic issues (e.g., issues with power, leadership, gender equality, evil spirits, honor-shame, and human rights), the local church must reflect on Scripture in context and let Scripture speak to these issues from their located perspective. “Every church in every particular place and time must learn to do theology in a way that makes sense to its audience while challenging it at the deepest level” (Flemming 2005, Kindle: Loc. 42). When theology is imported
and not organic, it does not address many deep systemic cultural issues. As Jayson Georges (2016, 73) points out, when local people do not understand from their own perspective the fullness of what the Bible says about particular issues, “the veracity and integrity of the Bible is threatened.” Although all of humanity is created in the image of God, worldview, religion, geography and many other factors create unique circumstances and strongholds that God wants to redeem and bring freedom to. In order, however, to faithfully address these issues about life and spirituality particular to a local area, a context-sensitive theology remains non-negotiable. It is through that type of theological reflection that what God has already said and provided for to address those deep level context particular issues and sins will be discovered. Biblical theology provides the latitude needed for those involved in local theologizing to discover what God has already said about the issues that exist in a given culture.

Contribution to the Global Christian Community’s Understanding of God

Finally, when a local body of believers develops a contextual theology, it makes an invaluable contribution to the global Christian community that helps everyone understand God and his Word in a more complete way. Contextualized theology not only helps address issues, but also reveals dimensions of God’s unsearchable reality that people simply cannot capture through one cultural lens. Speaking about the desire of God from Revelation 5:9-10, Ott (2006, 309) states, “If theology is understood as a part of worship, then our theology should no less reflect the manifold richness of human diversity and expression present in the heavenly vision.” Local theology in any context helps the global Christian community by contributing to the ever-worthy pursuit by God’s followers of faithfully understanding what he means by what he has revealed about himself in his Word (Cook 2010, Kindle: Loc. 452).

Summary

When the church truly operates in an indigenous manner and has the tools it needs to engage in contextual theological reflection, beginning with biblical theology, these priceless outcomes are within reach. In contexts like Vietnam, where remarkable loyalty to the Christian workers who brought and taught the Bible in the beginning remains, missionaries and church leaders must proactively and patiently offer the church the tools and latitude that will stimulate local theological
reflection. These necessary tools must come from those the church trusts and respects—both local and foreign persons in positions of leadership and theological education—in order for the church to recognize its potential for growth. In this way, adopting biblical theology as an initial theological approach to understanding God’s Word could indeed provide the foundational contextualization methodology for faithful and contextual theological reflection.

Conclusion

In the quest to see a robust indigenous Vietnamese national church that is self-propagating and self-missionizing, leaders must begin to help the church become self-theologizing. In light of the cultural and educational realities that exist within the Vietnamese culture and the national church, this intentional fundamental shift in the church’s teaching of theology and hermeneutics remains imperative. Adopting a biblical-theological approach in Bible schools and ministerial training programs across the nation will create philosophical space and a basic framework for contextualized theological reflection. While adopting this approach to teaching theology may not address the issues embodied in the older generation, hopefully the up and coming generation of Vietnamese Church leaders will embrace and expand this dynamic. A truly contextualized Vietnamese theology faithful to the revealed Word of God will affirm its authoritative role in the life of the believer and remain consistent with the historic global Christian community, yet address the real-life needs of the Vietnamese people from a philosophical perspective that makes sense to them. This remains a task worth pursuing.
Exploring Biblical Theology as a Contextualization Method in Countries with a Semi-Established National Church

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Theological Education between the West and the “Rest”: A Reverse “Reverse Missionary” and Pentecost Perspective

by Amos Yong

Introduction

Pentecostal theological education is gradually coming into its own, not the least since its seminaries in North America are now in their second generation and accredited at the highest levels. Also, a full range of other institutions of theological education (Bible institutes, colleges, universities, and theological schools) is emerging outside of the Euro-American West and across the Majority World. Yet the nature of globalization in a post-Enlightenment, post-Christendom, and post-colonial world means that, inevitably, higher educational institutions of all sorts in the Global South (theological schools included) are patterned after those in the West; and this applies also to schools within the pentecostal orbit. In some respects, such is unavoidable not only because many of these schools depend on mission funding that originates in the West, but also because Pentecostals now more than ever realize that they are a part of a worldwide church and that those trained in its theological institutions will serve within the movement and within other churches in the universal body of Christ, including the western hemisphere. Yet the question is still: Will pentecostal theological education around the world remain Euro-American-centric now well into the second pentecostal century?

In this essay, I wish to propose a Pentecost approach to theological education that will both serve the needs of pentecostal churches around

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1For overviews, see the three chapters by Wonsuk Ma (focus on Asia), Daniel Chiquete (Latin America), and Cephas Omenyo (Africa) in the 35th section of Dietrich Werner, et al., eds., Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 729-49.
the world and engage with the church ecumenical as well. To appreciate this proposal, however, we begin by situating the reigning western paradigm for theological education that continues to norm fledgling efforts elsewhere, then sketch the overall contours of our Pentecost model, and lastly explicate some of the implications of this vision for pentecostal theological institutions, especially in the Majority World. Our goal in such a short piece cannot be exhaustive, but it can serve as a springboard for ongoing reflection and discussion.

One caveat, however, needs to be registered: that being my own theological education and institutional location in the West. Although I have visited pentecostal schools and seminaries in every continent, my experience and perspective is predominantly western. Yes, I was born in Malaysia to Assemblies of God pastors who migrated to the United States when I was age ten to minister among Chinese speaking immigrants to Northern California; thus, overnight, I became an Assemblies of God missionary kid. Yet all of my theological schooling and formation has been in North America, and I have only taught (in three different theological institutions) in this context. Hence, I can claim from this space no more than what I am calling ‘a reverse-reverse missionary perspective’. That denotes I am applying what missiologists call my reverse missionary experience to thinking about what it means

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2Note how in this essay pentecostal (capitalized when used as part of a name or to refer to a group of persons, but not when used adjectivally) always qualifies the modern group of churches with roots, at least in part, in the Azusa Street revival in the early twentieth century, while what I call Pentecost, although informed by my background, experience, and ministerial affiliation with the modern ecclesial movement, more intentionally connects to the narrative of Acts chapter 2 that belongs to the church catholic in order to propose a theological logic that could be embraced by any follower of Jesus Christ; this latter notion will be elaborated upon later even as interested readers can explore further where I have developed this distinction in other articles including, “The Missio Spiritus in a Pluralistic World: A Pentecost Approach to Dialogue, Hospitality, and Sanctuary,” Pittsburgh Theological Journal 9 (Autumn 2018): 11-48 [at https://www.pts.edu/UserFiles/File/resources/Journal%202018.pdf], and “The Spirit Poured Out: A (Pentecostal) Perspective after Pentecost,” in Guido Vergauwen, o.p., and Andreas Steinbruber, eds., Veni, Sancte Spiritus! Theologische Beiträge zur Sendung des Geistes/Contributions théologiques à la mission de l’Esprit/Theological Contributions to the Mission of the Spirit – Festschrift für Barbara Hallensleben zum 60. Geburtstag, Studia Oecumenica Friburgensia 85, Studienzentrum für Glaube und Gesellschaft 7 (Münster, Germany: Aschendorff-Verlag, 2018), 198-210.


Theological Education between the West and the “Rest”: A Reverse “Reverse Missionary” and Pentecost Perspective

for someone like myself to re-imagine theological education outside the West, both in relationship with and to the West on the one hand, but also after the West on the other. My wager is that a Pentecost perspective can facilitate such a reverse-reverse, both-and, and with-after vision for theological education in the present global context.

Contemporary Theological Education: Problems and Prospects

In order to appreciate the Pentecost proposal that I will develop later, it might be helpful to comprehend more specifically the main lines of theological education today, in particular its developments in the West. We shall see that (like it or not) its western forms have been exported from one perspective or imported from other perspectives (whether consciously or unconsciously or for whatever reasons) by the emerging forms of theological education in the Global South. Further, precisely because theological education in the West is undergoing upheavals due to pressures on higher education and other factors, these can only be understood better given a deeper socio-historical context. Therefore, let us ask questions regarding the who, the what and how, and the why of this enterprise.

Theological Education: Who It’s For

In North America a few decades ago, the response to this question was more or less clear. Theological education was for those who sought to prepare themselves for vocational ministry in churches. The Master of Divinity was the central degree that equipped and certified individuals for professional ministry; and it was required by clergy at least in the mainline Protestant denominations, which constituted the bulk of the Christian demographic in the United States. So, what happens when such groups of churches begin declining both in membership and in adherents? Further, what transpires when the prerequisite undergraduate degree either is perceived as less worthwhile of pursuit or if such programs of study are less accessible to those who aspire to a ministerial vocation? What unfolds when the nature of ministry itself shifts so that its responsibility rests increasingly on ordinary laypersons rather than on an

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6These and related questions have plagued theological education now for over two decades; see John H. Leith, Crisis in the Church: The Plight of Theological Education (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997).
educated and elite group of ecclesial participants? Or what happens when forms of the church grow (e.g., pentecostal movements) that have historically not relied on credentialing ministers in post-graduate courses of study? The answers to these questions combine to announce the diminishing prestige or attractiveness of theological education, at least in its traditional instantiation.

Yet while certain Protestant groups are waning, other expressions of the church, including pentecostal ones, are thriving (at least numerically) both in North America and around the world. Outside of the West there is a shortage of ministers and, thus, a great need for ministerial training that cannot wait for potential candidates to first complete an undergraduate degree. On the flip side, even though tertiary educational endeavors are increasingly under strain, the desire for learning will continue as long as human beings are around. And precisely because the laity is being engaged in ministry and mission (albeit in increasingly unrecognizable manifestations), there may be more persons looking for theological education even if not in traditional seminaries. This combination of factors may mean that there’s a future for theological education at varied levels, although perhaps such might be desirable and workable only for those who can re-vision its character for the church’s witness to the world in a new era.

Theological Education: What It is and How It’s Accomplished

In its classical iteration, especially in the North American context, the curriculum was organized quadratically: biblical studies, historical studies, theology proper, and practical ministry. The first three were more theoretical and the last was more applied. Within the seminary framework, students came for three years of residential study, with the practicum in the final year forming a bridge designed to enable return to the parish community. Unfortunately, such a curricular division from the nineteenth century does not prepare students today to serve effectively in real-life contexts in changing times; and the seclusion of residential seminary life for one or more years to begin with has also severed rather than nurtured ecclesial connections and relationships. Especially in non-western cultures, the cleavage between theory and praxis is not

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7The immediately preceding iteration was the triadic categorization of philosophical, historical, and practical studies, with the middle segment delineated biblically, historically, and dogmatically; see Friedrich Schleiermacher, Brief Outline on the Study of Theology, trans. Terrence N. Tice (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966).
presumed, and such an organization of the curriculum will have its limitations.8

Changes in society at large, especially those changes prompted by the electronic and telecommunicative revolution of our lifetime, are further transforming the way we learn. Such convulsions, while drastic in some respects, are also expanding and disseminating knowledge. Even if some form of the residential experience might be retained (including through intensive modules that gather together students for face-to-face interactions and learning experiences), the pedagogy of adult education – andragogy, more precisely – is being revolutionized. It is true that in some regions of the Majority World the lack of access to education and underdeveloped technological infrastructures inhibit many from participating in such digitally mediated forms of education, theological and otherwise. Nevertheless, to the degree that communicative technologies enable learners to begin or continue studies without having to relocate to a residential campus, to that same degree theological learners around the world will take advantage of such media to further their studies from where they are at.9

On the flip side, if the message and the medium are thoroughly intertwined (even if not reducible to each other), then theological content is also being repackaged. It is not that the four traditional theological disciplines will disappear anytime soon, but they are less silo-ed now than before, and will be even more integrated going forward. Further, the interrelated character of these historic arenas of study will extend beyond the explicitly theological horizon to interact with and engage with other fields of inquiry in a universe of knowledge that is growing through cross-cultural contact and is more intensely interdisciplinary in ways unanticipated a generation ago. Thus, the what and the how of theological education that survives into the next decades will be both continuous and discontinuous with what we have inherited from our ancestors.

Theological Education: Why It’s in Flux and What It’s For

All of the preceding then also alerts us to the reality that theological education is in flux. So, why? Any answer to this query will surely dovetail with responses to the prior questions; but in this context, the


‘why’ question concerns not just the practicality of the enterprise, but also its fiscal sustainability. If the goals and objectives of theological education in the previous time were dictated by the need to certify professional clergy, then its scope in the present moment are much wider and will be further expanded in ways constrained only by the human imagination. In actuality, insofar as human learning is motivated by the need to know and by curiosity (and these are often interrelated rather than disparate), then people will embrace the opportunities provided by theological education to the extent that such is accessible. Accessibility in a digital and globalizing world knows no geographic boundaries, so that the issue here involves affordability. If theological education were accessible and affordable, then there surely be more and more opportunities to learn with new learners, save the following caveat.

Here we connect back to what might be called the mission of theological education, which converges with but also extends from what up to now has been called missiology (the so-called science of Christian mission). What I mean here is that, to the degree members of the church are engaged in and committed to discipleship and its missional implications and applications, to that same degree they will seek theological education that supports those endeavors. Hence theological education that is neither missiological (the older term) nor missional (the more contemporary nomenclature) will be of less relevance.

I need to be clear, though, that this does not mean returning to older notions of mission, particularly not those generated from out of the colonial past. But if mission in understood in terms related to what sustains and enables the church in its life and work (however differentiated from its prior forms not only in the West but around the world), then theological education that is mission-related in that sense will retain a dynamic and ever-expanding audience. Further, if mission is also comprehended as empowering Global South Christians to bear effective witness not only to their neighbors, but also to their fellow human beings in the northern and western parts of the globe, then such a missional-theological education will be relevant transnationally and in every Majority World context. But then it also needs to be said that,

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without this missional dimension, theological education will lack orientation and cease to inspire, in which case it will lapse into obscurity, if not eventually disappear.

Renewing Theological Education: After Pentecost

It is not that theological education has remained only western or that there have not been developments in thinking about and constructing theological education outside of the western orbit. But as our topic is pentecostal theological education, I want to suggest that our response is and ought to be explicitly both pentecostal and theological rather than either generically ecumenical or only practical. More particularly, I urge that we seek to construct our pentecostal and theological proposal from and at its foundations. In fact, to raise the teleological and missional/missiological, question is also to get to the heart of theological education. It is for this reason that the major thesis presented here concerns cultivating a fresh experience of Pentecost, one that empowers the mission of the church. So, what does this mean, what does this not mean, and what does this look like?

Fresh Experience of Pentecost: What It Means

Some might say that to talk about Pentecost in relationship to theological education is to mix apples (a biblical theme or motif) and oranges (the task of theological formation and learning). My response is that, if education is to be theological, the latter involves not just the content of what is taught but also the engine (so to speak) that drives the efforts. The first part of my response is that, whatever else the Pentecost account provides, at the least it charts the major missional pathways for Christian mission. The Day-of-Pentecost narrative initiates an expansive and cosmic vision: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In other words, the work of the Spirit not just inspires, but also enables and emboldens the messianic witness of the church.

My point is that a theological education that serves the church ought to facilitate participation in this divine mission. The Day-of-Pentecost

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12For the state of the question on global theological education, see the previously referred to Werner, et al., eds., Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity, and the related regional handbooks focused on Asia and Africa in its wake.

13Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

read, according to this register, therefore launches not just an ecclesial body, but also (this essay wagers) the means and mechanisms of its formation, sustenance, perpetuation, and development. The earliest messianic believers (we are told) engaged in theological formation and education under the aegis of the Spirit. As Luke recorded, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship . . .” (Acts 2:42a). By implication and extension, Pentecost empowers and enables teaching but also learning, which, in turn, supports and enhances the Christian mission. “And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42b).

Thus, the missiological and the pentecostal go together, and they remain tethered in our proposal for thinking about theological education. It may be recalled that three decades ago a book was published titled *The Search for God at Harvard* and was followed up soon after by the pronouncement that God was indeed found there.15 Well, it now appears that God is present in the academy and within Christian higher education, a Christ-centered approach and commitment that’s well pronounced, especially in institutions affiliated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. From a pentecostal perspective, then, the question is begged: Where is the Holy Spirit in academia generally and in the realm of theological education particularly? Thus, our suggestion is a more robust theological and pneumatological consideration, for which task we resort to the Pentecost account.

Fresh Experience of Pentecost: What It Doesn’t Mean

Perhaps the most important thing to note at this point is that, while such a missional vision is all-embracing, according to its scriptural delineations it is neither parochial nor hegemonic or totalizing. So, what does it mean to secure theological education on a foundation featuring centrally the Day-of-Pentecost narrative while also not advocating any kind of parochial pentecostal version? I grant that my own ecclesial commitments are pentecostal in the sense that they have been shaped by my growing up within and ongoing service of the Assemblies of God (a classical pentecostal denomination or church). In that sense, there is no denying that the theological platform I am attempting to construct has been influenced by the modern pentecostal movement. Ironically, though, modern pentecostal churches have a deep streak of anti-

intellectualism embedded within the tradition; and this has hindered not just theological education but also higher education in general.\textsuperscript{16}

While things are changing slowly precisely for this reason, I am advocating not a pentecostal theology of higher education but a Pentecost-perspective. Some Pentecostals believe that, according to the movement’s sensibilities, the only way to do theological education is to have church, to experience the move of the Spirit in all of the quintessentially pentecostal ways, and to lay hands on then send out those so filled with the Spirit (with speaking in unknown tongues as its initial physical sign) for ministerial work and mission witness. I would not discount that such practices can and do produce some who are able to effectively lead the church in its missionary work. But what I am lifting up is not at all the modern expressions of Pentecostalism, whether from Azusa Street or anywhere else, even if these expressions are not being denied or rejected, but rather the central account of the outpouring of the Spirit “upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17b), which is how Luke records Peter explaining that event while drawing from the prophet Joel (2:28).

The point is that Pentecost does not belong only to Pentecostals but to the entirety of the body of Christ.\textsuperscript{17} Theological education rooted in the reality of Pentecost belongs to the church catholic, just like the Book of Acts, and is not copyrighted by any one church or movement. In this sense, then, a Pentecost vision for theological education ought also to serve the cosmic Christian witness in its many tongues and languages. It is for this reason that I urge such a Pentecost approach to theological education to be non-hegemonic and non-totalizing in that its essence both derives from and is for the church catholic (universal and ecumenical).

Fresh Experience of Pentecost: What It Looks Like

Most importantly, the witness that the Spirit brings about resonates not in one voice but through many. The Acts narrator describes the glossolalia catalyzed on that Day in these ways: “Each one heard them speaking in the native language of each” . . . and “We hear, each of us, in our own native language” (2:6b, 8). Therefore, theological education in such missional and missiological terms cannot but be pluralistic, attending to the many voices that come from the many directions. Or put another way, Spirit-ed theological formation follows according to the pneumato-logic manifest in the many tongues articulated on the Day of


Pentecost. Such a pneumatic or pneumatological education is relevant for and appropriate to our present twenty-first century pluralistic, glocal-, multi-, inter-, and trans-cultural context.

What then are the contours of theological education inspired by the Pentecostal reality? In this case, Pentecost is as much an adverb as it is a noun, as relevant for the how (pedagogy) of theological education as for its what (content). One might ask, Where is the Holy Spirit or what difference might the Holy Spirit make in the seminary or divinity school of the 21st century constituted by students of different ecclesial traditions/movements and multiple cultures, traversing diverse global routes, and inhabiting dynamic contexts? What might it mean to reconsider the theological curriculum from such a pentecostally and pneumatologically shaped, informed, and oriented point of view? How might educational pedagogy be reformed, revitalized, even charismatized, from this perspective? What does theological inquiry, scholarly pursuit, intellectual life, and life of the mind historically prominent in academia look like when reconsidered as integral to, rather than disparate from, life in the Spirit? What happens if the enterprise of theological education in this time between the times were to be reordered according to the work of the Spirit “in the last days” (Acts 2:17a), which extends to and derives from the “ends of the earth”?20

The telos aimed toward ought to be borne by conduits consistent with and supportive of such objectives. Hence, if the goal of theological education is to empower the church’s multicultural and multifaceted mission in a complex world, then a Pentecost model for such ought to be charted pneumatically. Pentecost thereby provides not just theological (pneumatological) content, but also charismatic modality: i.e., a way of doing or enacting theological education that features the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit.

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Toward a Pentecost(al) Theological Education

In this final section, I would like to tease out three programmatic trajectories of what I am calling a Pentecost paradigm for theological education: a triadic orientation, a decolonizing and dialogical arc, and a liberative horizon. Again, there is no claim here either that these exhaustively define the proposed Pentecost model, or that they are central to theological education as found in institutions affiliated with especially classical pentecostal churches and movements around the world today.21 Actually, in some respects, the approach I am suggesting may challenge the directions currently charted in our current classical pentecostal churches and movements around the world today.

Triadic Orientation Paradigm

First, a Pentecost approach anticipates and opens up to the holistic model involving (in terms popularized by Swiss pedagogue Johann Pestalozzi [1746-1827] and then developed within the Pietist tradition) heads-hearts-hands.22 Such a model encompasses minds (the cognitive) but also bodies (the affective) and activities (the behavioral). It is amenable to historic theological explication in terms connecting orthodoxy (beliefs) to orthopathy (desires) and orthopraxy (practices) as well as consistent with the ethos and sensibilities of the relational, affective, and pragmatic spirituality of pentecostal and charismatic-type churches and movements. With modern Pentecostalism having been fed by Holiness movements and embedded within the broader Pietist tradition, such a triadic conceptualization is inherent within pentecostal sensibilities and commitments, rather than an intrusion from the outside.

More importantly, this triadic frame can also be discerned from the Pentecost narrative. Recall that the outpouring of the Spirit touches down on human flesh (Acts 2:17).23 More concretely and precisely, there are tactile and kinesthetic aspects of the Spirit’s arrival. Those upon whom the Spirit descended perceived being palpably surrounded (even overwhelmed) by the “violent wind, [which] filled the entire house where they were sitting,” and testified to seeing and feeling the “divided

21For further elaboration, of which the following provides a very partial glimpse, see Yong, Renewing the Church by the Spirit: Theological Education after Pentecost, Theological Education Between the Times series (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020).
tongues, as of fire...[that] rested on each of them” (2:2-3). Classical pentecostal exegesis focuses on the speaking in other tongues, which here I want to observe as emerging from deep within their lives, bodies, and experiences of being filled by the Spirit.

Further, the Spirit-inspired speech is not the glossolalic tongues of angels that St. Paul mentions in his Corinthian letter (1 Cor. 13:2), but rather clear witness to and “about God’s deeds of power” (Acts 2:11b). Hence, the affective dimension of feeling the divine is interconnected with the intellectual and cognitive domain of testifying to and about the divine.

And last but not least, the entirety of this Pentecost event not only fulfills the promise regarding the sending and coming of the divine wind but also initiates those so imbued into the missional path of bearing witness to the risen and ascended Jesus “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (1:8b). In short, behavioral participation in the mission of God (orthopraxy) involves both affective and embodied experience in (orthopathy) and verbal and kerygmatic proclamation of (orthodoxy) the Pentecost reality.24

My claim, then, is that a Pentecost approach to theological education cannot subordinate any of these dimensions to the others. Instead, life in the Spirit involves nurturing the life of the mind and the life of mission altogether.25 Therefore, our commitments have to be on both finding pedagogical models that facilitate the integration of these domains and providing exemplars that initiate learners onto such integrated pathways of lifelong Christian discipleship, which refuse to marginalize or prioritize any of them. In other words, we are not faced with either-or choices, but rather invited to imagine theological education holistically, going beyond western academia’s cognitivism on the one side and populist pentecostal emotionalism on the other side toward a Spirit-filled

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25See also Yong, “The Spirit, the Public Sphere, and the Life of the Mind: Renewing the Theologian as Public Intellectual?” in Todd Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and Chris Devers, eds. Public Intellectuals and the Common Good (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021), forthcoming.
Theological Education between the West and the “Rest”: A Reverse “Reverse Missionary” and Pentecost Perspective

via media that attends to affectivity and praxis without negating critical thinking.26

Decolonizing and Dialogical Paradigm

Secondly, as already noted, there are substantive efforts to de-westernize theological education, both in order that such an enterprise may be more global in its discourses and that theological education can be better contextualized across the Majority World rather than be beholden to Euro-American norms and practices. Postcolonial perspectives have thus been emerging across the theological academy as scholars from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and indigenous traditions have been finding their own voices. Although some of the more radical approaches are calling for a relativization of historic creeds and confessions to western Christianities due to their contextual situatedness, most scholars are simply urging that there be a more substantive dialogue between western and Majority World churches regarding how to understand Christian faith (including theologies and dogmatic confessions) afresh in the newly emerging world Christianity.27

The Pentecost narrative is also suggestive for the contemporary task, even anticipating its challenges 2,000 years ago. Notice that the tables were turned not once but twice in Luke’s account. First, the imperial Roman world was decentered from the messianic perspective grounded in Jerusalem. Hence, what was the ends of the earth from the Roman point of view became the center. And it was from this inverted standpoint that the Christian mission sought to ring out to the Roman ‘ends’, indeed arriving there inexorably and against all odds by the end of the Acts story in chapter 28.

Yet there is also the second twist, one that we didn’t have to wait until the end of the Lukan sequel to arrive at the world’s ends. Instead, we have at the beginning, in the center of the world (which according to St. Luke would be the streets of Jerusalem) “visitors from Rome, both

26I like how pentecostal theological educator, Cheryl Bridges Johns, puts it: “The fund of knowledge is not for a few who can achieve the critical distance, but those who can achieve the critical embrace of love”; this is not a mere subjectivism, then, but a “deeper, more frightening form of criticism . . . so critical that it would allow for both students and teachers to be so claimed as to be disclaimed, to be seized and taken captive and dispossessed of everything they previously claim,” with a “resulting implosion of criticism and confession”; see Johns, “From Babel to Pentecostal: The Renewal of Theological Education,” in John S. Pobee, ed., Towards Viable Theological Education: Ecumenical Imperative, Catalyst of Renewal (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 132-46, at 140, 143, and 144 (italics Johns’).

Jews and proselytes” (2:10b). Not only that, but the wonders of God declared through the power of the Spirit on that day were also spoken in Roman tongues, we being told twice and specifically: “Each one heard them speaking in the native language of each” (2:6) and “We hear, each of us, in our own native language” (2:8). However, the point is less on the Roman presence than on the fact that in the Pentecost economy, center and periphery are already overturned. The world’s conventions of power are reorganized so much so that the outpouring of the Spirit had produced “people who have been turning the world upside down” (17:6). There are no marginal cultures or languages in God’s salvation history.28

What then does this entail for pentecostal theological education? No doubt many of its institutions in the Majority World have come about as a result of western pentecostal churches and missionary efforts (largely funded by America), which have catalyzed and sustained such enterprises. However, part of the problem here is that, as well intentioned as pentecostal missionary efforts have been to reach toward the ends of the earth (from their America-centric perspective), these efforts have promoted a deeply ethnocentric worldview, despite longstanding recognition that missionary work and vision needed to be turned over to local churches as soon as possible.29

Thus, Pentecostal theological education in the Majority World needs to grapple more seriously and in a sustained way with what it means to be self-funding, self-governing, and self-theologizing,30 not only so that they can care for themselves or be self-concerned, but so they can mature into churches that, in their own languages, activities, and initiatives, declare the glory of God for the sake of the gospel and the global church (including pentecostal and other churches in the West). This means, first of all, learning from their western (missionary) colleagues yet recognizing the socio-historical contexts within which such beliefs and practices have developed then, secondly, not merely adopting (or even

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30 These are longstanding theological and missiological commitments of even western Pentecostals – e.g., Melvin L. Hodges, The Indigenous Church (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2012) – although putting them into practice among pentecostal communities in postcolonial environments has not been as easy.
translating) such into non-western milieu but considering if and how new approaches ought to be forged.31

Liberative Horizon

Last but not least, note that the promise of Pentecost, which is for our “children, and for all who are far away” (2:39), is universally indiscriminate in its horizons. It is for all flesh—male and female, sons and daughters, young and old, slave and free—as Peter recounts, drawing from Joel, and recorded by Luke (2:17-18; cf. Joel 2:28-29). This represents the Spirit’s inauguration of the day of the Lord (2:20b), along with its enactment of justice for all (cf. Luke 4:18-20). Patriarchalism is undermined, gerontocracy is leveled out, and class divisions are overcome. The concrete manifestation is the emergence of a fellowship of the Spirit (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35) in which landowners like Barnabas (4:36-37) are mutual members with those needy who joined the apostolic community “from the towns around Jerusalem” (5:16). No one is excluded from participation in the Pentecost outpouring, and it is precisely those marginalized by imperial Rome who are now brought into the center of God’s redemptive plan.32

Of course, theological education in the western world is principally egalitarian, meaning that not only that many (except for those with complementarian convictions regarding male and female having distinct gender roles) accept and train women for ministry but also many attempt to scholarship students of color, who are often underrepresented in the graduate-level educational enterprise. In my view, all of this ought to be applauded even while we reconsider also the curricular and pedagogical dimensions of such a Pentecost perspective. Should not these multicultural, multiethnic, teleological, and ethical themes be part and parcel of the missiological heart of any theological program of inquiry? And should we not also teach, by way of embodying solidarity with the poor or empowering students from communities from beyond the western hemisphere, how to be missionally engaged as part of (not as

31 As one example: thinking about other faiths in a Christendom (western) context is different than when considering religious pluralism in Asia; thus South Asian Pentecostal theologian Ivan Satyavrata, *God Has Not Left Himself without Witness* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), proposes a more inclusive approach than most other western Pentecostals (except perhaps Tony Richie, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Religions: Encountering Cornelius Today* [Cleveland: CPT, 2013]).

extracurricular to) their course of study? 33 In short, missiology or mission studies ought to become more prominent in the theological curriculum even as liberative praxis ought to be more pronounced. 34

Despite modern Pentecostalism’s many exemplary female pastors, evangelists, and missionaries, there remains a glass ceiling for women in pentecostal churches and communities. 35 Further, although Pentecostals focus much on divine healing of human bodies, they are otherwise more spiritually concerned about salvation vis-à-vis the afterlife than about addressing and engaging social and economic injustices in this world. 36 Much of this derives from North American Pentecostalism’s taking the side of fundamentalists against liberals in the early twentieth century debates and then exporting such perspectives to their pentecostal compatriots in the Majority World over the last 100 years. Might Global South pentecostal theological institutions revisit the scriptural witness to the Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit not for the purpose of dismissing their North American colleagues’ perspectives but rather to enrich and enlarge their missional vision? 37 Mission ought to be at the heart of the theological education task, and this is why our heart for mission ought to be as wide as that of the missionary God. 38

May pentecostal theological education in this second century of the movement mature in helping its churches and the church ecumenical and

33 See Love L. Sechrest, Johnny Ramírez-Johnson, and Amos Yong, eds., Can “White” People Be Saved? Triangulating Race, Theology, and Mission, Missiological Engagements (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018); note the scare quotes around “white,” which means that the question therefore refers not to individuals but to those racialized according to Eurocentric cultural norms instead of according to the gospel, so that our book charts trajectories for what it means to engage in Christian witness that decenters Euro-Americanism so that the many tongues of world Christianity can be heard.


36 Except see changes, gradual as they might be, on this front: Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).


catholic at large, including North American pentecostal churches that sent missionaries to the ends of their earth a generation and before, to more vigorously embrace and participate in the *missio Dei* in anticipation of the coming rule and reign of God.39

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39Thanks to my graduate assistant Jeremy Bone for proofreading this essay; all errors of fact or interpretation remain my own responsibility.
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Influence of Pentecostal Spirituality to Asian Christianity  

by Julie Ma

Introduction

Pentecostals have traditionally maintained their unique belief that empowerment of the Holy Spirit is for evangelism and mission. However, in recent decades, they have broadened the concept (as well as the scope of mission) to embrace social concerns.¹ Many Pentecostal missionaries now engage in a broad spectrum of social work, such as HIV/AIDS intervention and care, relief for the hungry and destitute, involvement in media, education, and others. The focus of such ‘progressive Pentecostals’ may have contributed, in part, to the rise of Pentecostal consciousness of and engagement in social issues. These trends are particularly noted among Pentecostals in the Global South.² Nevertheless, despite this encouraging development, they still maintain as a priority the proclamation of the Gospel, with the experience of signs and wonders to augment evangelistic efforts.

Historical records show that, in the global South, healing was a part of religious practices and expectations, both in Christianity and in other religions, even before arrival of the Pentecostal faith. The Pentecostals’ focused emphasis on manifestations of the supernatural power of God has rightly aligned with this general religious expectation. As a result, while Pentecostalism flourished among such a mindset, it has also influenced fellow Christians in expectation, theology, and mission practices. As it steadily expanded its mission theology and practice to include social issues, Pentecostalism has been considered an important missions player, for example, in the south and Southeast Asia region.

In this study, I will explore the Pentecostal impact on non-Pentecostal churches in this region through the demonstration of divine

power, social ministry, and others. As the discussion progresses, I also want to probe as to whether there is an increasing openness to each other.

Expansion of Global Pentecostalism

Development of the present-day Pentecostal movement is an unprecedented experience. At the turn of the previous century, the movement began with a ‘fringe crowd’ congregating every day in a deteriorating storeroom in downtown Los Angeles, California, most of them having been marked as “religious fanatics, but who were urged to spread throughout the world and to impact other church institutions.”3 Although statistics vary,4 there is general agreement that the movement has grown to where it now claim about half a billion followers worldwide. Besides the numerical growth, it has embraced diverse systems and traditions, including Charismatics well incorporated into many present churches.5 It further describes,

The significance of Pentecostal expansion was evident as the world church celebrated the centenary of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. In its original 1910 conference, Pentecostals were in their infancy. The disappearance of the Azusa Street Mission in 1909, perhaps the most visible expression of Pentecostal Christianity, after a three-year controversial existence, may have been a relief to some Christian leaders who felt embarrassed by this “tongue-babbling cultish group.”6 So, the Edinburgh conference did not need to worry about them. They were already struggling with issues surrounding the Catholic Church. However, Pentecostals did not ‘die out.’ In fact, the dramatic expansion of Christianity owes much to the exponential growth of Pentecostal churches and their variants. By the time the world church came to celebrate the centenary of the Edinburgh conference in June 2010, the radical shift of the landscape of global Christianity was crystal clear. A hundred years ago, about 82% of all Christians lived in the global North, or the ‘West,’ including

3Wonsuk Ma, “‘When the Poor are Fired Up’: The Role of Pneumatology in Pentecostal Charismatic Mission,” Transformation 24 (Jan. 2007), 30
5Ibid., 103.
Oceania. But today, over 60% of Christians live in the global South, the three major southern continents.  

The anticipation is that expansion of Christianity in the South will continue well into the foreseeable future. Concurrently, Pentecostal worship and spirituality will also continue to grow.

What, then, is the future significance of global Christianity? To gauge that, let us look at the various continents. For Africa, the exponential growth witnessed in the last century is expected to continue. Indeed, the annual growth rate of Christianity in Africa the first two decades of this present century is a mind-boggling 2.89%, compared to 1.27% for global Christianity over the same period!  

For Latin America, Christian growth is more often the result of transfers among church traditions. For Asia, Christianity stands at almost 9% of that continent’s vast population of 3.5 billion, which is more than half the world’s population. And within Asia, Chinese Christianity is estimated to be close to 10% of that nation’s population (although obtaining any reasonably accurate count is a formidable challenge). All told, the growth of Asian Christianity remains strong (rate of 1.89%), surpassing significantly that of world Christianity (rate of 1.20%).

So where is Pentecostalism situated to contribute to the continuing growth of Christianity? And equally importantly, what gifts would it bring to the shaping of Christian spirituality in Asia?

Influence of Pentecostalism in Asia

A century ago, most of Asia battled with diverse colonial forces. Although varying in the relationships between the colonizers and the colonized, loss of national identities and dignity was a common experience. Under harsh colonial rules, massacres, sex slaving for the colonial army, and attempts to eradicate national languages were commonly practiced against the people. As the birthplace of all the world’s major religions plus the widespread powerful influence of

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9Ibid., 95.
various forms of animism, religion has played a vital role in meeting a variety of the people’s needs. Even after the “advent of modern education and economic development along with political independence from the middle of the twentieth century, religious faiths, both native and foreign to Asia, persist in all the East and Southeast Asian countries.”

It is within this social context that Pentecostal faith quickly spread among the socially marginalized. Pentecostal’s lively worship, anticipation of God’s immediate interference, theology of empowerment by the Spirit, and outward signs (e.g., speaking in tongues, healing) have stimulated the swiftest rising in Asia. Emphasis on an experiential dimension of religious life and the affecting aspect of human life has brought a powerful emotional and social release and introduced “religious experience.”

Pentecostal and Charismatic beliefs and practices meet a specific plea from the needy and desperate, whose voices are often not heard. The message of a God who can supernaturally intervene in daily concerns is indeed good news. “The promise of good health and blessing, in spite of controversies, re-establishes the materiality of Christian salvation both to individuals, and families, and communities.” As a consequence, in numerous East and Southeast Asian countries, a steady “social mobility has been observed among Pentecostal and Charismatic believers.”

**Transformative Impact of The Pentecostal Faith**

South Korea’s Yoido Full Gospel Church

The Yoido Full-Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, is the largest single congregation in the world, David Yonggi Cho being its founder and now senior pastor emeritus. Upon completing his theological education in 1958, Cho and his future mother-in-law, Jasil Choi, began their ministry among the urban poor in war-torn Seoul. Despite initial harassment for their message of miracles and deliverance out of life’s struggle, “the five-member tent church began to grow rapidly to 600 members by 1961. Church growth accelerated after moving to Yoido, and a newly built church on 23 September 1973. Its membership reached

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13 Ibid., 64.

100,000 in 1797; 200,000 in November 1980; 500,000 in 1985; 700,000 in 1992, and 755,000 in 2007.”

Cho’s Pentecostal messages of hope and healing had reached far beyond his congregation to the devastated post-war population, including to non-believers. The appearance of those messages couldn’t have found a better audience than the whole of society, which was in despairing, deficient, and marginalized. They needed a word of consolation as well as the basic provisions for daily survival. In any society, when people face political and social crisis, they want to hear a voice of peace and comfort; and when they experience injustice, they seek fairness and equal rights to be brought into the situation. Also, such an unstable social situation causes people to pay attention to a message of hope. Not only was Cho’s preaching fiery, it also held the claims of God’s miraculous healing. Thus, his Pentecostal messages began to transform the hearts and attitude of Seoul’s slum inhabitants. His perspective of salvation was and still is inclusive spiritually, emotionally, and physically. His ministry has powerfully demonstrated the role of the Gospel as a significant means of radical social change.

Another factor of Cho’s influence was his stress on prayer, frequently with fasting. Besides the usual prayer meetings (including daily dawn ones), he instituted weekly Friday all-night meetings and soon established a large ‘prayer mountain’ on the outskirts of Seoul. Cho believed that, through prayer, God’s people and churches in Korea would experience his closeness, overcome desperation, and bring hope to all who approach him.

Still another influencing factor is Yoida Church’s cell-group system, which effectively utilized “large numbers of women lay leaders.” This was a drastic and counter-cultural choice in a male dominant and privileged society. The system has brought liberation and empowerment to women as ministerial leaders. “Cell units conceived as sub-churches grew rapidly practicing worship, prayer, and fellowship.” The cell units are particularly useful for evangelism, as people find it easy to participate in a home group. In this mega-church, the cell-unit structure minimizes lostness of the individual in a sea of people. The home environment and

16Ibid.
19Ibid.
small size of each unit prove conducive to providing pastoral care. Success of the cell-group system has encouraged almost all the Korean churches, regardless of their denominational affiliation, to implement the system by preparing lay women leaders through training.

**The Impact of Prayer Mountain**

As previously mentioned, prayer has always been one of Yoida Church’s the most influencing elements. Cho’s partner in the pastoral ministry, Jashil Choi,²⁰ enormously influenced the congregation through prayer and by what she spent hours each day in the 1970s praying for—establishment of a prayer mountain. Although recognizing the formidable financial challenge, Choi never abandoned her vision; in fact, over time it grew stronger. Every night, she would go to where that prayer mountain would some day be (at that time, a cemetery north of Seoul) and pray that the ministry of a prayer mountain would be used to bring people into personal encounters with God and to begin a prayer movement.²¹

In response to her determination, the Osan-ri Pray Mountain (now called the Jashil Choi International Fasting Prayer Mountain) was established in 1973; and people from all walks of life and denominational churches began flocking to it. Known for its emphasis on fasting and for stories of healings and miracles, Prayer Mountain attract Christians first from neighboring countries, such as Japan and Taiwan, and then international visitors, all of whom wanted to learn an innovative “spiritual dimension through prayer with fasting.”²² As the years go by, testimonies of God’s miraculous work (especially in healing) have multiplied, attracting more people to experience God’s reality. Even non-believers have experienced healing and the transformation of life.²³

Fasting displays how earnest the people of God are, especially in time of need. Arthur Wallis notes that fasting makes prayer ascend up as on eagle’s wings. It is meant to usher the supplicant into the spectators’ room of the Lord and to extend to him the golden scenery. It may be anticipated to drive back the oppressing powers of darkness and loosen their grip on the prayer objective. . . .²⁴

²⁰Jashil Choi passed away in 1989 during a mission trip to America.
²²Ibid.
²³Ibid., 433.
Jashil Choi’s vision for Prayer Mountain has set a new model for Korean Pentecostal spirituality by heightening the long religious traditions of Korea—prayer and fasting. With its popularity, Prayer Mountain has been the setting for many ecumenical encounters, drawing people from a wide variety of church traditions but ever united by pressing human needs and expectation of God’s transformative work. Further, Choi’s Prayer Mountain has motivated a rise of similar prayer mountains or houses in Korea and elsewhere. Through continuous preaching of the immediate work of the Holy Spirit, it has consistently propagated pneumatology on a grassroots and experiential level. “Ultimately . . . it was the Holy Spirit who accomplished the vision, as, during the early period of the prayer mountain, Choi fasted as frequently as three days a week.”

The Revivals in Malaysia

From 1935 through 1940, famous Chinese evangelist John Sung toured throughout the countries in southeast Asian conducting huge Charismatic healing and evangelistic meetings. Considering that, in Muslim-majority Malaysia (and later Singapore), most Christians were either Chinese or Indian, Sung’s influence was acutely felt within the Chinese communities. Beginning about the same time as Sung but lasting into the 1960s, Hong Kong actress Kong Duen Yee (popularly known as Mui Yee) played an important part through her Pentecostal revival meetings. Also, in 1936 and 1937, American Pentecostal missionaries conducted large tent evangelistic meetings in Kuala Lumpur. All these unrelated but concentrated efforts by Pentecostal preachers resulted in the experience of Spirit baptism especially among young people, many of whom would make lifetime commitments for full-time ministry.

Starting in 1960, the Bible Institute of Malaysia became influential in development of the Pentecostal movement, with many BIM graduates from 1960 to 1980 becoming evangelists and church planters. As a result, the movement, often marked by healing manifestations, even touched many non-Pentecostal churches. In 1973 in East Malaysia, the Barrio Revival began among Christian youth in Borneo and quickly spread throughout the entire island via these Spirit-filled young people functioning as zealous evangelists. This revival movement eventually impacted the whole nation, including West Malaysia. Today, Sidang Inji


Borneo Church, the largest denomination in Malaysia, continues to exhibit its Charismatic faith with a strong mission commitment.27

The Pentecostal Holistic Mission in India

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) was known as an Indian Christian “reformer, Bible translator and social activist, particularly involved in the revival movement in her mission.”28 Her Mukti Mission and the revival played key roles in the rise of Pentecostalism in India. Because of her high profile in civic engagement, her influence spread far and wide. Also, a revival movement among children and women at her mission was reported both by “the emerging Pentecostal press in India, and especially in Britain and North America.”29

After earning academic degrees in England and the United States, she returned to India in 1889 and soon established a ministry for widows near Bombay (now Mumbai), which a year later moved to Pune. In 1895, she began a mission on a farm she purchased in nearby Kedgaon. By this time, she changed her ministry from “religiously neutral” to an explicitly “evangelical Christian organization”30—a move that resulted in her Hindu parents no longer supporting her work. She called this mission “Mukti,” which means ‘salvation,’ its main goal being to provide housing for underprivileged girls and young women. Many of them were suffering from childhood marriages and widowhood, while others were rescued from hunger. “There were 48 young women and girls in 1896; but throughout that year, 300 girls were liberated from starvation in Madhya Pradesh. By 1900, nearly 2,000 people were cared for.”31

Ramabai’s social work, which was based on a deep spiritual foundation, challenged other churches to likewise advocate for the underprivileged and engage in social ministry. By 1905, her Pentecostal community’s holistic ministry efforts became known internationally,

29Ibid.
30Ibid.
even before the revival took place.\textsuperscript{32} Ramabai’s solid mission vision progressed to the point where by 1907,\textsuperscript{33}

\ldots the Mission had expanded to include a rescue mission, a hospital, and oil-press, a blacksmith forge, a printing press, a complete school that provided college entrance training, a school for the blind, and training departments in teaching, nursing, weaving, tailoring, bread and butter making, tinning, laundering, masonry, carpentry and farming.\textsuperscript{34}

**Jesus Is Lord Church in the Philippines**

Jesus Is Lord Church grew out of a small Bible study group at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines in Manila in 1978, which was led by Eddie Villanueva, a professor of economics and finance. Following his radical conversion experience from Communism, Villanueva seized every opportunity to share the Gospel with students. Each year, his group grew exponentially to where, within a decade, Jesus Is Lord Church claimed five million members, with satellite fellowships all over the Philippines and beyond. Becoming the largest Charismatic church in the nation, with its primary focus on a holistic mission,\textsuperscript{35} the growth of the JILC and the expansion of its influence were staggering. Joseph Suico explains,

Soon the church expanded to an international multi-ministry network, establishing churches in various cities of Asia, Australia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Canada, America,


\textsuperscript{33}See Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 77; and S.M. Adhav, “Pandita Ramabai” (Chennai, India: Christian Literature Society, 1979), 114-15. “Ramabai became nationalistic because of the repression of ‘British rulers’ and their arrogance towards Indian social structures . . . She was a dedicated ecumenist before the word was coined in the twentieth century, deploring the divisions within Christianity and pleading for a united Indian church.” See also R.E. Hedlund, *Quest for Identity: India’s Churches of Indigenous Origins—the ‘Little Tradition’ in Indian Christianity* (Chennai and Delhi, India: Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies and Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000), 160: “Gauri interprets Ramabai’s conversion as a quest for intellectual and spiritual freedom . . . Ramabai set about ‘refashioning Christianity to her own requirements,’ says Gauri. If so, it is not surprising that in Ramabai one finds an incipient Indian Christian nationalism expressed in a critique of missionary paternalism and rejection of colonial control.”

\textsuperscript{34}Mukti Prayer-Bell (Kedgaon, India: Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission, 1907), 21-22.

The church maintains 106 Sunday worship sites in Metro Manila, 25 in Bulacan Province, and 275 in the rest of the country. Also, there are 72 international sites in 27 countries, totaling 478 worship sites with two million worshippers altogether. The church also runs a television station (ZOE TV-II) that broadcasts church services. Once [sic] the Jesus Is Lord was the only Pentecostal-Charismatic group in the nation that operated a school system from nursery, kindergarten, whole primary and high school to university.36

Jesus Is Lord Church is especially well known for its attention to social issues. As observed above, it utilizes its educational network to prepare future leaders and its broadcasting systems to spread the message of hope, peace, and love. Among its outreaches to local communities, Jesus Is Lord is providing low-cost education to urban and rural families and opening Bible studies in many civic and governmental organizations. Its engagement with social sectors through holistic ministries has challenged both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal churches to likewise help address social issues as part of their mission agendas.

The Healing Revival in Myanmar

In Myanmar, healing crusades were favorably used during the early stages of the Pentecostal movement and brought marvelous results. In such meetings, many would come from a variety of denominational churches in the given locality and be exposed to the Pentecostal belief in Spirit baptism and healing. For example, the evangelistic meetings of Harvey McAlister in the 1950s and Mabel Willetts in 1961 were characterized by extraordinary manifestations of God’s power, the result being that many were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and the experience of healings was common. These meetings often started with the Spirit descending upon the gathering and would spread into a “veritable deluge.”37 Their preaching marked the beginning of the widespread of Pentecostal beliefs and experiences.

In the early 1970s, Hau Lian Kham, a Baptist-turned-Pentecostal among the Chin tribe, and Myo Chit, a long-time leader of the Burmese Pentecostal movement, made a noticeable “contribution in the renewal and revival movement” across both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal Churches:

36Ibid.
Kham Hau Lian’s evangelistic ministry during 1987-89 was profound, with unique experiences of crying and laughing and being slain in the Spirit. At another evangelistic meeting in Suangzang during May 1988, the village priest, who was sick to the point of death, experienced God’s healing touch and instantaneously converted during these evangelistic meetings. Yet, at another evangelistic meeting in Tedim town during July and August 1988, around five to seven thousand attended the service. Again, the move of the Spirit was so strong that many people came to the Lord, received healing, were ‘slain in the Spirit’, and were speaking in tongues. These evangelistic meetings were celebrated with singing and dancing ‘in the Spirit’. Many children became Christians during these meetings, and more than thirty of them went out for evangelism to nearby villages.38

By year 2000, the Assemblies of God of Myanmar had a membership of 84,158, not only growing in number and influence but also in mission consciousness, which, in turn, fueled further growth.39

Influence of Pentecostal Spirituality and Social Engagement on Asian Churches

The immediacy of Pentecostal spirituality, often through manifestations of God’s supernatural power, has long been the hallmark of the Pentecostal belief. In revival meetings, whether taking place in a local church or in a park, healing through proclamation and prayer has been a regular feature. In Asia, because most religions include belief in healing, Christians show more openness to this Pentecostal message. It was the western construct of theology, introduced by western missionaries, that tended to hinder the appropriation of such practices in a church’s worship and life. In Asia, however, inter-church evangelistic meetings create an environment where messages of healing are openly preached and warmly received; and prayer mountains serve a similar purpose as participants from diverse ecclesial traditions come together with a common and intense expectation of God’s intervention.


Equally significant is the community-forming aspect of the Pentecostal faith. The Christianity that was introduced in Korea was a western and individualistic form of faith. Thus, the conservative and evangelical tendency among Korean Christians accentuated the individual dimension of faith. Such ran against the socio-cultural fabrics of Korean society, where communal interests precede personal concerns. It was Cho’s Yoido Full Gospel Church’s home cell-group system and its Prayer Mountain that have brought back the communal dimension of Christian faith. Both have provided common space where people facing similar challenges, regardless of their church traditions, are coming together to share with and pray for one another.

Also, Pentecostal worship features several important elements that foster community-building. One is unison prayer, in which all worshippers are invited to raise their voices in a ‘prayer concert,’ and many pray in tongues as the Spirit motivates. Although popularized by Yoido Church, this was routinely practiced at the turn of the last century by True Jesus Church in China. Unison prayer, often in tongues, enhances the identity and community-forming process:

Once they pray [together in ritual], they hear their own voice as well as that of others. They thus confirm the copresence of all the participants which includes God, themselves and their fellow members. Amplification of the prayer sound indicates that the church community is strong in faith and well-orchestrated in action.40

As discussed previously, Cho’s messages of hope for people in devastating situations were well received, as were his awakening words to both Pentecostal and other denominational churches. Also, his cell-group system influenced others to adopt it in their own churches. Additionally, Prayer Mountain astonishingly impacted many non-Pentecostals to come there to pray and fast with Cho’s people for healing and other prayer needs. Communal and unison prayer has become common in many churches in Korea and elsewhere.

The other feature of Pentecostal worship that has enhanced the community-forming process is the sharing of testimonies, which takes various means and avenues. For example, in mountain churches in the northern Philippines, members spend considerable time sharing with each other their spiritual experiences. One’s experience is soon

‘communally owned’ through an interpretive and discernment process. At Yoido Full Gospel Church, its highly successful monthly magazine regularly publishes testimonies of God’s intervention, healing, and miracles. Pentecostal ethos and spirituality have positively facilitated the process of community formation.

Expectation of God’s intervention and Cho’s message of hopes have had a transformative effect at both the individual and communal level. As Pentecostal preaching seeks immediate relevancy, real-life struggles are often the basis of sermons. Yoido Church’s weekly overnight prayer meetings at Prayer Mountain were instituted so that all could bring their pressing needs to the Lord in concerted prayer. Such meetings attracted Christians from other churches to experience God’s immediate answer. Soon, all-night prayer was adopted by almost all the churches in Korea. The cell group meetings also regularly collect members’ immediate prayer needs and take time to pray for each of them. Through this process, Pentecostal believers form a more positive attitude towards life, even if they generally come from the lower social strata.

Pentecostalism has also returned the consciousness of the spirit world to Christianity. Most forms of Christian faith introduced to Asia by western missionaries had removed the elements of the spirit world and its impact on our lives. Although to a lesser degree, Asian Evangelical churches seldom spoke about evil spirits, demons, and the like. It was Pentecostalism which re-introduced the reality of the spirit world, along with the person and work of the Holy Spirit. While most religions in Asia and Africa do acknowledge the existence and activity of the spirits (both benevolent and malevolent), traditional forms of Christianity found itself helpless when cases of demon possession were presented to the churches. It is the Pentecostals who actively engaged the spirit world through power encounters. As part of healing prayer, often demons are rebuked for causing physical and emotional disturbances. This has challenged Asian Christianity to rethink the reality of spirit beings and recover it into Christian theology and life.

In many places, Pentecostals have introduced a two-pronged approach—spiritual engagement, such as power encounter, and holistic ministry, as seen in Jesus Is Lord Church in the Philippines and Ramabai’s social intervention in India. The research undertaken by Miller and Yamamori convincingly demonstrates Pentecostal commitment to human suffering. The influence of such a balanced approach has thus encouraged non-Pentecostal churches in Asia to take issues of life seriously.

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Concluding Remarks

I have discussed Pentecostals’ empirical experiences of God’s power and their unique ministries in diverse occasions in numerous Asian countries. Further, I have shown their influence on non-Pentecostal churches concerning supernatural healing, the cell-group system, prayer mountains, holistic ministry, etc. Also, as mentioned briefly, in the early stages of our movement, the traditional denominational church was hesitant to recognize and accept Pentecostals as a decent Christian group. However, in current times, more and more denominational fellowships are open to and even embrace the Pentecostal Church. Because there seems to be a mutual understanding of different beliefs and practices, this has brought them closer as partners in God’s ministry.

My study has explored the locus of modern Pentecostalism and the Asian Church in the context of today’s global Christianity. Then, through several examples, this study has identified the key characteristics of Pentecostal faith and spirituality in Asia. Pentecostal’s belief in God’s immediate intervention and their experience of his power inform their attitude, life, and ministry in diverse social contexts of Asia. The same orientation has given birth to several unique expressions of Christian life, such as the cell-group system, prayer mountains, holistic ministry, and so on.

When the Pentecostal faith was first introduced to Asia, mainstream churches refused to consider and accept Pentecostal churches as a decent Christian group. But as they grew in number and stature, the influence of their faith and life began to increase upon the non-Pentecostal churches, first in worship and prayer and then in the work of the Holy Spirit. More denominational churches are now open and even embrace Pentecostal faith and ethos. This also demonstrates the maturity and confidence of the Pentecostal Church in its identity and relationship with other ecclesial bodies. Consequently, there seems to be a growing mutual understanding among different belief traditions. As Asian societies face more challenges, partnership in ministry among the churches will be needed more than ever. For this reason, such an increase in inter-church relationship is encouraging. Pentecostals, as well as Christianity as a whole in Asia, have come a long way. I anticipate there will be more opportunities to dialogue as well as work together as one body in Christ.
Bibliography


The Spirit and Biblical Interpretation: Spirit Hermeneutics

by Craig S. Keener

Introduction

In this article, originally written for a presentation at Oral Roberts College of Theology and Ministry, I am condensing material from my book *Spirit Hermeneutics* and some subsequent discussions. (Further documentation will be found there.)\(^1\) I am leaving out some other discussions treated in the book, such as biblical epistemology,\(^2\) so as to focus here on two commonly discussed sides of Spirit hermeneutics.\(^3\) At the risk of suspense, I will preface my remarks by noting that I am a charismatic biblical scholar who fully affirms both sides of what I am addressing here.

My forty-hour course on biblical interpretation for seminarians starts with the literary context of the immediate passage and the entire book in which it appears, moves to the context of the inspired author’s style and word usage elsewhere, the biblical-theological context of how a passage draws on earlier biblical revelation, the linguistic context of how the words were used in the author’s setting, and the cultural-historical context that the author was addressing. As my background commentary exemplifies, my personal scholarly focus has been providing the ancient Jewish, Greek and Roman background for the New

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\(^2\) Treated in *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 153-204.

\(^3\) The two hermeneutical camps are helpfully identified by L. William Oliverio, Jr., *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account* (Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies 12; Leiden: Brill, 2012).
Testament to which most Bible readers otherwise lack access. After introducing these elementary principles I turn to special hermeneutics—that is, attention to the particular genres in the Bible.

More concisely here, I shall simply rehearse at the outset my reasons for emphasizing ancient meaning, that is, for trying to hear the message as it is apparently designed to communicate between the ancient author and audience. I will return to this subject at the end when addressing the dangers of neglecting “original” meaning. Between these discussions, however, I will emphasize at fuller length an aspect of interpretation that typically receives much less emphasis in academic settings.

We should consider not only the ancient context of the original message, but also “hear what the Spirit says to the churches” today. I shall not make an argument here for Scripture’s inspiration, a sometimes controversial point on which I might elaborate in the future; for the sake of time constraints I shall simply accept that belief, shared by most Christians through history, as an axiom that most of us here also share.

**Reading in Light of the Ancient Contexts**

I do concede that God, being sovereign, may speak through Scripture out of context—but I also would contend that this is not the canonical meaning that we have the right to teach others on the authority of Scripture. God can speak through anything noncanonical he cares to, even Balaam’s donkey or preachers like me. When I was a new Christian convert eager to abandon my homework, which was translating Caesar’s *Gallic War*, in favor of exclusively reading my Bible, I flipped open the Bible and stuck my finger down. I expected it to declare, “Forsake all and follow me.” Instead, to my grave disappointment, it urged, “Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s” (Luke 20:25). I acquiesced and did my homework. But what if I had gone around to churches proclaiming, “God showed me in the Bible that you are all supposed to translate Caesar?” That is simply not the contextual, canonical meaning of the text, the universal basis for all our other appeals to how its authority applies to our diverse situations.

Because God knows the future, Scripture may indeed contain revelation the full import of which is not always evident to interpreters until after the fact—such as pre-Christian readers envisioning Christ

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5On a popular level, I treat some of this material in The Bible in its Context, available free in several languages at http://www.craigkeener.com/free-resources/.

6What has traditionally been called sensus plenior.
coming twice. Yet it would be precarious to make that expectation for a fuller meaning a normative principle for interpretation, especially when we have not already witnessed a fulfillment. If the explanation of not-yet-fulfilled dimensions is in the hands of simply anyone who claims to speak for the Spirit, we return to subjective claims without a canon to anchor us. God can outline new insights related to older promises (e.g., Dan 9:2, 21-27), but they should be consistent with his message, come from trustworthy agents, and should pan out. Most modern “prophecy teachers” have a very poor track record of their interpretations panning out, and they have to recycle interpretations of passages as news headlines change.7

When our reuse of biblical language is not consistent with its original point, we owe our hearers the courtesy of letting them know that we are speaking on, at best, the authority of our own experience of the Spirit, not on the authority of Scripture itself. In so doing, we acknowledge that our own finite hearing remains subject to correction if it diverges from the already-tested canon of Scripture. The very point of having a canon warns that we dare not place personal revelation about Scripture, or even a particular group’s claim to revelation about Scripture, above Scripture itself. To do so no longer allows the revelation that we all share to arbitrate other claims to revelation, and leads to the interpretive and consequently theological chaos that characterizes much of popular Christianity today. We need to be ready to speak correctly to such abuses, to the extent that God gives us a hearing among those willing to listen.

Apart from extraordinary revelations, a full-orbed hermeneutic invites us to take into account the ancient as well as modern contexts. Trying our best to hear the original meaning may be out of fashion in some contemporary hermeneutics, but I believe that it still matters, since that is what we as Christians with a shared canon can be absolutely confident that the Holy Spirit originally inspired. It is important to have that canonical authority over us, especially as we dialogue, about what is true, with members of other interpretive communities, whether Christian or (as in the case of Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormons) marginal ones.

Certainly not everyone is called to research the ancient milieu firsthand; specialists can provide this background and other teachers can draw from it as needed. Yet readers who have it available should take account of it when needed, and I believe that sometimes, as when even many scholars oppose women in ministry, they often do not know the background well enough to recognize their need for it.

7See e.g., Dwight Wilson’s Armageddon Now! The Premillenarian Response to Russia and Israel Since 1917 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977); Richard Kyle’s The Last Days Are Here Again (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).
That the Bible comes to us in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek and much of it, such as its history and many letters, recounts or addresses particular historical situations, shows that God is practical, caring about real people in concrete situations. That God gave us the Bible in this form means that we need to attend to the particular shape in which God inspired these documents, shaped to address those concrete realities. The Spirit who speaks to us in Scripture will speak a message consistent with the message that the Spirit originally inspired.

Scripture is more than text, but God did provide it in textual form, which invites us to engage it in part textually. It is more than its constituent genres, but inspired ancient biographies and ancient letters, for example, are still ancient biographies and ancient letters. That is why Paul first names himself and then his audience, in contrast to modern letters. Scripture’s message is eternal, but it was communicated in ancient languages, written in ancient alphabets, uses ancient literary forms and often refers to ancient events. The Holy Spirit inspired it in these forms.

Understanding these forms helps prevent them from being obstacles to us hearing these texts afresh; their very concreteness in one setting invites us to respond to them in concrete ways in other settings.

Just as we translate the language, we take into account the background it takes for granted. Just as the Word became flesh with a particular ethnicity in a particular time and place, identifying with all of us because we too are shaped in historical particularities, so the books of Scripture came to us shaped by their historical particularities so we will take seriously our own historical particularities. Thus we should value hearing the settings that shaped Scripture with its particularities as well as the multiplicity of settings in which we hear it afresh today.

Such study requires engaging the texts intellectually; Proverbs urges us to seek wisdom and knowledge, so long as they are founded on the fear of the Lord. Contrary to some church traditions and my own resistance as a young Christian, the Spirit is not limited to engaging the affective aspect of our personalities; God is at work in our intellects when we seek to understand a text. Scripture teaches that the Spirit works with and renews our minds (Rom 8:5-7; 12:2; 1 Cor 2:16; 14:15) as well as our spirits (Rom 8:16; 1 Cor 14:14).8

Granted, we do not have access to the ancient human authors’ minds.9 But the text, together with some knowledge of the cultural setting, often allows us to infer to some degree the sorts of issues the text was designed to address. I could use a hammer as a weapon—if I were not pretty much a pacifist—but the shape of my hammer suggests that it was especially designed for pounding (and removing) nails. If I take a biblical warning meant to scare sinners into repentance, and use it to squeeze tithes out of impoverished seminarians, I may not be employing a passage in the sense for which it was designed. If I take Paul’s praise of love outlasting tongues to mean that tongues passed away when the Apostle John died, I am not using the text in the sense for which it was designed.

Further granted, our reconstructions of background vary in degrees of probability and still leave lacunae in our knowledge. The point is not that our background knowledge will be perfect but that we should do the best we can, which is usually considerably better than what we do if we do not try. The text itself, in its literary context, gives us much of what we need, with available backgrounds supplementing and often confirming.

My point is that literary and historical context can help us understand why the text is shaped the particular way that it is, and thus draw from it the sort of inferences consistent with, rather than inconsistent with, its original design. Certainly I do agree that we recontextualize its message as we hear Scripture afresh in a range of contexts; I initiated and coedited a book of global readings.10 Still, the original context is the foundational context that shaped the texts whose message we seek to recontextualize.

Hearing it helps protect us from the dangers of overcontextualized interpretations. All the slaveholder theologians I have read proof-texted the Bible on slavery without regard for literary and historical context11—in contrast to all the abolitionist theologians I have read, who took these

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9Cf. e.g., Christopher Spinks, *The Bible and the Crisis of Meaning: Debates on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Bloomsbury, 2007), 44, 82, 92, 122; John Farrell, *The Varieties of Authorial Intention: Literary Theory Beyond the Intentional Fallacy* (Springer, 2017), 43.


things into account. (I treat this material more extensively elsewhere.)

More deliberate was the Aryan contextualization supported by Nazi-aligned churches, which tried to supplant the Jewishness of the Jesus who came in the flesh in a very real and different historical context.

Normal textual principles for interpretation remain relevant to Scripture because God inspired the Bible textually, in literary form. All these principles are relevant for texts in general, and most of the genres in the Bible are genres that also existed, in at least a fairly close form, in the biblical world outside the Bible. And I personally regularly find that the Spirit helps me in using such context. I do not find spiritual life in ancient background, but I often find the Spirit using that background in helping me hear the text more clearly.

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Some today criticize any appeal to ancient context as “modernist”—despite many thinkers through most of history, including Chrysostom and many Reformers, deeming it merely common sense. I see it as common courtesy: normally we try to understand what someone is trying to communicate to us.\textsuperscript{15} If understanding it is crucial to us, we will even learn the language and context of the communicator, or will depend on resources (such as translation and background information) that help us.

Taking seriously the fact that God repeatedly chose to inspire human authors requires us to take seriously the human dimensions of the text—the linguistic and cultural matrices in which the text is encoded. Such authors sought to communicate, and if we are truly interested in God’s word the way he gave it through these authors, we will seek to hear what they sought to communicate. Even deconstructionists apparently want readers to understand something of their point, and the ancient authors were hardly deconstructionists.

**Hearing the Other Author**

As Christians, however, we also believe in another level of authorship, through the inspiration of the Spirit (2 Tim 3:16). Knowing this Author’s context also matters, inviting us to consider the wider canonical, theological context, and what we know of the Author through our personal and corporate relationship with him. Academics typically screen out this level when discussing texts in an academic forum that lacks consensus about divine activity. But as I have unfortunately learned from experience, methodological naturalism, if not kept in its place, can reshape our own personal approach to the biblical text, with disastrous spiritual consequences.

But when we listen and speak among ourselves as Christians, the divine context is the most important context of all! Without sufficient attention to literary and historical context, we run the risk of distorting what we think the Bible cumulatively teaches theologically. Without sufficient attention to the divine authorial context, however, we risk neglecting the very response that the biblical message invites from us.

One reason that I agreed to write this article was to affirm personal hearing of the Spirit in the biblical text, because some leading colleagues in promoting Bible background have argued against this, and I wanted to be clear that the ancient meaning is not the only thing the Spirit is speaking. At the same time, the Bible is not only about us: it is about

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\textsuperscript{15}Note that I am speaking here of historical context, not historical criticism, which I explicitly distinguish in *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 84, 124, 125, 132, 146, 347n55. I use the latter for academic historical discussion, but it is historical context for which I advocate for textual understanding.
God’s purposes in history. All the Bible is relevant for something; we need to study it in context so we can understand what is relevant for what purpose.

Even though God inspired the Bible in textual form, it is not just any text. For us as Christians, it is God’s Word, and it not only spoke in the past but continues to communicate to us God’s message. When I read a work by a friend or mentor I know, such as Gordon Fee, E. P. Sanders or Michael Brown, I hear it in their voice. For example, as I read Gordon’s commentaries, I know when his voice would be rising because Gordon is preaching this point with conviction. I know when Ed Sanders pauses for his audience to chuckle. I know when Michael Brown is underlining a point rhetorically yet iraically.

When we read the Bible, there is a sense in which we can get to know many of its authors, such as Paul or John. But because the Bible is inspired by God, there is a sense in which we can, most importantly, learn to hear the Author who speaks through these various human authors in various ways. As we grow to know God’s voice better in Scripture, we recognize his voice and understand better what he is saying, and the heart with which he is saying it—because we know that God is consistent with his character revealed throughout Scripture. This also keeps us on track in recognizing the voice of God as he speaks in our lives in other ways.

A Spirit hermeneutic is a thus relational hermeneutic: we know the God of the Bible and therefore read the Bible from a vantage point of trust in him. This should not be confused with the way readers sometimes approach the Bible on a popular level in the name of being spontaneous. If I hear my wife speaking, I can admire her wisdom and sensitivity even when she is speaking with someone else. But I would not ignore the context of her speaking. If a dog is chasing her and she says, “Go away!” I do not take that as a message to myself; that would be an utter distortion of relationship and trust. In the same way, a genuine Spirit hermeneutic will be sensitive to the original context in which God inspired his message in the biblical text.

The Spirit comforts and instructs us through Scripture, as taught in Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:11. This applies not only to when we are reading Scripture but also to when the Spirit recalls Scripture to us regularly in our daily lives. Hearing the Spirit through prayer\(^\text{16}\) and hearing in Scripture are complementary and often overlapping, but I do insist that before we tell others that the Bible says something, thus

speaking on its *canonical* authority, it needs to be consonant with the overall message that the Spirit already inspired there. God’s Word is not *limited* to Scripture, but most Christians recognize that Scripture as tested canon retains a special role as God’s Word for evaluating all other revelation.

**Reading with Faith**

We read from diverse cultural starting points, but one special vantage point is uniquely Christian: the vantage point of faith in the living God. Reading the biblical narrative with faith means reading its message as true. The God of the Bible is our God; the Jesus of the Gospels is our risen Lord; the sorts of angels and demons that inhabit the New Testament exist in our world (even if western interpreters do not recognize it); and the Bible’s verdict on human moral failure is what we see reflected around us continually.

Many ordinary readers of the Bible, recognizing it as God’s Word, intuitively expect to hear God’s voice there. Such expectancy is a sign of faith. Often readers do not know how to approach the text as a text, but God meets them in their study because they have faith. Sometimes they go amiss, because faith is effective only when it has the right object—in this case, what God has actually said. But as academicians we sometimes go to the other extreme. Influenced by the Enlightenment, sometimes our institutions may teach interpretive techniques mechanistically, as if an academic reading were enough. Even after we have finished our contextual study, however, we still need to approach the text in faith, embracing its message for us today.

Chrysostom, Luther and Calvin all approached the text grammatically and historically, but they also all emphasized our need for faith and the Spirit’s illumination. While taking seriously the human authors of Scripture, Luther insisted that God’s Spirit is present and active in a special way there. “Experience is necessary,” Luther insisted, “for the understanding of the Word,” which must “be believed and felt.”

Fifth-century Benedictines developed the meditative approach

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18 Luther WA 5:108, as quoted in Bartholomew, *Hermeneutics*, 198; Luther insisted that he had learned to abandon his own wisdom and depend on the Spirit to hear Scripture (WA 4:519.3-4, as quoted in Bartholomew, *Hermeneutics*, 199). Luther notes Paul’s appeal to his audience’s experience in Gal 3:5 (*First Lectures on Galatians*, on 3:5, in Bray, *Galatians, Ephesians*, 93).
lectio divina.\textsuperscript{19} From church fathers to Pietists, from Reformed to Holiness and Pentecostal Christians, listening to the Spirit’s voice in the text has long been part of devotional practice. It is certainly not a new discovery.

Reading from a standpoint of spiritual experience also helps us hear Scripture; it provides a sort of spiritual context similar to canonical theological context and often ultimately more important for hearing the message than is even the ancient cultural context. Because I have prophesied, I can resonate with the prophets to some degree; because I pray in tongues, passages about that experience are not foreign to me. Then again, I have to grapple harder to resonate with some other passages that describe experiences that I have not shared, such as visions or encounters with visible angels.

Imbibing the Spirit of Scripture also stirs spiritual experience. For example, Psalms inspire in us a spirit of prayer,\textsuperscript{20} and reading the prophets the spirit of prophecy.\textsuperscript{21} I suspect that those who do not envision much judgment for today’s world could profit from spending a bit more time in the prophets.

**Letter and Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3**

We pay attention to grammar because it helps us to understand the message, but if we care only for textual grammar, we will miss the heart of God that the text is designed to communicate.

Jesus warned the religious elite of his day that they were meticulous about tithing yet neglected weightier matters such as justice; this was like straining a gnat from one’s drink while swallowing a camel, though the latter was more levitically impure (Matt 23:23-24).\textsuperscript{22}

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul shows that his new covenant ministry is greater and more life-giving than the deathbringing old covenant.

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ministry of Moses. The world might deem it less glorious, but that is because new covenant ministry involves especially inner transformation.23

In Jeremiah 31, the promised new covenant will be written on the heart rather than on tablets of stone (Jer 31:31-34). In Ezekiel 36, the Spirit will enable God’s people to keep his laws, and give them hearts of flesh to replace their hearts of stone (36:26-27). In 2 Corinthians 3:3, Paul directly alludes to these two passages, even using an expression that in the Greek translation of the Old Testament appears only in this prophecy of Ezekiel. As Deuteronomy makes clear, God had always wanted his people to have a heart to keep his law (Deut 5:29), with circumcised hearts (10:16; 30:6).

As ministers of the new covenant, Paul explains, he and his colleagues are empowered not as ministers of the “letter” but as ministers of the Spirit, and therefore of life (2 Cor 3:6). The “letter” probably refers to “the mere written details of the law”; Jewish teachers played even with matters of spelling. In antiquity, legal interpreters often distinguished between what we would call the “letter” (the codified written form) of the law and its intention. Paul, however, contrasts the letter not with mere intention, but with God’s own Spirit who inspired the law.

Paul says that just as his people could not withstand the law-connected glory on Moses’ face (2 Cor 3:13-14), their hearts remain veiled when the law continues to be read (3:14-15). Moses had to veil the glory when addressing Israel, but he took the veil away when he was before the Lord (3:16; Exod 34:33-35); he witnessed some of the Lord’s glory in Exodus 33-34. In 2 Corinthians 3:17, Paul compares the “Lord” who revealed himself to Moses in Exodus to the Spirit who reveals himself to Paul and his colleagues. The apostolic message of the new covenant is a message written on the hearts by the Spirit (3:3, 6).

What does this imply for our reading of Scripture? Paul goes on to say that the gospel remains veiled to those who are perishing (4:3), but that God has shone his glory in our hearts in Christ, who is God’s very image (4:4-6). As Moses was temporarily transformed by God’s glory in the context of God giving the law, so are we more permanently transformed by the greater glory of the new covenant, which works within. As Paul declares in 3:18, enjoying God’s image in Christ transforms our hearts to the same image, from one level of glory to another.

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For us, no less than for Moses, the veil has been removed (2 Cor 3:14-18). When we read Scripture, we read to learn about the Lord and be transformed by him (2 Cor 3:18). We get to know Christ’s image and character in the Gospels and throughout Scripture.

For example, when Moses beheld part of God’s glory when God was giving his Word at Sinai, God made his goodness pass before Moses (Exod 33:19). God revealed to Moses his character as the God of grace and truth (Exod 34:6). Analogously, the Apostle John later writes about God’s Word becoming flesh, and that John and the other disciples saw Jesus’ glory (John 1:14). This glory, like that at Sinai, was full of grace and truth, but whereas Moses saw only part of God’s glory, in Jesus we see God’s heart revealed fully (John 1:18). And we see this glory most fully in the ultimate expression of Jesus sharing our fleshly mortality (12:23-24); when Jesus died on the Cross, God both executed his just wrath on our sin and gave the ultimate, sacrificial act of love. Here we see his heart, and seeing his heart makes us more like him.24

Implications for Hermeneutics

The Spirit points to Christ and to God’s character as we read Scripture (see 2 Cor 3:15-18). The Spirit may draw from texts wider analogies, beyond the direct communication to the first audience, that are nevertheless consistent with the text and with the larger framework of the Spirit’s message in biblical theology. While background studies, grammar and the like provide essential context for understanding Scripture, the Spirit provides us with the needed spiritual context for appropriating it as God’s word to us (1 Cor 2:11-13).25

Grammar matters, but our ultimate interest is the Spirit’s message spoken through that grammar. Exegesis is essential as the foundation for correctly hearing the text’s message, but we dare not stop with exegetical observations. When we truly hear the Spirit’s message in the text, we commit to it. Exegesis in the usual sense focuses on the text’s original horizon; today some postmodern approaches focus only on the present horizons. Exclusive attention to a present horizon without attention to the original one leads to overwriting the original inspired meaning with an unrelated one from our own imagination, risking being like Jeremiah’s false prophets who speak visions from their own

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unregenerate hearts (Jer 23:16). Yet it is by hearing the Spirit’s inspired message in the text that we can communicate its points most accurately for hearers today.

Connecting the traditional two horizons, without obliterating either of them, is often considered the role of hermeneutics. The Spirit can guide us in exploring and researching both horizons, but we often recognize the Spirit’s activity especially in bridging the gap between them, in applying the principles of the text to our lives and communities.

A Spirit-led hermeneutic is not just making exegetical discoveries in our study and then going on our way, like someone who forgets their own image in a mirror (Jas 1:23-24). We do not just read Scripture to be transformed: we live our whole lives in light of Scripture, and in light of what Scripture teaches us, so that we live our lives in light of the cross, in light of our Lord’s resurrection and exaltation over all creation, and in light of God’s presence with us by the Spirit.

**Spirit and Letter in Romans 7:5-6**

Paul depicts the immoral pagan mind in Romans 1, but in Romans 7:7-25 shows that even the law-informed mind fails God. Paul contrasts “the oldness of the letter” in 7:5 with new life in the Spirit in 7:6. The old way provided enough knowledge of right and wrong to limit sin; but in Christ, we have the Spirit who empowers us to live out the gift of righteousness God gives us in Christ. The Spirit is never mentioned in 7:7-25, but is mentioned in Romans 8 more than anywhere else in the Bible.

Paul is not rejecting the inspiration of the Old Testament or the nature of Scripture as something written. God once used a civil law to restrain sin in Israel; it is from God (Rom 7:14; 8:4), and we still may learn lessons from it (as Paul does; 1 Cor 9:9; 14:21). But righteousness comes from Christ, and his Spirit inscribes the heart of the law within us, so that we fulfill the real principles that the law was ultimately meant to point toward anyway (Rom 8:2-4; 13:8-10).

Paul is here correcting a way of approaching Scripture that, in light of Christ, can never again be thought adequate. Thus he says in 3:27 that boasting is excluded, not by the law as approached by works, but by the law as approached by faith. In 8:2 he announces that the law of the Spirit that brings life in Christ has freed us from the law that judges sin with death. In 9:32, Paul warns that Israel failed to achieve the law’s righteousness because they pursued it by works instead of by faith. In 10:5-10, Paul contrasts righteousness based on law with righteousness based on faith.

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based on faith, showing from Deuteronomy 30 that the latter was always God’s intention for salvation.

Approaching Scripture for works involves priding ourselves on our rules, doctrines or perhaps ethnicity; but in God’s presence no one has the right to boast. Approaching Scripture for faith means that reading Scripture always renews our trust in and dependence on God. Accordingly, as we approach Scripture, it is appropriate for us to pray for understanding, humble and obedient hearts (see e.g., Ps 119:18, 27, 34, 73, 125, 144, 169).

In Luke 24:45, it was the Lord himself who opened the mind of his disciples to understand the Scriptures; in 24:32 believers’ hearts burned in them as he explained Scripture. Let us pray for this!

A Spirit hermeneutic means that we embrace the message of the text and live it out, not just satisfy our intellectual curiosity or, still less, to boast about our knowledge (Rom 2:23). To those insistent on righteousness by keeping the law, Paul responds in Galatians 5:14 with Christ’s law of love. Using language evoking Old Testament passages that literally speak of “walking” or “going” in God’s commandments, Paul speaks in Galatians 5:16 of “walking” by the Spirit. Such walking is not aimless, for Paul equates it with being “led” by the Spirit in 5:18. In 5:25, he uses similar wording that probably means that we know where to walk by placing our feet where we find the footsteps of the Spirit. In 5:22-23, he insists that there is no law that prohibits the fruit of the Spirit; in 6:2, as we serve one another, we fulfill the law of Christ.

Thus, our understanding of the law is transformed. It may provide moral guidance, but it also reminds us of God’s activity in our own lives. We hide his word not merely on paper but in our hearts; it is God himself working within us who has not only accepted us in Christ but who also produces the moral fruit of his presence.

The Word of God for the People of God

Exegesis rightly and necessarily concerns what the biblical writers were saying first of all to their ancient audiences. But once we understand the texts in their context, we also read them to believe and embrace their message with our whole hearts, and to live accordingly.

Believers may start from various cultural assumptions, but we all can read Scripture as the people of God living in the promised messianic era. We live in the same sphere of spiritual and theological reality as the people in the Bible. We read the Bible as God’s people, addressed in Scripture because God gave it for us:
Romans 15:4: “For whatever was written beforehand was written to teach us, so that through the endurance and the exhortation/encouragement provided by the Scriptures we should have hope’’;

1 Corinthians 10:11: “These things happened to them to serve as examples, and they were written down to warn/instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come.”

Yes, “these things happened to them”—they are historical events. But they were recorded so that subsequent generations could learn from what happened to them, and especially for us as Christ’s followers, “on whom the ends of the ages have come.”

End-Time Readers

That is why we read:

- Hebrews 1:2: “in these last days, God has spoken to us by His Son’’;
- Acts 2:17, on the day of Pentecost: “In the last days, says God, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh."

If it was already the last days on the day of Pentecost, it can hardly be before-the-last-days now.

Peter’s announcement is consistent with the rest of the New Testament, where believers who share in the Holy Spirit have tasted the powers of the coming age (Heb 6:4-5). In Christ, Paul says, we already have the “firstfruits” (aparchê) of the Spirit (Rom 8:23), using a term that designated the actual beginning of the harvest. He also announces that we have the down payment (arrhabôn) of our future inheritance (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14), using a term often used in ancient business documents for the first installment of a promised payment. Human sight and hearing cannot anticipate what awaits us, he says, but God has revealed this to us by the Spirit (1 Cor 2:9-10).

We also read of hard times, mockers, and apostasy in “the last days” in 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1; and 2 Peter 3:3. The context of each of

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these passages refers to the time in which people were then living. 1 John 2:18 warns, “You have heard that an antichrist is coming; even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know that it is an eschatological hour.”

A Spirit-led reading of Scripture will thus read Scripture from the vantage point of God’s eschatological activity already among us, “on whom,” Paul says, “the ends of the ages have come.” We thus live in the time of fulfillment, the time between the first and second coming of Christ. Jesus is already the firstfruits of the promised resurrection (1 Cor 15:20, 23); the coming king has already come the first time, so the kingdom has come like a mustard seed yet will flourish like a great tree (Mark 4:31-32).

That both Christians in New Testament times and Christians today live in the last days means that we, like they, are the eschatological people of God. We do not read the New Testament as belonging only to them, to a foreign dispensation, but as God’s Word for us today. This is what makes a specifically Christian, Spirit-sensitive reading, different from merely a historic reading.

A Continuationist Reading

Acts 2:17-18 treats the Spirit’s prophetic empowerment of the church as a sign that “the last days” have arrived. God poured out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and did not pour the Spirit back afterward! Joel’s prophecy about all God’s people being prophetically endowed belongs to today, to the same era as Joel’s prophecy about calling on the Lord to be saved or Ezekiel’s prophecy about God’s Spirit transforming our hearts.

My wife is from Congo in Africa; there three people who did not know each other prophesied to her at different times that she was someday going to marry a white man with a big ministry. When we got engaged but had not yet told others an acquaintance came to me and said, “I feel that God is saying that you have found the right person, and not to worry that you are from different cultures and continents.”

On the other hand, people often prophesy nonsense! That is why both prophecy (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:19-22) and teaching must be tested; Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 13:9 that in this age we both know and prophesy only in part.

Scripture itself does not distinguish between so-called supernatural and so-called natural gifts given by the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul emphasizes that we need all the gifts to function fully as one body, whether, for example, prophecy or teaching. Ideally, we want our bodies to be whole.
Some churches amputate particular kinds of members, and some other churches want just to collect and connect amputated members. It would be better for us to value and learn from all of one another’s gifts.

Paul’s praise of love in 1 Corinthians 13 corrects errors in the Corinthian church; Paul’s particular language about love not boasting or being arrogant addresses the very errors of Corinthian boasting and arrogance Paul reproves earlier in the letter. But the passage remains relevant today: boasting and arrogance still must be addressed today, whether in spiritual gifts, as in chapters 12-14, or in knowledge, as in 1 Corinthians 8.

Similarly, we continue to need partial gifts mentioned in the passage, such as prophecy, tongues, and knowledge (probably meaning teaching). Such gifts explicitly continue until we see Christ face to face and know as we are known, and therefore no longer need such partial gifts (1 Cor 13:8-12). In context, as most scholars today recognize, this completed time is when we see Christ face to face at his return. And so I believe that we should continue to obey Paul’s concluding exhortations to the section: “be eager to prophesy, and do not prohibit speaking in tongues; but let everything be done in the right way and in order” (14:39-40), probably speaking of the order he has prescribed for these gifts earlier in the chapter.

Continuing prophecy does not contradict or supplement the authority of Scripture. Although Scripture contains many prophecies, it never equates all prophecies with Scripture. The Old Testament historical books mention scores of prophets whose prophecies are not recorded in Scripture, and the New Testament presumes tens of thousands of prophecies in first-century church gatherings that are not recorded in Scripture. (If we estimate just two or three prophecies per week in just a hundred house churches by the time that John wrote the book of Revelation, there would have been roughly 850,000 of them.) Nor is prophecy the genre of all Scripture, nor were all biblical authors said to be prophets or apostles.

God spoke through prophecy all through biblical history, so it would seem odd to expect the gift to stop, suddenly and without major, explicit biblical warning. In 1 Corinthians 14:3, genuine prophecy is meant to encourage or exhort in new situations, not to provide new doctrine; continuing prophecy no more adds to Scripture than does continuing teaching. Interestingly, it is the idea that prophecy ceases before Jesus’ return, which is nowhere clearly taught in Scripture, that is a postbiblical teaching!30

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By very definition, the canon by which we evaluate all other claims is closed; no one is writing Scripture now. We do not live in the generation or two right after Jesus, so none of us witnessed Jesus’ ministry or directly heard such witnesses, a criterion ancient Christians used for canonicity. We do not have to believe that apostles and prophets have ceased to believe that first-century apostles and prophets, or the immediate circle who knew Jesus in the flesh, have ceased.

Yet virtually all believers must agree that the Spirit continues to speak to us in some ways; in Romans 8:16, for example, God’s Spirit still bears witness with our spirits that we are God’s children. Theological continuationists are more consistent than cessationists, allowing for God’s more vocal ways of speaking to continue. And continuationists who embrace spiritual gifts and experiences with the Spirit in practice are more consistent than those who are merely continuationist in theory.

Patterns in Scripture

In 1 Corinthians 10:11, already noted, Paul cites the examples of the Old Testament; all Scripture is profitable for teaching (2 Tim 3:16). Paul uses Abram’s faith (Gen 15:6) as a model for believers (Rom 4:1-25). James uses the experiences of the prophets and Job as models for endurance (Jas 5:10-11). Ancient historians and biographers often plainly and explicitly tell us that they expected their readers to learn moral and ideological lessons from their true accounts.

Human examples in biblical narratives are often negative, but we can learn about God from all of Scripture. How we see God acting in the world of the Bible can shape our understanding of how God works. We should learn not only from what we consider key verses of Scripture but also from patterns of how God works with his people in Scripture. Being people of the Bible means that we embrace the biblical worldview, a worldview in which God remains active in this world. Expecting God to continue to act today in ways consistent with how he acted in the Bible is closely related to what the Bible calls “faith.” This does not mean that we can always predict what he will do, but we can always be confident that he is working. We can even expect him to surprise us, as God often surprised his people in the Bible.

As people of the end-time and people of the Bible, we should live by faith in the recognition that what God did in the Bible he can do, and in various times and places still does, today.
Reading with the Humble

Awakenings often start among the humble;\(^3^1\) the spiritual dimension of Spirit hermeneutics thus cannot be the prerogative of the highly educated. Scripture often indicates that God is near the broken but far from the proud (Ps 138:6; Pro 3:34; Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14; Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5). If God normally reveals himself especially to the broken, why should he reveal himself differently (only to elites) among those who read (or hear) the Bible?

Unfortunately, we scholars are sometimes proud of our knowledge; knowledge does, as Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 8:1, tend to lead us to overestimate our status. With few and usually private exceptions, it was not the intellectual elite of Jesus’ day, but the lowly, who followed him. “I praise you, Father,” Jesus prayed, “for you hid these matters from the wise and intellectual and revealed them to little children” (Matt 11:25//Luke 10:21). Only those who welcome the kingdom like a child will enter it (Mark 10:15).

The humble read Scripture not simply to reinforce their knowledge, but with faith—and often in a situation of desperation—to hear God there. They read with dependence on God, trusting the Holy Spirit to lead them. We who are scholars and leaders have much to offer them; but we should also consider what their faith has to teach us.

God’s People as a Community of Interpretation?

In line with the frequent scholarly emphasis today on communities of interpretation,\(^3^2\) some emphasize the consensus of the Spirit-filled community. This is certainly part of the biblical safety net; in 1 Corinthians 14:29, after some prophesy, the other prophets are to evaluate the prophecies. Awareness of interpretive communities also helps us guard against prejudices that reflect a single interpretive location’s biases.

When I was moved by the Spirit to prophesy out loud to the entire cafeteria at my undergraduate Christian institution, I was very happy that afterwards someone came up to me and told me that God had told them to do the same thing, but they hesitated and then I did it. I would hate for that to have been just my imagination!

\(^3^1\)Cf. e.g., Mark Shaw, *Global Awakening: How 20th-Century Revivals Triggered a Christian Revolution* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2010).

\(^3^2\)I did my PhD at Duke in the heyday of Stanley Fish’s influence, so interpretive communities (see e.g., Stanley E. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980]) were regular subjects of discussion with friends in the English department, religion department and divinity school.
At the same time, I should also highlight some difficulties with the community criterion if used in isolation. If the community adopts an interpretation that diverges significantly from the message that God originally inspired, it lacks divine authority. Jeremiah had to stand virtually alone among the prophets of his day; most of the other prophets were prophesying peace when there was no peace (Jer 5:13, 31; 6:13; 14:13-15). Jeremiah had to call the community of his day back to God’s message (Jer 6:19; 9:13; 16:11; 26:4; 32:23; 44:10, 23); the community was wrong about the word of the Lord.

Happily, God ensured that, over the course of generations, the long-range communion of saints got it right: Jeremiah’s word came to pass, so it was his tested message, rather than the failed prophecies of his majority detractors, that made it into the Bible (2 Chr 36:12, 21-22; Ezra 1:1; Dan 9:2). Yet this observation suggests that the wisdom of the people of God is not always the best criterion for discernment in a given generation that might need it most. I mistrust the political proclivities of most born-again Christians in the United States right now, partly based on some dreams I have had; the hindsight of the next generation will likely be able to arbitrate the wisdom of competing political strategies more confidently than is possible at the moment.

While I certainly deem Spirit-led consensus valuable, as in Acts 15:28,33 consensus is often more elusive than we would prefer. Those who claim charismatic experience range from the Way International, which denies Jesus’ deity, to Oneness Pentecostals, for whom Jesus is the Father, Son and Spirit.

Among Trinitarians, they range from conservative U.S. evangelicals such as J. P. Moreland and Wayne Grudem, to British Anglicans such as Michael Green and N. T. Wright,34 to Lutherans such as Mark Allan Powell, Methodists such as Richard Hays and Ben Witherington, and Catholics such as Teresa Berger and Luke Timothy Johnson.

While we share a common respect for Scripture, we represent a range of interpretive methods and theological details. On most of the most important points, we Trinitarians all agree, but appeal to consensus, whether of Christians in general or those generally designated as renewalists, cannot resolve all questions. Simply designating one subgroup of Christians as the reliable community of interpretation without argument begs the question of how such a group should be

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identified, unless we tautologically pre-identify them as “the best interpreters.”

**Dangers of Neglecting the Human Dimension of Scripture**

I have tried to take seriously here both human and divine dimensions of Scripture and of reading it. Some scholars have recently criticized my emphasis on the importance of the ancient element in interpretation and my concerns about undue subjectivism in approaches that neglect it.

Here, then, I will elaborate and especially illustrate those concerns further. Obviously, one does not even need to be able to read to communicate the gospel (some argue that many or most of the first apostles, such as Peter, could not read, although they could dictate). For evangelism the basic gospel is sufficient, and apostolic servants of the gospel with signs and wonders are advancing it throughout the world today.

But as some of those very apostolic servants have expressed to me (and as the letters of the first apostles indicate they would have agreed), believers being conformed to Christ’s image eventually need more of the gospel’s implications that depend on the distinct gift of teaching Scripture. My annoyance is not with those who cannot read, but with those who have resources available yet neglect them (cf. Isaiah 29:11-12). Most importantly, I believe that if we as scholars fail to challenge some popular errors that harm Christ’s body, we abdicate our responsibility as those called to be teachers.

Whatever else God might say, it will naturally not contradict what he has already spoken in Scripture; if believers are not equipped to evaluate other teachings from Scripture, what is the future of the churches? Theological liberalism as promulgated in secular universities where many of our young people study? Fundamentalist legalism for local traditions? Or the pop religion circulating in many Christian bookstores and on the internet? Or even the fusion of faith and partisan politics dominant in much Christian social media?

A popular approach in the West today is celebrating “whatever Scripture means to me,” if we appeal to Scripture at all. Such an approach usually cites a very selective repertoire of texts and usually without much regard for safeguards such as literary context, background, wider biblical theology, or even the wider Christian community.

Counter biblical teachings are of course not limited to charismatic circles: witness, for example, prayed-a-prayer-always-saved teaching or
widespread neglect of Jesus’ teachings about caring for the needy.\textsuperscript{35} (At least prosperity preachers have enough of a conscience to try to justify their materialism!) Similarly, John MacArthur’s followers embrace antipsychology, dispensational eschatology, and cessationism. Less vocal but also spiritually lethal, some pastors of whatever stripe, perhaps reacting against some more traditional legalism, will not preach against sexual immorality for fear of offending someone, no matter how often it comes up in Paul’s letters.

But in circles primed to blame biases more directly on the Holy Spirit, fresh errors seem to surface more quickly and ad hoc, since they require less historic precedent. Because I am charismatic and am addressing “Spirit hermeneutics,” I note here especially cases where promoters of particular ideas claim the Spirit’s authority yet diverge significantly from Spirit-inspired Scripture. In many charismatic circles, many winds of teaching (Eph 4:14) have buffeted believers:

- Some Branhamists still await William Branham’s return
- Some still accept Pigs in the Parlor demonology originally allegedly acquired from interviewing demons;\textsuperscript{36}
- Hobart Freeman, a former professor, rejected medical treatment, reportedly leading to his own death and that of

\textsuperscript{35}See the classic critique of the latter in Ronald J. Sider, \textit{Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity} (sixth ed.; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015).

many of his parishioners. This rejection appears not only in Dowie\textsuperscript{37} but even in some early Pentecostal theology;\textsuperscript{38}

- One may note also the excesses of the shepherding movement;
- The more extreme forms of positive confession and prosperity teaching;\textsuperscript{39}
- Some extreme faith and Manifested Sons teaching that believers will become Christ or gods;\textsuperscript{40}
- Allowing only positive, comforting prophecies, which if taken to extremes may lead to crying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace (cf. Jer 6:14; 8:11).

Many of these errors reflect independent churches without larger spheres of accountability. But in 1989 Margaret Poloma showed that, although the Assemblies of God and nearly all its scholars and teachers officially rejected the teaching that sufficient faith always cures, more than a third of adherents in A/G churches accepted it.\textsuperscript{41}

I have recently conferred with some significant renewal leaders who are deeply concerned with unhealthy teachings circulating among their own followers, even including salvific universalism.\textsuperscript{42} Most of these erroneous teachings reflect readings of texts that are unfaithful to the original contexts. Some leaders in Pentecostal biblical training in Brazil and Nigeria have noted to me that many Pentecostals are now returning to mainline denominations because of inadequate or erroneous teaching


\textsuperscript{40}For brief discussion, see \textit{Spirit Hermeneutics}, 380n41, 382n11.

\textsuperscript{41}Margaret M. Poloma, \textit{The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas} (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 62.

\textsuperscript{42}For perhaps the most thorough critique of universalism, see Michael J. McClymond (a renewalist scholar), \textit{The Devil’s Redemption: A New History and Interpretation of Christian Universalism} (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).
in many Pentecostal circles. Although I believe that God often uses such an exodus to bring renewal to other denominations, it is not a state of affairs that any of us relishes.

Michael Brown’s new book *Playing with Holy Fire* addresses a number of in-house charismatic errors. Many errors that he critiques are widespread in Christian media, promoted by major figures who claim special revelation impervious to the insights of mere academicians who merely devote our much less important lives to studying Scripture. Both they and we claim the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Second Timothy 3:16-4:3 shows that God gave us Scripture as an arbiter to decide claims to revelation and to correct error. Both they and we claim dependence on the Spirit, but whose teachings in given cases conform to Scripture as it was inspired in its original setting? First John 4:1-3 invites us not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits according to *the Jesus who came in the flesh*, the Jesus consistent with the apostolic message John had taught.

From such observations I would conclude that, at least so far, the “community of interpretation” approach, while helpful in part, has not proved sufficient by itself in guarding sound teaching. One might of course appeal to Spirit-filled scholars as a more authoritative community of interpretation with better knowledge of sound teaching. But Hobart Freeman and one of the leaders in the shepherding movement, Derek Prince, were scholars. The community still needs to be anchored in the original message of Scripture.

**Conclusions: Spirit Hermeneutics**

Responsible exegesis still requires us to explore the meaning of the biblical texts in their original contexts. But sometimes even non-Christian scholars do that. Where we go beyond non-Christian scholars is that we believe these texts as Scripture.

Careful study of Scripture is essential to counter the unbridled subjectivism of popular charismatic excesses, for example, teachings about God making us rich. At the same time, study that does not lead to living out biblical experience in the era of the Spirit misses the point of the biblical texts. All Christian experience in this era must be shaped by the experience of the day of Pentecost. The last days are here, and the Lord has poured out his Spirit on his church.

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The Pentecost Bands in India: Radical Holiness Revivals and the Mukti Revival

by Robert Danielson

Introduction

Many scholars of Pentecostalism are familiar with the Mukti Revival of 1905. Many see this outpouring of the Holy Spirit on a girls’ orphanage in India as a precursor to the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906.¹ Various accounts have tried to explain this experience. Some scholars connect it to the holiness revival inspired by the Welsh Revival in the Khasi Hills, over 3,000 miles from the Mukti Mission.² Others have explained it as a spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Still others argue for the incredible influence of Pandita Ramabai herself, a spiritual intellectual perhaps unrivaled in her day and age.³

Without any desire to take away from the inspired work of Ramabai, and the historically noted influences of the Welsh Revival (as well as the unparalleled power of the Holy Spirit), this paper seeks to introduce another potential influence.⁴ Radical holiness representatives were present in Central India before the Mukti Revival, and evidence shows they had direct contact and interactions with Ramabai. While any lasting potential influence is still only speculative, the similarity of holiness

³However, Pandita Ramabai’s role is somewhat minimized due to a colonial revisionist reading of the historical events that occurred, which tend to simplify the situation. For an excellent discussion on this, cf. Yan Suarsana, “Inventing Pentecostalism: Pandita Ramabai and the Mukti Revival from a Post-Colonial Perspective,” PentecoStudies 13, no. 2 (2014): 173-196.
⁴This is not to suggest that the Wards and the Pentecost Bands in India were primary drivers of the revival, or to suggest that they were the only influences. Stanley M. Burgess, “Pentecostalism in India: An Overview,” Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies 4, no. 1 (2001): 85-98 demonstrates that there are plenty of contenders for Pentecostal influence in India, both before and after the Mukti Revival. The goal here is to simply introduce these missionaries who were influenced by Free Methodism as serious additional potential influences in the region prior to the Mukti Revival.
accounts of revivals among orphans from the same 1897 famine (which prompted both Ramabai and these radical holiness missionaries to create and run orphanages) should not be overlooked, especially since they are in close geographical proximity to each other.

This paper focuses primarily on the documented work of the Pentecost Bands in India. This group was initially a part of the Free Methodist Church, but had become independent by the time they arrived in India. However, their leader, Rev. Frank C. Hotle joined forces with Free Methodist missionaries Ernest and Phebe Ward to promote holiness through the Harvest Home Camp Meetings in India. They also functioned through their social work in caring for and educating orphans. This paper will conclude with some considerations about the relationship between the Pentecost Bands in India, the Wards, and the Mukti Mission.

**The Pentecost Bands: An Overview**

The Pentecost Bands were an evangelistic movement that emerged out of the Free Methodist Church. Their dynamic founder, Vivian Dake, (1854-1892) was their chief leader. B. T. Roberts founded the Free Methodist Church in 1860, which saw itself as part of the larger Holiness Movement. As Howard Snyder pointed out, the Free Methodist Church in part defined itself as a “radical” holiness group, “though maintaining some irenic contact with the broader Holiness Movement, its leaders and writers often warned against too low a standard of holiness: an experience that did not go deep enough, was not sufficiently world-denying, and compromised particularly with the amusements and ostentations of the age.”

Vivian Dake was a young Free Methodist minister and conference evangelist for the Michigan Conference of the Free Methodist Church. He began to organize young people into bands in 1885 to assist in his evangelistic work. B.T. Roberts encouraged Dake writing, “Organize your bands. Push out. Be as aggressive as the Salvation Army, but more holy, more serious and have no nonsense about it.”

These bands typically were self-supporting, evangelistic groups of four people,

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6Snyder, 70.


8Snyder, 72.
including a leader and an assistant leader. They would travel around, preach evangelistically, and engage in visitation and tract distribution. Their goal was to win souls, start revivals, and they hoped to leave a small church plant behind them when they left.

Dake’s early death on a trip to Africa in 1892 precipitated a crisis in the Pentecost Bands. Their zealous enthusiasm and organizational autonomy did not suit denominational leaders of the Free Methodist Church so, in 1895, the Pentecost Bands under leader, Thomas Nelson, withdrew from the Free Methodist Church and became an independent entity. They developed their own publication, *The Pentecost Herald* to promote their work. The Pentecost Bands reached their peak about 1906 with 487 congregations, and they ultimately merged with the Wesleyan Methodist church in 1958. In an earlier version of his article (already mentioned), Snyder noted the following:

It does not appear any significant number of Band workers ended up in the later Pentecostal Movement. Despite the use of the term “Pentecost,” the Pentecost Bands seem to have been more christologically than pneumatologically focused. Their emphasis on radical commitment and crucifixion seem to have made them resistant to Pentecostal appeals despite some obvious affinities, particularly in demonstrative worship styles.⁹

The Pentecost Bands Arrive in India

While the first Pentecost Band of India technically arrived on November 28, 1897, there had been representatives of the Pentecost Bands in India for much longer. In the first issue of *The Pentecost Herald* from April 1894, there were three bands listed in “Tradeo, Bombay, India.” These included: Band no. 12 with Ernest F. Ward as leader and Watson L. Huber as Assistant Leader, Band no. 13 with Laura Douglas as Leader (and Division Leader) and Emma Appling as Assistant Leader, and Band no. 23 with Phebe E. Ward as Leader and Bessie Sherman as Assistant Leader.¹⁰

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⁹This quote did not make it into the published form of Snyder’s “Radical Holiness Evangelism,” but was part of a copy sent to the author by Dr. Snyder. It was originally part of his discussion on page 79 of the diffusion of the Pentecost Bands. In an email with the author, Dr. Snyder indicated that this was a paper initially presented at a Wesleyan Holiness Studies Project consultation in the 1990s. I am using the quote because it so clearly states the distinctions between the Pentecost Bands and the later Pentecostal Movement itself.

¹⁰*The Pentecost Herald* (Uniontown, PA) 1, no. 1, (April 1894), 4.
Ernest and Phebe Ward had left the United States for India in November 1880. Ernest had joined the Free Methodist Church one year earlier because of their holiness teachings. In a whirlwind of activity in October 1880, Ernest married Phebe, became both a deacon and an elder of the Free Methodist Church in a conference in Freeport, Illinois, and announced that he was going to India as a missionary. At the time, the Free Methodist Church did not have an active mission program, so Ernest and Phebe left as self-supporting missionaries using money Phebe had saved as a teacher. On January 16, 1881 the Wards arrived in Bombay (Mumbai). They worked as evangelists preaching in the bazaars in Ellichpur (Achalpur) and Burhanpur until their first furlough back to the U.S. in 1892. On their return to India, they took up their evangelistic tasks in Raj Nandgaon. It is unclear when they joined the Pentecost Bands, but it was most likely on their return to the U.S. in 1892 (before the 1895 split from the Free Methodist Church).\footnote{In her account of the life of Ernest and Phebe Ward, their daughter Ethel noted that as the Wards were waiting in Bombay to leave for their furlough in 1892, they met Miss Douglas and Miss Sherman, who had just arrived in India as representatives from the Pentecost Bands. Together they held some meetings in a tent and formed the first Free Methodist society in India before they left. But it does not indicate if they joined the Pentecost Bands at this time or later. Ethel Ellen Ward, \textit{Ordered Steps, or the Wards of India}, (Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life Press, 1951), 69.}

Ernest Ward described the location in a letter to Thomas Nelson, which was published in \textit{The Pentecost Herald}:

I want to give you a little idea of our field; Raj Nandgaon our headquarters, is just 666 miles from Bombay by rail on the direct line to Calcutta, (It will not be difficult to remember that number.) It is 618 miles from the latter place, so that it lies near the centre of the peninsula. Our nearest missionary neighbors are forty-two miles east and 107 miles west, respectively.

This mission field naturally includes a territory having a population of half a million souls the greater part of whom have never heard the gospel. The Rajah or Chief of Nandgaon has been quite friendly to us so far, and has given us a fine building spot within a stone’s throw of the station and near the bazaar. We have fenced it in (one and a half acres nearly) and are asking the Lord for the funds to build a house thereon. This is a very interesting field for mission work. Within a radius of five miles are over forty villages. The village people are simple hearted and ready to listen to the truth. They are not so much under the control of the priests as in many parts of India. It is very
gratifying to see them drink in the truth so far as they understand at our open air meetings.\textsuperscript{12}

The very next month after this letter appeared in \textit{The Pentecost Herald}, another interesting notice appeared. This was a notice from Frank C. Hotle noting that he had felt called to the mission field in India. He also noted some of his background. He was sanctified in the Pentecost Band meetings at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa about three years previously (about 1891) while attending a Methodist Episcopal college (most likely Iowa Wesleyan University) where he was studying for the ministry. In his personal memoirs, Hotle noted he experienced conversion at seventeen and felt a desire to preach, so he entered a Methodist college, where he encountered a “band of bright, fire-baptized young ladies” who he initially thought were from the Salvation Army, and they convinced him of the need for sanctification in the Holiness Movement’s understanding of the concept.\textsuperscript{13} He noted that he “entered Band work at once.”\textsuperscript{14} Apparently there were early discussions about settling the Hotle family with the Wards in Raj Nandgaon in 1895 or 1896, although this did not happen until later.\textsuperscript{15}

Frank Cylvester Hotle (Feb. 11, 1870 – Dec. 19, 1945) was born in Talleyrand, Iowa, the son of Henry Hotle and Mary Ann Shockley. Like Ernest Ward, he set out to do things quickly. Just about a month after announcing his plans to go to India in \textit{The Pentecost Herald}, he married Delphina (Della) Turner on September 5, 1895 in Page, Iowa. The couple set off raising funds and speaking, and in between all this work managed to have a daughter, Elsie Mae (Eliza) on July 28, 1897.

At this same time, the Wards’ approach to mission work in India took a drastic turn. Throughout 1897 growing reports of a massive famine in Central India began to emerge. In \textit{The Pentecost Herald}, Frank and Della Hotle expressed concern about the famine in March of 1897.\textsuperscript{16} A letter followed this from Phebe Ward about the famine,\textsuperscript{17} and growing reports continued until the famine news took over the front page of \textit{The

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12}Letter from E. F. Ward to Bro. Nelson dated February 14, 1895 in \textit{The Pentecost Herald} 2, no. 13 (April 1895), 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{13}Hotle, Frank C. \textit{My Experience and Call: With a Brief Summary of Seven Years Labor in Central India}. Louisville, KY: Pentecostal Publishing Company, n.d., 8.
  \item \textsuperscript{14}\textit{The Pentecost Herald} 2, no. 14 (May 1895), 3. The Hotles also note their fund raising and speaking activities in \textit{The Pentecost Herald} 2, no. 8 (whole no. 20) (October 1895), 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{15}Cf. letter from Vina Winnie dated November 9, 1895 in \textit{The Pentecost Herald} 2, no. 15 (whole no. 27) (January 1896).
  \item \textsuperscript{16}\textit{The Pentecost Herald} 3, no. 23, (whole no. 54) (March 1, 1897), 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{17}\textit{The Pentecost Herald} 4, no. 5, (whole no. 60) (June 1, 1897), 5.
\end{itemize}
Pentecost Herald.\textsuperscript{18} Faced with a situation with reports of as many as twelve million people dying over an eight-month period, the Wards shifted from an evangelistic program of preaching in the bazaar to taking in abandoned and dying children. They also helped bury the dead. This situation soon stretched the Wards’ meager resources. Phebe Ward wrote a letter dated September 29, 1897 to The Pentecost Herald published in November 1897 in which she was clearly exhausted:

I love the way of the cross this morning, by which I am crucified to the world and the world unto me. I presume you have heard of Bro. Ward’s and Louisa’s serious illness with cholera. God loosened our hands by the singular providence and let me get a breathing spell, from where I was living at high pressure speed. The change was much needed; I might say imperative. Bro. Ward is improving now but it has been a veritable fight with death. A less strong man would probably have succumbed, Louisa too though not so ill, has had a long pull. Blood poisoning set in which has kept her from getting on her feet… Some of our loveliest ones (orphans) have gone to heaven. I have sat and watched them leave us, when it seemed as if this famine was a giant fiend, stealing away our jewels. I can never describe the awfulness of this famine! I have grown old in eight months and can wear Bessie Sherman’s clothes easily, I am so thin. We shall be glad to hear the out coming party have left America.\textsuperscript{19}

Phebe Ward’s letter appeared alongside the first report written by Alfred S. Dyer, editor of The Bombay Guardian in The Pentecost Herald of Pandita Ramabai’s work helping girls impacted by the same famine.

In the light of the famine reporting, and perhaps because of an increase in mission giving driven by those reports, things sped up for the Hotles. An organized Pentecost Band group left Indianapolis on September 29, 1897. The group included William McCready and Elizabeth Tucker, along with Frank C. and Della T. Hotle and their daughter Eliza.\textsuperscript{20} They arrived in Bombay on November 28, 1897, and

\textsuperscript{18}The Pentecost Herald 4, no. 13, (whole no. 68) (October 1, 1897) and The Pentecost Herald 5, no. 1, (whole no. 82) (April 1, 1898).

\textsuperscript{19}The Pentecost Herald 4, no. 16, (whole no. 71) (November 15, 1897), 3.

\textsuperscript{20}The trip of the group was reported extensively in The Pentecost Herald 4, no. 14, (October 15, 1897), 2, no. 15, (November 1, 1897), 3, no. 17, (December 1, 1897), no. 18, (December 15, 1897), and no. 20, (January 15, 1898), 6. It is interesting to note that Elizabeth Tucker ultimately became Ernest Ward’s second wife. Their marriage was from January 17, 1914 until her untimely death from cancer in India on September 3, 1915. Phebe died while on furlough in Seattle on September 1, 1910.
on December 10, 1897 Hotle and his wife went to Raj Nandgaon to visit the Wards. The Pentecost Band journal noted they had not seen the Wards in five years, indicating some contact with the Wards on their 1892 furlough. Shortly before this visit they had established their group in Nagpur. While visiting the Wards, the Pentecost Band’s account for December 10, 1897\(^21\) also noted, “While there they found that famine children could still be procured by going into the villages and gathering them.”\(^22\) Hotle began gathering children for an orphanage in Nagpur.

The Pentecost Band’s account for May 25, 1898 noted,

Bro. Ward came today to get his daughter Louisa, who has been here for a two weeks change. We were all very glad to see him and we had a real breaking through time at prayers. Bro. Ward feels his heart is with us and that the Lord would be pleased to have him cast his lot among us. We told him to pray much about it, and if he still felt his place was in the bands, we would gladly welcome him.\(^23\)

In the account for May 27\(^{th}\), 1898, the Pentecost Band’s account noted, “Bro. Ward returned home today; but before going he gave us his name to be sent to the *Pentecost Herald* to be enrolled among the workers.”\(^24\) On June 21, 1898 (less than a month after Ward joined the Pentecost Band in India), the Pentecostal Band decided to combine the orphanages at Nagpur and Raj Nandgaon. The account recorded,

After prayerful and careful consideration, we decided that it would be profitable and pleasing to God for the two orphanages at Nagpur and Raj Nandgaon to be united as our forces thus concentrated would enable us to more properly adjust matters so as to lessen or more fully equalize the burdens of each worker.

\(^21\)All references and quotations from the Pentecost Bands of India come from the *Records of Pentecost Bands in India*, microfilm at Asbury Theological Seminary, ARC1010 1989-006 reel 1. This microfilm contains the records of three bands: Band #1 at Raj Nandgaon (1897-1905), Band #2 at Gondia (1899-1905), and Band #3 at Dondi Lohara (1899-1949). The originals are kept at the Marsden Memorial Historical Center in Indianapolis, IN. The quotes used in this paper are from the records of Band #1 unless otherwise specified.

\(^22\)Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for December 10, 1897 (see footnote 21).

\(^23\)Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for May 25, 1898 (see footnote 21).

\(^24\)Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for May 27, 1898 (see footnote 21).

This move by Ward is significant. The Pentecost Bands broke away from the Free Methodist Church in 1895 in part due to their radical understanding of holiness and unwillingness to accept denominational oversight. By joining the Pentecost Band in India, Ward broke away from the Free Methodists and aligned himself with a more radical holiness doctrine.
The decision seems to be met with the favor of God as the railroad company gave us free pass for over fifty children and we took them from Nagpur to Raj Nandgaon today. Our family of children number up to one hundred and eight now.25

The Wards may have remembered this event differently. Ethel Ward wrote,

Then they learned that a party of four missionaries from the Pentecost Band work had begun a Mission in Nagpur which was nearer than others. “Let us invite them,” said Mr. Ward, and his wife consented. So the letter of invitation was written. “Yes, we can come,” was the reply, “and it is surely an answer to our prayer because we have had to pay such a high rent here that we have been contemplating moving elsewhere.”26

Ernest Ward and Frank Hotle: Competing Leaders

While the account in *The Pentecost Herald* and in the Pentecost Band in India journal seems to relate a positive working relationship between Ernest Ward and Frank Hotle, there is clear evidence of some level of simmering conflict. Ward may have eagerly cast his lot with the Pentecost Band because of his own deeply rooted belief in radical holiness doctrine, but this decision would have consequences. After the extreme hardships and exhaustion from the work to aid those suffering from the famine of 1897, the Wards likely welcomed these holiness reinforcements. The extra hands were needed in the new form of social mission at Raj Nandgaon that was taking shape. However, Ward, a veteran missionary of sixteen years in India with immense knowledge of the culture, context and language, had put himself and his family (as well as his mission station) under the leadership of Frank Hotle who had little to no experience in India.

By September 1898, just a year after leaving the United States, with 108 orphans in their charge, and 80 of those in their school, the Pentecost Band decided to send Ernest and Phebe Ward back to the U.S. for a furlough. The Pentecost Band journal does not say much about this decision, but it would be the cause of a permanent strain between Ward and Hotle. Ethel Ward in her 1951 book on her parents and the mission in India gave the only real clue as to what happened:

Adjustment! That was the great problem now. That has ever been the perpetual problem on every mission field. Hundreds of

25Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for June 21, 1898 (see footnote 21).
26E.E. Ward, 93.
years before, the prophet Amos knew this and wrote, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” And here were six to “walk together.” Mrs. Elizabeth Tucker and Mr. Wm McCready were two of the band from Nagpur but Mr. and Mrs. H____ were the “leaders” and they “determined” (Acts 15:37) that it would be best for the Wards to take a furlough to America now and leave Louise in India to save expense and insure the Wards returning to Raj Nandgaon again. The rest “agreed,” so it came the decision was that they should go on furlough.27

On furlough in 1892 the Wards’ left their two oldest daughters, Ethel and Bessie, in the care of the “Reaper’s Home” in Virginia. Now, the Pentecost Band forced the Wards to leave their youngest daughter, only five years old, in India to “ensure” that they would return. Frank Hotle was the leader under whom this was done. In her account, Ethel even refused to name him.

Interestingly, Rev. Frank C. Hotle wrote an account of his experience in which he completely erased all mention of either the Wards or the Pentecost Band in India—and most of his fellow workers as well.28 Why he did this is unclear at this time. However, the final chapter of his book focused on his current work at the Missionary Holiness Alliance Bible School and Training Home in Terre Haute, Indiana. Perhaps Hotle was using the book for fundraising and he wished to elevate his role in the India mission, or perhaps it reflects a negative experience which led him to break from the Pentecost Bands as well.

While the Wards were back in the United States, they took up the task of speaking and travelling. Meanwhile, Hotle and the Pentecost Band instituted the first Harvest Home Camp Meeting in India, from November 1-8, 1898. In the U.S., the Harvest Home Camp Meeting was a tradition of the Pentecost Bands. The Camp Meeting was a time for holiness people to enjoy fellowship, and also to reinforce the teaching of the holiness doctrines. There were at least four annual Harvest Home Camp Meetings held in India by the Pentecost Band in Raj Nandgaon.

Ernest Ward was also closely connected to the work of *The Pentecost Herald* during the Wards’ furlough. He published numerous reports on the work in India, and he and the paper listed the Wards as the leader and assistant of Band no. 21. This Band was located at the “Herald

27Ward, 94-95.
Office, Indianapolis, Ind.,”29 from the November 15, 1898, issue until the October 15, 1899 issue. It is also interesting to note that in an article by Fannie Birdsall about one of the Wards’ speaking engagements. She concluded with a brief plug to “Send 5 cents for the illustrated sketch of the life of Pandita Ramabi (sic).”30 Clearly the Wards and the Pentecost Bands were aware of Pandita Ramabai well before the Mukti Revival. However, this awareness also included direct contact as well.31

Before the Wards went on furlough, Hotle and Ward had been investigating the possibility of a new branch of the Pentecost Band mission in Gondia. They planned for this mission to focus on work among child widows. Within Indian custom at the time, young girls were often married as children to much older men, and then were often left unprotected and abandoned when these husbands died. Various early missions often assisted these girls, and Pandita Ramabai especially focused on this type of ministry at the Mukti Mission. The Pentecost Herald discussed the child widow plight several times in its pages.

While Ward was in the U.S., Hotle sent a letter dated April 5, 1899, from Poona (Pune), India to The Pentecost Herald, where he wrote,

We go to Kedgaon tonight, a village thirty miles east of here where we wish to visit the high caste “Widows’ Home” conducted by the notable woman, Pandita Ramabia (sic). We are praying and hope to obtain some special and valuable information as to principles and management of this wonderful work. God is with us and we feel he has led us here. He has been laying these people heavily on our hearts and we are praying the Lord of the Harvest to send forth laborers into his vineyard to go forth and preach deliverance to the many thousands who are bowed beneath the galling yokes of moral and social slavery.32

An additional note in the Pentecost Band journal indicated that Sister Tucker “will go to Dardar, Bombay, and Pandita Ramabai’s”33 on her way home for furlough on April 20, 1903, before sailing. Clearly, the

29The Pentecost Herald listed all of the bands in each issue of their periodical. While the Wards were on furlough, this was the assignment that was listed in the paper from the November 15, 1898 issue until the October 15, 1899 issue when they returned to India.
30The Pentecost Herald 5, no. 16, (whole no. 95) (November 15, 1898), 8.
31Phebe Ward’s initial contact with Pandita Ramabai came as early as 1892, when she took a trip to Pune. She went there to leave an Anglo-Indian adopted daughter at a Children’s Home since there were insufficient funds to take her on furlough with the family to the U.S. Cf. Ward, 69-71.
32The Pentecost Herald 6, no. 6, (whole no. 109) (June 15, 1899), 6.
33Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for April 20, 1903 (see footnote 21).
members of the Pentecost Bands were impressed by Ramabai and willing to learn from her work. What is less clear is how these radical holiness missionaries might have influenced Ramabai.  

Despite the obvious tensions between the Wards and the Hotles over the furlough incident, it would be unjust to imply that they did not support each other and work well together for the good of the larger group. On August 7, 1900, the Hotles’ young son, Earl Clifford, died at only eleven months and four days of age. The journal for the Pentecost Bands recorded that Ernest Ward conducted the funeral service the following day, noting, “This is our first death among the missionaries.” The two also worked together to establish the second Pentecost Band in Gondia and on the Harvest Home Camp Meetings.  

Having said that, Ernest and Phebe Ward set out in December of 1900 to establish a new mission station in Khairagarh, and so they would have less day-to-day contact with the Hotles. *The Pentecost Herald* listed the Wards as the leaders of Band no. 4 in Khairagarh from the January 15, 1901 issue until the September 1, 1901 issue. Then, it suddenly listed the Wards as just workers under A.E. and Bessie Ashton (the former Bessie Sherman) in Gondia. Ethel Ward remained as an assistant leader in Khairagarh. From the September 15, 1901 issue of *The Pentecost Herald* until the January 15, 1902 issue the Wards remained in this status. From the February 1, 1902 issue of *The Pentecost Herald* on, the Wards were not listed as members of the Pentecost Bands in India at all, except

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34These relationships become even more interesting when we consider that Ramabai had an experience in April 1895 at a Holiness Camp Meeting in Lanauli (or Lanowli). Further, she chose to enroll her daughter and three other Indian girls into Chesbrough Seminary in New York in 1898. Chesbrough was a Free Methodist school, coming from the same roots as the Pentecost Bands and the missionary work of Ernest and Phebe Ward. For more on these relationships see Howard A. Snyder, “Holiness Heritage: The Case of Pandita Ramabai,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40, no. 2, (Fall 2005): 30-51.  
35Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for August 8, 1900 (see footnote 21).  
36In Phebe’s diary, the decision to remain at Gondia occurred at a workers’ meeting on July 25, 1901. Phebe also reminisced in a letter to Ernest dated April 22, 1902 writing:  

Do you remember the time you, Bro. and Sr. Ashton, Sr. Vail and others were all called together for a worker’s meeting, when they dealt with you about the tithing of the Khairagarh house, and that you had not obeyed orders? Sr. Ashton says they had sent for some books without an order from Raj Nand and that Bro. and Sr. Hotle began to fear you and they were acting too much on your own hook and that things were being taken out of their hands and hence the worker’s meeting.
for Ethel, who appears to remain at Khairagarh with the Bands until the end of 1904.37

To pinpoint the reason for the Wards’ separation from the Pentecost Bands, it is necessary to explore some of their more personal items, including a diary of Phebe Ward.38 Her diary included letters between her and Ernest shortly after the break. Phebe made an extensive note in her diary for October 7, 1901:

Harvest Home camp meeting began Sept. 25, Wed. About Sat. morn. Ernest objected to some teaching of the Bands in the holiness meeting. His manner displeased the workers and upon holding to his position, he was forbidden to take part in the meetings. He fainted away while standing in the eve. meeting which was construed by the workers to be the judgment of God. I could not quite see it as he was able to attend the meetings the next day. If Bro. Hotle had not previously forbidden him to speak it would have looked more reasonable to me . . . I was much distressed about things as I truly loved the Bands and felt that God was with them. But when Bro. Ward withdrew from the Bands, I felt God wanted me to stand by him. I can see things in the Bands that I know is [sic] not of God, such as forcing workers to take convictions from leaders as from God, and there was a relief in my heart when we left Raj Nandgaon. I was much tossed about during the trial, sometimes thinking I could not get through to heaven without the severe dealing of the Bands with me.39 But when I think of things that have

37The Wards made another brief appearance in the March 15, 1905 issue of the Pentecost Herald 11, no. 21, (whole number 235) (March 15, 1905), 3. They led the “ingathering” (when new Christians were baptized by the Bands) with Phebe, Ernest, and Ethel all leading meetings and preaching at the event. The accounts on page 3 refer to them as “former co-workers,” and also note that Frank Hotle was “unable to come.”

38The diary of Phebe Ward from 1900 to 1904 is part of the “Papers of Ernest F. Ward,” Archives and Special Collections, B. L. Fisher Library, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, box 1, folder 5. This diary also contains several letters slipped into the back of the book, which the author will also reference in this paper.

39In her letter to Ernest in April 22, 1902, reflecting on their experience, Phebe wrote of even more extreme events emanating from the Hotles’ leadership:

You know that Bro. Hotle wanted me out of the way so they could run things as they pleased and they thought they saw in me a formidable foe. You remember the day you and he locked me up as he thrust me in that little room, he said “Your power in Raj N- is broken,” because I insisted on knowing the state of my own soul. He told Sr. Vail I had to be taken to America to get me out of the way. How sad! Instead of utilizing the God given power in me- they would not have it when it ran counter to their opinions. That was the secret of your being taken from Khairagarh. They could not handle you so well there.
happened in dealing with different workers and the severe and harsh treatment used, I cannot but contrast it with the spirit of Jesus and it makes me more sure that this sudden and extraordinary move is from God. For Ernest did not think of severing his connections with the Bands when he went to H.H. 40

The fact that their daughter Ethel remained with the Pentecost Bands was a cause of concern for her parents. In her April 22, 1902 letter to Ernest, Phebe was considering returning to the U.S. due to her poor health, and for the education of her younger two daughters. While she ultimately decided to stay in India, she wrote,

This is my plan, to send the money to Ethel to come to Bombay to get her picture taken with the girls before we go. She will want to come to see us off. If they will not let her come that may be a link in the chain to open her eyes as to the bondage she is in . . . If they hold her there so we cannot see her it will be another incentive to pray her out. My heart sinks as I think of going without seeing her, but I can do it . . . 41

Having broken with the Pentecost Bands in October 1901, the Wards were forced to abandon all they had worked for and look for a new field. A brother Wiley was sent to oversee their work while they prepared to leave, even while they tried to continue their ministry. Phebe made a note in her diary about a religious service held November 10, 1901: “When Ernest testified he spoke of consecration, whereupon Bro. Wiley got up and stopped him and said he must not talk any more about that.” 42 Since their mission work at Raj Nandgaon was now under the Pentecost Bands’ leadership, it was important to find a temporary location to regroup. In a copy of a letter to Phebe’s brother, Frank, dated April 17, 1902, Ernest wrote, “After leaving the P. Bands last October, Phebe and I have rec’d invitations to cast in our lot with 3 other missions. We chose to come here and help in the work at Dhond. There are 400 orphan boys and I am at present assisting in their spiritual training.” 43 The Wards relocated to Albert Norton’s boys’ orphanage, a partner mission with Pandita Ramabai’s Mukti Mission that was close by. Phebe noted in her diary that Ernest wrote to Albert Norton (the missionary who encouraged them to come to India in the beginning), and on December 13, 1901 they arrived at the boys’ orphanage. Phebe reported that the

40 Diary of Phebe Ward, entry from October 7, 1901 (see footnote 38).
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
Nortons were shocked by the physical change in her, and that, “We sleep in the dining room curtained off from one end.”

Of this time, Ethel Ward noted that the “leaders” moved the Wards from Lohara to Gondia, to Khairagarh, and in the meantime they visited and helped other missionary friends as well. During this time, Ethel Ward recorded:

Just then, the Wards had a letter from their old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Norton who had first interested them in India. “Come and see us,” they wrote from Dhond. “We have a boys’ school near Pandita Ramabai’s School at Kedgaon, near Poona (Pune).”

The Wards had an invitation to another place but decided to visit in Dhond enroute, and help them temporarily. The Nortons had a large orphanage of 440 boys, and being near to Pandita Ramabai’s famous “Mukti Mission,” where she had about 1000 girls and women, this boys’ school supplied many husbands to Ramabai’s girls. Mrs. Ward looked after the little boys and the sick boys, also taught a class of sixty-five boys in Sunday School.

Ethel’s view seems to gloss over the true accounting of these events, but the diary and letters clearly indicate that Ethel was still with the Pentecost Bands and under their control.

From December 1901 through April 1902, the Wards stayed and worked closely with the Nortons. During this time, the Wards clearly had contact with Ramabai’s work. Phebe’s diary recorded news from Kedgaon. She also noted that on February 7, 1902, Ernest took Methodist missionary C. B. Ward to visit Ramabai and her mission. On February 27, 1902, Free Methodist missionary Effie Southworth stopped by on a visit to Ramabai. Phebe Ward also made an extensive record in her diary on March 28, 1902 of a visit to the Mukti Mission. It noted that she took C. W. Sherman (Bessie Ashton’s father and founder of the Vanguard Mission in St. Louis—also with ties to Free Methodism) to visit Ramabai’s work. In her account Phebe was also clearly impressed by Ramabai’s organization and methodology.

Apparently in 1902, the work of both the Nortons and Pandita Ramabai were not sufficiently tied to the radical holiness views of Ernest

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44Ibid.
45E.E. Ward, 103.
46To see the full extended and notated quote from Phebe Ward’s diary, see Robert Danielson, "From the Archives: Ernest F. Ward: The First Free Methodist Foreign Missionary," *The Asbury Journal* 70, no. 1 (Spring 2015), 172 - 180. Available at: https://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/vol70/iss1/11(accessed January 15, 2020).
Ward to present permanent options, despite apparent encouragement from C. W. Sherman to consider working with Ramabai. Ernest wrote to Phebe on April 7, 1902 about the future options in Dhond or Khedgaon:

I have very little hope of a permanent affiliation with this work (he is writing from the Nortons’ work in Dhond). Both sides of the house are neither in harmony with our teaching nor our practice on thorough holiness lines if we are at all aggressive, and until they radically change will continue to head us off in our work among the orphans. I think it should be exactly the same at Khedgaon if they had invited us there and I don’t see why Bro. Sherman has any hope in that direction. I don’t see a bit for true holiness with the advisors P.R. (assumed to stand for Pandita Ramabai) has about her now (or) P. herself, unless she shows a desire to shake loose of everybody unspiritual who have a controlling voice at home or abroad.47

The Wards assisted with some of the Vanguard Mission’s work in Sanjan, until they ultimately returned to the Free Methodist Church in June 1904. They also helped its work in Yeotmal. Ethel also apparently left the Bands at that time and went to work with the Free Methodists at Yeotmal.

Reports of Holiness Revivals among the Pentecost Bands

The journal for the Pentecost Band in Raj Nandgaon is full of accounts of daily activities and trips taken by the missionaries, but it also contains accounts of spiritual revivals that occurred among the orphans. It is important to remember that the Pentecost Bands were primarily an evangelistic group rooted in radical holiness teaching. It is also significant to realize that spiritual accounts such as these were common in the period, especially in the Holiness Movement. However, a few of these accounts can convey some of the ways in which the Pentecost Band in India combined their evangelistic work with the orphanage work thrust upon them by the famine of 1897. One of the earliest accounts is in a letter from Frank Hotle to The Pentecost Herald published in 1898:

A real revival is prevailing all over our compound. Something over twenty of our children have prayed through and got saved, and some of them most gloriously. When they would strike the

47Diary of Phebe Ward, copy of letter from Ernest to Phebe in the back of the diary dated April 7, 1902 (see footnote 38).
joy they would clap their hands, praise God and prance about for joy, like some people in America who had the light all their lives. Bro. Ward said he never saw anything like it in India. The revival broke out among our children at Nagpur. Some of the children who have been with us but a few months are saved. Since we have been here the revival is spreading among all the children and a number of Bro. Ward’s have been saved. Bro. and sister Ward are being much helped of God.48

In an account from the Pentecost Band journal from November 25, 1900, the secretary of the band wrote,

Sunday—A Sabbath day indeed. All nature is keeping it holy. In the early morning most of the workers went to a village to hold services. The Spirit came down in our midst as the workers began telling of a savior for the Heathen. Some of the workers jumped, danced, and shouted while the natives looked on in wonderment. Praise the Lord! At eleven o’clock a Hindi service was held in the chapel. In the bazaar meeting again the Spirit was poured out in blessing. The English service at seven p.m. was a time of heart searching as the truths of the Bible and how to be a soul winner was pressed home to the workers. O Hallelujah for the blood and fire track!49

Again, a similar account from May 12, 1901 stated,

Sunday—Hindi morning meeting led by Sis. Wiley and Alcorn and Sumerit and Rukhumin. It was followed by a rousing prayer meeting with the children in their school house where a number of them got saved. The evening meeting showed the results of it. We had a blessed time and all seemed so free, as the children were in readiness and gave their testimonies with such speed. Many testified to being saved from shame, which they manifested in the morning meeting by not taking up their crosses. The fire fell at the first of the services and many ran around, shouting, and praising God. Hallelujah! We can live free and cut loose in Hindi as well as English. Praise the Lord.50

We find another one of the numerous examples in the account for April 7, 1902:

48The Pentecost Herald 5, no. 12, (whole no. 91) (September 15, 1898), 6.
49Pentecost Band Journal from Raj Nandgaon for November 25, 1900 (see footnote 21).
50Ibid.
Monday—Bro. and Sis. Whittle arrived in the morning at 7:30 and both went on the morning train to Igatpuri. Workers called on Bi-Kaulal’s people today. The salvation seeking among the girls of late is working out the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The Lord has favored us with showers of rain, the atmosphere is deliciously cool, but the glory from the presence of our Father far exceeds every temporal blessing. The wonderful outpourings of the Spirit at prayers encourages us to expect great things. We are looking to God for such a revival to break out as will be felt throughout India. And prayers are ascending for the meeting now on at Igatpuri. Bro. Hotle writes of backsliders and professors being much stirred. Amen!51

And yet a final example from December 7, 1902:

Sunday—We had no village meeting this morning. Ugari, Sankuriya and Gwalin led the morning Hindi service. Gwalin read Matt. 5:13-17 and talked, then the other two and the testimonies followed promptly. SS as usual. Satmir, Hyder and Rupsingh led the evening Hindi service. Satmir read Jno. 13: 10-17 and talked and the other boys followed. During one of the opening hymns the Spirit came down and some were running, others jumping, dancing, or shouting. It was a blessed time. Nearly all the children testified and many of them had new testimonies. Bro. Harlowe said it was the best children’s meeting he was ever in in India. Sr. Goode led the Eng. Meeting and after reading Isaiah 35 talked from a verse in Jeremiah, “Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths.” We all testified and had a good free time.52

What is significant here is that all these accounts occurred prior to 1905, which was an important date for the outbreak of the Mukti Revival led by Pandita Ramabai in Kedgaon. Kedgaon is near Bombay (Mumbai), just 600 miles away on the main railroad from Raj Nandgaon. During a key period in the first half of 1902, the Wards and their form of radical holiness were located just thirteen miles away at the Dhond home, which took in the brothers of Ramabai’s girls, and often provided the girls with

51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
husbands as well.\textsuperscript{53} Thus we have a potential radical holiness influence on children in orphanages which were created in Central India as a result of the famine of 1897. These orphanages had known contacts with the Mukti Mission prior to the Mukti Revival of 1905. Evidence shows that Ramabai was interested in the holiness message, especially through contacts within the Free Methodist tradition.\textsuperscript{54} While none of this proves a definite connection between the spiritual practices of the Pentecost Bands (and by extension the Wards) and the Mukti Revival, there is a greater likelihood of immediate impact coming from this direction than from 3,000 miles away in the Welsh Revival influence in the Khasi Hills.

\textbf{Potential Parallels with the Mukti Revival}

Accounts of the Mukti Revival of 1905 are quite like those found in the Pentecost Bands of India journal. One example could be this account by Pandita Ramabai:

\begin{quote}
. . . the Spirit of God [falling] on those praying people with such power, that it was impossible to keep them silent. They burst out in tears; loud cries, were heard in all parts of the Church building, and we were awe-struck. . . . Little children, middle sized girls and young women wept bitterly and confessed their sins. Some saw visions and experienced the Power of God, and things that are too deep to describe. Two little girls had the spirit of prayer poured on them in such great torrents, that they continued to pray for hours. They were transformed with heavenly light shining on their faces.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

As mentioned earlier, such revivalist language was common for the time, and was not unique to the Pentecost Bands in India or even the Pentecost Bands in general. It was even familiar for the Indian context at the time.\textsuperscript{56} However, we should have serious pause, given the similarity

\textsuperscript{53}It is also important to note here that Ernest Ward was involved in the spiritual training of the boys in Dhond and he had a strong leadership role. In one letter to Phebe dated April 1, 1902, Ernest wrote, “We had special meeting for boys today. Then went down to river and baptized 13 boys including 2 blind boys and that little boy who prays so much. Bro. N. asked me to perform the ceremony, which I did. 2 boys came up after we had settled who to baptize at the school and begged to be baptized. Bro. N. left it with me to decide and I told him to postpone their case to another time.”


\textsuperscript{55}Pandita Ramabai Sarasvatı, “More Surprises,” Mukti Prayer Bell (October 1905), 7.

of context, including geographic proximity and similar mission aims and goals. Further, we must also consider the historical evidence of physical interaction between the Pentecost Bands, the Wards, and the Mukti Mission, along with Ramabai’s own interest in the Free Methodist Church and the Holiness Movement it represented, as it should give us serious pause for thought.

It is interesting that Edith Blumhofer, a well-known scholar on the Indian Revival, noted, “Three notable features seemed ubiquitous in this Indian revival: fire (felt and unseen), intense joy, and public confession of sin.” All three elements were seen in the Pentecost Band’s account almost five years before the Mukti Revival—and three years before the Welsh Revival! Perhaps the Pentecost Band’s accounts signify that the Indian Revival was already a reality in Central India prior to the Mukti Revival, and even the impact of the Welsh Revival in the Khasi Hills.

It is reasonable to wonder, if the Pentecost Bands did have any type of influence on the Mukti Revival, why do their own records not report any reciprocal influence following the June 1905 Mukti Revival? There are several possible reasons for this. First, any direct contacts between the Pentecost Bands and Pandita Ramabai were likely more personal in nature, probably with either the Wards or Frank Hotle. Second, by the time of the Mukti Revival, Frank Hotle was no longer in India. Third, the nature of his leadership had also splintered the group as older members left, leaving mostly newer members with fewer personal contacts. The May 27, 1905 issue of the Herald of Light (which replaced The Pentecost Herald) noted that Frank Hotle had returned to the U.S. with his family due to “poor health” and at that time was resting with friends in Kansas. Hotle never returned to the Pentecost Band’s work in India after this.

As I have shown, the Wards broke with the Pentecost Bands in late 1901 and returned to the Free Methodist Mission in Yeotmal by 1904. Helen S. Dyer’s account of the Mukti Revival and its spread around India made the following interesting statement:

Longing for Revival, the Free Methodist Mission at Yeotmal, Berar, was in the right attitude for blessing. Schools were closed in order that missionaries, teachers, and pupils might wait on

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58Phebe’s diary notes in December 1901 that Bessie (Sherman) Ashton and her husband “have left the Bands because the rule of the leader is too oppressive.”

59Herald of Light 12, no. 9 (whole issue no. 244) (May 27, 1905), 8.
the Lord. This was the last week in August 1905. On the Saturday night of this week of prayer the answer came. The meetings were over, but twenty were still “tarrying” when at 10:30 p.m. the Holy Spirit came like a shock of electricity; some shouted the praises of God, some danced, some ran, and some fell to the ground, under the power of God. All present were Christians with one exception, and she was converted. The others were all baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then the work spread to the unconverted in the orphanages. There was true conviction of sin, which resulted in confession followed by forgiveness and great joy.60

According to Dyer’s account, only local missions in Pune, including Soonderbai Powar’s Zenana Training Home and Albert Norton’s Boy’s Christian Home in Dhond, which was closely aligned with Ramabai’s Mukti Mission, received the impact of the Mukti Revival before the Free Methodists in Yeotmal. It is possible, therefore, to argue that if the Pentecost Band’s work had any influence on the Mukti Revival at all, it would have been through the personal contacts and influence of Ernest and Phebe Ward. Also, according to Dyer, the impact of the Mukti Revival travelled back to influence the Free Methodist mission as rapidly as it did because of those same contacts.

Given the available evidence, it would be presumptive to argue that the Pentecost Bands alone had a direct impact on the Mukti Revival, or even that it had a significant influence.61 We should not diminish the importance of Pandita Ramabai and her influence in the story of the Mukti Revival. Yet, history frequently shows us that there are many factors that influence significant events. We would be imprudent to dismiss the possibility that the radical holiness missionaries of the Pentecost Bands, especially Ernest and Phebe Ward, might have played a small role in the succeeding events of the Indian Revival.62 Their potential contribution should not be ignored in an attempt to over simplify the influences on the Mukti Revival.

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62Stanley M. Burgess. “Pentecostalism in India: An Overview” in the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4, no. 1, (2001), 85-98. Burgess demonstrated that there were plenty of other contenders for Pentecostal influence in India, both before and after the Mukti Revival.
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It is an honor to be invited to review the book of Dr. Robert Stefan, my fellow professor and colleague here at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS). Robert Stefan was educated at Northwestern University with a degree of Master of Management and worked as an investment banker before the Assemblies of God World Missions appointed he and his wife as missionaries. He completed his Master of Divinity from APTS and a PhD in Missiology from Concordia Seminary. Since the late 1990s, Robert and his wife, Marilyn, have served among Asians, training them to become spiritually and economically responsible. Stefan acknowledged that doing a "for-profit" business in the context of mission is a real challenge, and it requires us to be committed "disciples of Jesus Christ, and at the same time, we should be effective business people in Muslim society" (viii). The wealth of information and knowledge provided by Stefan appears to be a product of business knowledge, experiences, and insights from mentors and peers in the mission field (ix).

Chapter 1 of Stefan’s book (the Introduction) focuses on the research framework, including the background, concerns, rationale, questions, and methodology of the book. It also contains a brief review of the literature and a synopsis of each chapter. In the Introduction, Stefan argues that to properly contextualize business as a mission strategy in the Muslim context and to minimize potential conflicts, one has to properly understand the theology, values, laws, and business practices of Muslim people (4). The task of contextualization is a call for missionaries to be "sensitive cross-culturally" regarding the place where they are serving since there is a "high degree of suspicion" toward the West's ideas and people. According to Stefan, missionaries will "advance a sustainable form of economic activity for the community at large" (6). Stefan wrestled with the idea of whether a profitable business can be organized and operated in Muslim Majority Nations (MMNs), so he asked several critical research questions in his book, such as: What is the Islamic view about business and possessions? (9), How did Muslims conduct business over time in the various places where Islam gained ascendency and What is the Islamic view of modern capitalism? Stefan also addresses whether there are aspects of modern businesses that are particularly troublesome to Muslims (10, 11). Approaching these questions in this study, Stefan used two methodologies: an exegesis of the Qur'an and Hadith passages (11), and an examination of the historical business practices of the Muslim people. Interplaying these two methodologies,
according to Stefan, will result in a "full-orbed understanding of business in Islam" (12).

Chapter 2 begins with an exegesis of Ayat, an Islamic concept of possession and wealth. Ayat from Qur'an shows that Allah is the creator, owner, sustainer, provider, and decider (19, 20, 22, 24). Stefan explains, however, that wealth and possession are linked to piety. Wealth is a reward by Allah for those believers who do good deeds. Similar to the concept of Christian stewardship, man is also called to be stewards and responsible for possessions entrusted by Allah (28). While there is an ongoing debate in Muslim circles on whether land should be owned by the state or individuals, Stefan argued that there are multiple indications of Qur'an teaching on private properties such as movable goods, houses, orphaned children, payment of booty to warriors, and two-thirds of inheritances (28-30). The use of property and wealth is a test of personal piety (31), and it should be used rightly and justly (33-34). Included in this chapter is the concept of trade and commerce in the Qur'an. Work (amal) has a multifaceted meaning that can be religious, moral, judicial, or economic. Man is tasked by Allah to tend and work the whole earth (35, 36) and be productive through commerce and trading (37). Trading and commerce are bound by "what is lawful and what is unlawful" (40). Each person is responsible for how he uses his "ayah," (possession or wealth) and it is explicitly taught in the Qur'an that a person doing business with others must show honesty and mutual consent. Qur'an also teaches equal justice when dealing with other people (42). Ethical practices must be observed, like keeping an oath and honoring contracts, giving the right payment to laborers, and competing with an upright heart (44).

Chapter 3 deals with the hadith, or the sayings of Muhammad, concerning ayat. It looks at the business of Hijaz's environment, which is where the prophet Muhammad was born and lived. This is to understand the perspective of the prophet about business. Trade in Hijaz was both local and long-distance (54). People bartered their pastoral and agricultural products in exchange for other goods. Since Arabia is almost entirely desert, products were transported through overland routes and various canals in the Red Sea and Nile River (56). During the prophet’s time, Mecca was both a primary trading center because Mecca was at the intersection of "two trade routes", and was also considered "sacred territory." Mecca was a kinship society, owned, ruled, and managed by "merchant capitalists" (58, 59). The second section of chapter 3 deals with the origin of the prophet Mohammed who came from a low-income family, but because of his blood relatives’ social concern they brought him with them on their trade journeys. Thus, Mohammed learned to become a trader. He married a wealthy widow by the name Khadijah.
Her wealth enabled him to have sufficient capital to do trading enterprises. Rejected as a prophet in Mecca, Mohammed left Mecca and lived in Medina. However, Mohammed attacked and seized the merchants of both Mecca and Medina, raided Meccan caravans, and confiscated the Jews’ properties and distributed them to his followers (65-66). Concerning the prophet's teaching about hadith, there were indications that he believed that Allah owns the wealth and that he gives the hadith to those who believe him. Hadith is a by-product of work and trade, which should be practiced with right ethics and healthy competition (79-80).

Chapter 4 examines the concept of business within Islamic thought and Islamic law, which is sharia law. In contrast to Islamic theology and philosophy, Stefan highlights the actual legal practices based on Islamic thought and doctrine. Stefan argues that the basis of Islamic thought and law came from three sources: Qur'an, Hadith traditions, and administrative and legal practices from Muslim conquests. Islamic scholars that promulgated Islamic laws are not immutable but conflicting in some ways because of the perspective of different scholars that emerged during the formative stage of Islamic State in MMN (88-90). With the contributions of different law schools and jurists and religious scholars, the plurality of these laws often overlapped. Thus, the next generation of Islamic scholars produced manuals on governance, policies, and instructions in the marketplace. Stefan identifies three distinguished scholars. First, in 1058 Al-Ghazali produced Islamic books that broadened Islamic philosophy, theology, and jurisprudence (103). Second, in 1263 Ibn Taymiyya, wrote commentaries on all disciplines that pertain to Islam (105-106). Third, Ibn Khaldun wrote about "Islamic logic, philosophy, law, grammar, and poetry” (109). The second half of chapter 4 deals with Islamic law regarding private use and possession of property (116), the establishment of waqfs (Islamic charitable foundations) (118), trade and commerce (120), and partnership (124). It is important to note that Islamic law's evolution was a product of different sources, traditions, schools, and thoughts of Islamic scholars.

Chapter 5 is a historical review of how business and trade was done in three Islamic societies. First, Stefan reviewed the Golden Age that began with Muslim expansion, the periods of the Ummayads, up to the Abbasids' time. The Golden Age, according to Stefan, was primarily centered in Syria and Iraq. During the Golden Age militant caliphs conquered territories and lands and collected their booties from these conquered territories. In short, economics are the main drive and motivation of conquest (131, 133, 134). The second center of commerce and industry in the Muslim world shifted to Cairo, Egypt, because of the decline of the Abbasids dynasty in the 10th century and the rise of
Fatimid Egypt. The third center of business and commerce that Stefan examined is pre-modern Egypt during the Middle Ages through the end of the 19th century. Again, Stefan highlights some of the main ideas and practices of trade and commerce in these periods and shows an important business context in the Muslim world.

Chapter 6 deals with economic reformers who sought independence from Western economic occupation from the 18th and 19th centuries. Stefan particularly examines the models of Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), whose economic model and writings have influenced the younger generation of reformers and Islamists to change. Then, Stefan discusses the perspective of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), arguing that both modernism and Islamists elicited and produced "contemporary Islamic economics" (198). Stefan continues to argue in the latter part of this chapter that contemporary Islamic economics, as a product of modern and Islamist reformers, justifies the Muslim rhetoric for the supremacy of the Islamic economic system, the development of interest-free Islamic Banking System, and economic growth in the MMN.

Chapter 7 is a survey of various business-driven organizations started by Christian organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Stefan begins with a thesis that business has been an integral part of the early church reflected in the early disciples of Jesus (Zacchaeus, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Luke, Priscilla and Aquilla, Lydia, etc.), as well as distinguished Europeans and British Christians. They used business and trade as an entry point to start missionary work in different nations. Stefan argues that Christian organizations that started a missionary work are classified as either mission-driven or business-driven; both groups possess elements of doing mission.

In Chapter 8 of the book, Stefan points out some critical points about the compatibility and contact points where Christians can begin contextualization. While Stefan admits that the task of contextualization is enormous because of the negative perceptions of Muslims toward Western capitalism and colonial domination because of the presumed political and territorial nature of Christianity, he then makes some suggestions and recommendations regarding the task of contextualization in bringing the good news to the Muslim World.

Strength: This book provides a road map and entry point on how Christian business people and missionaries can creatively enter into the Majority Muslim Nations' business world. Chapters 2-6 offer a wealth of information and knowledge about Islamic perspectives regarding business, trade, and commerce. These chapters discuss the Quranic view of business in depth, including laws that regulate business and trades, Muslim theology and thoughts about wealth and possessions, and the
economic minds of the Muslim world who shaped the present economic systems of MMN. This is the strength of the whole book.

Weakness: This book has failed to survey the economic models (e.g., Free Market Capitalism, Social Capitalism, Democratic Socialism, and Democratic Capitalism) before discussing the economic history, system, and development of MMNs. The term “Muslim Majority Nations” is too broad for this study. Since the author admitted that the research questions pose a "microeconomic standpoint" (12), he should have selected one particular Islamic country within MMNs, then chosen several communities to be the pilot project of this study. Stefan's description of various mission organizations using business as a strategy to reach out is a good example, but it would have been better to locate these Christian organizations within the Muslim world. While Stefan has devoted much of his energy to research and writing about the conceptual understanding of Islam about business, wealth, and possessions, he failed to find a pilot example of Christian organizations doing missions in MMN. I strongly feel that he should have interviewed some emerging business organizations in MMNs to add additional substance to his thesis. I observed that he rarely mentioned “Muslim” or "Islam” in chapter 7, and he was quite detached from his subject study in that chapter.

Reviewed by Joel Tejedo

In *World Christianity: A Historical and Theological Introduction*, Lalsangkima Pachuau, John Wesley Beeson Professor of Christian Mission at Asbury Theological Seminary, offers a distinguished introduction on the contexts and ramifications of world Christianity. Following Andrew Walls, Pachuau understands the gospel as tensioning between the tendencies to identify with the world and to transform it, but goes further than Walls in advocating that such tension “governs the enterprise of theology” where “all forms of contextual theology are molded out of” (xiv). Therefore, Pachuau’s discussion of world Christianity is anchored within a paradigm of tensions between the West and the majority world, as well as between the gospel’s two tendencies. The project first describes the current state of world Christianity before addressing its implications concerning contextualization and mission. Note that while Pachuau locates world Christianity between western Christianity, Eastern Christianity, and Christianity of the majority world, the focus is on the last group (xiv).

In chapter 1, Pachuau seeks to define world Christianity and identify the historical and theological causes of it. World Christianity is viewed as the phenomenon where Christian faith exhibits a worldwide reach, where it is “owned at heart by people of diverse cultures and societies from every region and every continent, and portrayed in the multiplicity of church traditions, cultural expressions of faith-practices, and doctrinal voices” (2). Globalization is cited as the backdrop that allows Christianity to become a worldwide faith, while the gospel’s nature to incarnate and transform is regarded as the theological factor. Tracing the history of the study on world Christianity, Pachuau identifies Walbert Buehlmann and Andrew Walls as the pioneering scholars, while crediting the World Council of Churches (WCC) as the first direct dealing with world Christianity. As Pachuau conducts the study on world Christianity around the framework of “West and the Rest” (24-25), the impact of the Enlightenment on Christianity is examined (chapter 2). The Enlightenment forged western Christianity and the modern missionary movement, which sowed the seeds of world Christianity (31). Here Pachuau argues that the ways Christianity in the majority world differs from western Christianity are evidences of the majority world being oblivious and resistant towards Enlightenment ethos (29-30).

After setting the stage for discussing world Christianity, Pachuau explores emerging Christian movements during the post-colonial period (chapters 3 and 4), evaluating their contributions to the demography of Christianity while assessing the socio-political factors and theological features that shaped them. Latin American Christianity experiences a
revitalization despite a slight decline in the overall Christian population. The predominant Catholicism undergoes a spiritual renewal as laypersons yearn to meet the increasingly challenging sociopolitical environments while the articulation of liberation theology provides the theological framework. Protestantism also plays a more significant role than before, as it is often used to energize social movements. Pentecostalism grows conspicuously, and Latin America becomes the continent with the most Pentecostals.

African Christianity encounters the most dramatic Christian population growth, from 80M in 1970 to 335M in 2000 despite the depressingly deteriorating socio-political climate (54). During this period, all denominations experienced significant growth (Orthodox’s growth of 230% was the slowest), with the fastest-growing denomination being Anglican at 844% growth. Crucial observations concerning Pentecostalism are made here, including Pentecostalism as a fluid concept that can refer to denomination, movement, or stream within other traditions as well as many African Pentecostal groups have expanded outside of Africa (58). As for Asian and Pacific Islands Christianity (chapter 4), Pachuau presents succinct summaries of many countries’ encounters with Christianity as well as the results of these encounters. It is imperative to note that while there are significant conversions to Christianity in many regions, Asian Christianity looks radically different from one place to another as each nation is facing diverse contexts.

After describing each region in broad strokes, Pachuau moves from presenting the contexts of world Christianity to presenting its theological implications. Chapter 5 focuses on contextual theology, the contextualization of Christianity, and their relationships with global Christianity. Pachuau defines contextualization as disclosing “the crucial role played by contexts in any genuine theological construction, communication, and reception” (94) and sketches its developments, mainly how evangelicals turned from reluctancy to participation. The discussion on the variety of approaches to contextual theology at the end of this chapter naturally leads to a survey of contextual theologies from the majority world (chapter 6). Out of the common contexts of religiosity, poverty, and existential tensions, liberation theology, inculturation, and theology of religions are essential showcases of the implications of world Christianity, in light of the tensions between contextualization and contextual theology as well as between western Christianity and Christianity in the Majority World. Interestingly, Pachuau views the Charismatic movement as contextual theology. Last but not least, Pachuau shows three examples of missions from the majority world (chapter 7), showing how contexts have tremendous implications for missiology.
Perhaps the most crucial contribution this work makes to the study of world Christianity is its deconstruction of the delusion that western Christianity (and its theology) ought to be the only dominant form and understanding of Christianity. Throughout the book, Pachuau makes a convincing case that Christianity as a world religion is more comprehensive and sophisticated than many in the West have expected. He aptly shows that the diverse Christianity in the Majority World is neither more primitive nor immature than the western form but comprises valid contextual responses to realities. Besides deconstruction, this work also provides a comprehensive introduction to world Christianity in at least two ways. First, there is extensive coverage of all regions that have significant Christian growth in the post-colonial period. Though these are inevitably in “broad strokes” (21), they are meticulous enough for readers to form a general impression regarding the state of Christianity in a particular region. Second, succinct introductions on critical subjects related to world Christianity, such as globalization (1-2), Enlightenment (24-29), Pentecostalism (49-51), and contextualization (92-94), are given when appropriate, which are vital in enabling amateur readers to grasp the subjects.

Outside of the study of world Christianity, this work advances the study of other theological disciplines and confessions. For example, Pachuau’s keen observation of the tension between contextualization and contextual theology may open a new direction for intercultural study. Likewise, his depiction of Pentecostalism in other regions has given the Pentecostal community much to contemplate, including this reviewer on his own confessional body, neo-Charismatic Chinese immigrants in North America.

This work has much to commend, but the following strengths stand out in particular. Its high readability will ensure its wide readership, including being used as a textbook for world Christianity courses. Pachuau writes in a highly structured manner, often taking the readers through his rationale and always giving broad overviews before assessing chronologically the sociopolitical and theological factors that constitute the unique form of Christianity found in each region. This structured manner allows his readers to follow his presentation seamlessly. Besides its high readability, Pachuau’s exhaustive research and comprehensive documentation of his sources will make this book a useful reference for many. His inclusion of Catholic thought and careful documentation of Catholic change show the broadness of his research, and may yield ecumenical fruits. As a Mizo itinerant evangelist turned missiologist who was trained at Princeton, Pachuau notices things rarely articulated, including the general more positive view towards colonialism in Asia and Africa as well as the nature of Pentecostalism. These make Pachuau’s work one of a kind.
The only disappointing feature of this work lies with its occasional overt brevity that leads to the exclusion of crucial developments. For instance, Pachuau almost never mentions the Orthodox tradition apart from listing it alongside of other confessions. While this may be explicable with its presumably smaller role in global Christianity, the lack of treatment on western Asia is perplexing. Though one may reasonably expect a comprehensive treatment on this region, the book describes western Asia Christianity in only six sentences (64). Besides these omissions, several foundational assumptions and arguments are left unexplained. For instance, Pachuau acknowledges that his interpretation of the Charismatic movement as contextual theologies is “surprising, if not unacceptable” (20), but he neither defends nor proves that his view is preferable. Likewise, he does not expound his underlying assumption of the tension between western Christianity and Christianity in the Majority World enough to allow readers to approach topics like reverse mission and return mission. If Pachuau had done slightly more to include neglected areas and explain his interpretations, the book would be even more valuable.

In conclusion, Lalsangkima Pachuau’s *World Christianity: A Historical and Theological Introduction* is an outstanding work that should be widely celebrated, as one would find in it a concise description with careful analysis of world Christianity in a highly readable form. Pachuau has definitely accomplished his quest to present a balanced and holistic picture of Christianity (19).

Reviewed by Stephen Yeem

Alan Richard Tippett (1911-1988) is a well-known name to those familiar with the field of missiology and is perhaps best known for defining the concept of power encounter. This missionary biography by Kevin Hovey, a fellow Australian, is the publication of his PhD dissertation completed at Alphacrucis College, Sydney, Australia.

While the biography does cover his entire life, specific focus is given to the years 1954-1988, which Hovey contends “. . . was a crucial time for missions globally, with the late 1960s being a watershed” (xxv). Hovey also focuses more on Tippett’s career and writings than on his personal life and family.

The book is divided into three sections that include eight of the nine chapters in the book. Chapter one, which stands alone, contains much of what one would expect to find in the opening chapter of a dissertation, explaining the context of the study and how it will be conducted. Here, Hovey introduces the five themes that he felt defined Tippett’s life and work: (1) Centrality of a relationship with God; (2) Centrality of the Church; (3) The Importance of Appropriate Research Methodologies; (4) The Importance of Strategic Missiology and Strategic Missionary Practice; and, (5) Guidelines for Mission Boards and Field Missionaries (21).

Hovey then proceeds to provide a short introduction to each theme. Quite naturally, the first theme grew out of Tippett’s own relationship with God (22). The second theme reflects the emphasis in his writing that he gave to research and teaching on church growth (22). The third theme grew out of his missionary experience in Fiji where he did extensive ethnographic research, developing his own research methods along the way. That research served him well not only in his missionary experience, but also in his doctoral studies and teaching at Fuller (22). The fourth theme reflects Tippett’s conviction, again drawn from his experience in Fiji, that missionaries and missions societies must have a well-thought through strategy for their work (22). The fifth theme, which is strongly related to the fourth, came from Tippett’s observation that there were parts of the world that were ripe for harvest, but that mission leaders frequently failed to strategize to adequately reach them (22). The explication of these themes is threaded throughout the book.
The first section, entitled *Alan Tippett’s Life Journey*, comprises chapters two through four. Chapter two is a snapshot of his life journey from his birth and childhood in Australia to his twenty years of missionary service in Fiji, his doctoral studies in Oregon and twelve years at Fuller Theological Seminary’s School of World Mission in Pasadena, California and, finally, his retirement years back in Australia.

Chapter three describes the meteoric rise of Tippett’s influence in the global missions community. There were a number of factors that contributed to this, including his self-induced departure from Fiji where he felt his influence had become too strong to be of further value to the church in Fiji that was struggling to come out of the colonial era, an idea to which Tippett was strongly committed (54-5). A second factor was accepting Donald McGavran’s invitation to join the nascent School of World Mission (now School of International Studies) at Fuller Theological Seminary, which was fast becoming one of the most influential study of missions centers in the world. During this time, he also served as the founding editor of *Missiology*, the highly influential Journal of the American Society of Missiology. In his own reflections of three years in this job he stated “I think we were truly the mouthpiece of a large body of missionary opinion, which believed that the day of mission was not dead and that mission would somehow go on until the end of the age.”

Unfortunately, once Tippett retired from Fuller and returned to Australia permanently, his influence declined. Hovey lists several possible reasons including Tippett’s laborious writing style (81), no specialized textbook (although Hovey does note Tippett’s *Introduction to Missiology*, which was published the year before his death) (82), his rambling speaking style (83) and his retirement to Australia, where he was not well known outside of missions circles (83-4), his lack of continued writing for publication (85-6), and ongoing tension with his own Methodist denomination and mission board. (87) Happily, in 2012 the William Carey Library, with the endorsement of Ralph Winter, began publishing a number of his articles and manuscripts (81) and many of them are now available through online booksellers. When I read this, I immediately purchased a number of them and added them to my own personal missions library. In my opinion, the publication of his work has at least partially resurrected his influence.

Section two, entitled *Tippett’s Writings: Theological Basis and Research Methodologies*, comprises chapters five and six. Three of Tippett’s life themes, drawn from his prolific writing, are examined in these chapters (27). Chapter 5 focuses on his convictions regarding the

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¹Alan Tippett, *No Continuing City*, Unpublished manuscript. (Canberra: St. Mark’s Library, 1986), 426, cited in Hovey, 54.
need for a relationship with God, which includes the exclusivity of salvation through Christ alone, and the centrality that the Church must occupy in missional thinking and practice.

Chapter six focuses on Tippett’s third life theme, *Research Methodologies*, which were significant in Tippett’s own missionary experience in Fiji. If the gospel were to be able to shed its post-colonial, western trappings, missionaries must thoroughly understand the culture of the people group(s) to whom they are sent. Understanding culture requires having or developing the tools needed to understand the culture and to think through how the gospel can best be expressed within that culture. This was Tippett’s premise for conducting extensive research during his years of missionary service in Fiji. Because the sub-field of applied missionary anthropology was not well developed at the time, Tippett quite willingly drew on the work of secular anthropologists like Homer Barnett, A.F.C. Wallace, Arnold Van Gennep and others, as well as developing his own ideas (131). Hovey notes that Tippett well understood that the discipline of missiology drew on the fields of history, anthropology and ethnohistory, among others and made extensive use of these fields in developing his own research methodology (131). Like any good scholar, his keen observations and contributions to missiology flowed from his research, both in the library and in the field.

The third section, comprising the remaining three chapters, is entitled *Strategic Missiology and Strategic Mission Practice*. In dedicating a section of his book to Tippett’s views of strategy, Hovey successfully highlights the practical nature of Tippett’s work. Neither Hovey nor Tippett are armchair scholars, confining themselves to the rarified air of academia. Hovey mentions that Tippett’s writing “revolutionized” his and his wife’s (Glenys) own missionary work along the Sepik river in Papua New Guinea (xix). Tippett’s influence on Hovey is evident throughout the book. Like Tippett, the Hoveys eventually left the field and devoted their lives to training missionaries. For both men research and missiological theory must result in planting churches, including developing church leadership and organizational structures that deeply reflect the cultural environment of the host church.

In summary, I think this is a magnificent book that would benefit any missionary and, most certainly, missionary educators and scholars. It will most certainly contribute to Tippett’s outstanding legacy and well-deserved ongoing influence on missions studies and practice.

While I have yet to read much of Tippett's work, which I discovered as a result of this book, Kevin Hovey played a significant role in the development of my thinking in my early years as a missionary. In addition to the friendship we shared, I took a class with him in 1995 on
a biblical response to animism at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines.

The only weakness of the book is minor. The sections mentioned on pages 27-8 are not listed on the Contents page nor are they set off in the book itself. While one would not expect to see this in the dissertation itself, I think the flow of the published edition would have been enhanced by their inclusion. Nevertheless, I strongly recommend this book.

Reviewed by Dave Johnson
The essays comprising this fascinating volume grant readers an ecumenically diverse, multi-perspectival, and thus fairly thorough understanding of the term, “denomination.” They do so in ways that keep the book as relevant today as when first published in 2011. Following co-editor Paul Collins’ helpful Introduction, the 11 chapters are papers presented in a session of the Ecclesiological Investigations Group at the 2008 meeting for the American Academy of Religion. Principal to that meeting and this collection is co-editor Barry Ensign-George’s opening essay, “Denomination as Ecclesiological Category: Sketching an Assessment.” The other essays thus function as responses, representing on one hand diverse Christian traditions and on the other, clarifying our critical concerns. Hence as the book title suggests, “assessing” the notion of denomination as an “ecclesiological category.” Respondents represent Pentecostal, Quaker, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox traditions. Hence, the essays altogether read as a lively yet mutually-informing conversation with Ensign-George’s paper.

Central to Ensign-George’s argument for using the category of “denomination” as a viable way of describing diverse Christian church traditions—at least within Protestantism—is his insistence that the term is historically rooted in “theological” rather than (as opponents often argue) “sociological” reflection (1-2, 17 n. 1). He essentially substantiates this argument through two intrinsic themes he ascribes to the term. First, he argues that the term aptly describes a phenomenon intrinsic to linking the broadness of the Christian Church (as the Nicene Creed states: “one, holy, catholic, apostolic”) and its many localised concrete expressions; hence, local congregations. This phenomenon Ensign-George conceptualises as “intermediary structure” (4-7), which he posits as a synonym for “denomination” (5). He then correlates this concept to his second ascribed theme, namely, the biblical portrayal of embodied “diversity” as God’s aim for humanity and creation within a Christian vision of creational flourishing (7-16).

The most critical appraisal of Ensign-George’s study is Anglican Paul Avis’ essay. In my opinion, he rightly acknowledges warrant for the plethora of diverse Christian groups comprising Protestantism, while forcefully arguing that the term “denomination” is neither a “biblical word or idea, nor is it a theological or ecclesiological term” (22). He
then argues how other terms can better theologically articulate this diversity, such as “Christian tradition” (22).

Meanwhile, Pentecostal theologian Wolfgang Vondey’s essay (“The Denomination in Classical and Global Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Historical and Theological Contribution”) especially provides Pentecostal readers an erudite discussion on how earlier 20th century classical Pentecostalism (particularly looking at the North American/USA narrative) has theologically wrestled with the “denomination” term. Through engaging earlier literature, he skilfully explains how early Pentecostals generally eschewed the term, strongly preferring to self-identity themselves through the term, “movement” (100-105). Meanwhile, he also sketches how practical organisational challenges eventually forced Pentecostal groups to embrace denominationally descriptive structures (105-108). Yet more pointedly, he also explains how historically up to this present day, Classical Pentecostalism has yet to construct from within its own resources a “comprehensive systematic . . . Pentecostal ecclesiology.” He explicitly forwards his essay as a suggested cure towards this aim (101, 109-111).

Vondey therefore argues that a constructive Pentecostal ecclesiology should deeply mine the tradition’s earlier penchant towards “movement” language, which he effectively links to the eschatological fervour and “liminal” aims of Pentecostal spirituality (110). I am aware that Vondey has consistently expressed similar themes elsewhere. Yet the unique quality of this essay lies in how he ecumenically forwards these distinctive Pentecostal themes towards this broader Christian conversation; particularly how Pentecostalism robustly nuances the “eschatological and dynamic character of Christianity” (167).

Another essay that especially caught my attention is Roman Catholic Peter de May’s reflection. While dismissing any appropriateness of the “denomination” term with reference to his church tradition, he argues how the term helps us appreciate the unique communal giftedness of different Protestant churches (151), in ways that signify a historically warranted, “contingent” local “embodiment” of Christian life (158-159).

Meanwhile, Ensign-George’s work along with fellow Presbyterian Amy Plantinga Pauw’s essay (“Presbyterianism and Denomination”) and Kirsteen Kim’s closing paper (“Afterward: Denomination in Global Perspective”) demonstrates that the historical roots and most contemporary aptness with denominationalism actually lies with the Presbyterian tradition, and hence with the greater Reformed family of Protestantism (133-135, 165-166). So, if we can embrace the legitimacy of the “denominational” structures that comprise Protestantism, we can
thus appreciate this as perhaps a unique gift that the Reformed tradition offers the greater Christian tradition.

To clarify, I would point out how Pauw squarely acknowledges that denominations signify a “provisional structure of Christian existence that has taken diverse forms across space and time” (145). Yet for this reason, these structures provide repositories of unique “traditions,” each of which can ecumenically share with others (144). As Kim points out, when we recognise the “contingent” and “provisional” nature of different Christian structures, including our own, denominationalism thus fosters a healthy “‘receptive’ form of ecumenism” (172), referring to mutual exchange of the communal gifts each tradition uniquely comprises. Hence, as Kim suggests—and which I will more strongly stress here—it is this very concept of distinctive yet limited perspectival giftedness that all Christian traditions enjoy, that denominationalism theologically proffers to ecclesiology that is, to a theology of the Church (172).

Let me conclude by outlining, specifically for a Pentecostal readership and within Pentecostal studies, this volume’s relevancy, limitations and strengths. Coming from an Assemblies of God background, I know from personal experience, as Vondey well stresses, that we Pentecostals generally find ourselves ambivalent towards describing our corporate identity through the category of “denomination.” I would agree with Vondey that we have good reasons for this, rooted in our unique spirituality. I moreover concur with Avis that other terms may be more theologically suitable for defining the Spirit-birthed pluralism, such as the words “traditions” or “spiritualties.” Nonetheless, as a number of the respondents point out, the denomination category has historically proven helpful towards comprehending Protestant plurality. We recognise how on one hand the term helps us conceptualise the “contingent” institutional structures requisite for a tradition’s missiological effectiveness within specific contexts, and on the other how the term is simply a “model” for describing Spirit-birthed ecclesial diversity.

One limitation to this collection is that it lacks adequate analysis on how the denomination concept emerged within the 17th to 18th century Euro/American emergence of Protestant Evangelicalism as a movement sometimes within and sometimes counter to the historic Protestant “national” churches. The reader should therefore appreciate the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox represented essays as etic responses to a primarily Protestant phenomenon while Protestant essays thus provide and emic perspective.

In summary, let me reiterate that—while moreover recalling how the volume also positively engages a Pentecostal response within its conversation—I would strongly recommend this volume as an
imperative college library resource, from which both undergraduate and graduate students can retrieve for assigned readings or research. The volume specifically falls within the areas of ecclesiology, ecumenicalism, and Protestant tradition. Second, this well written edition provides readers a valuable assist for anyone desiring or needing to better comprehend the “denomination” concept—either for better understanding how the notion plays out within one’s own ecclesial setting, or within contemporary ecumenical dialogue.

Reviewed by Monte Lee Rice

This volume attempts to present a model of atonement that is meaningful and sufficient for a “sinless” society, that is, “a society that does not see itself in terms of the category of sin at all” (3 n. 7, italics removed). The book begins with a short introductory chapter, entitled “(More) Musings and Methodology,” and it ends with a brief conclusion, “The End of the Beginning: Some Closing Thoughts.” Sandwiched between these chapters, neither of which is numbered, are four parts consisting of three chapters each: Part 1, “The Stories We Tell”; Part 2, “The Function of Narrative”; Part 3, “The Intent of Jesus in the Gospels”; and Part 4, “Indwelling the Counter Narrative.” While the book includes a bibliography, it lacks author, subject, and Scripture indices.

The need for this project, according to the author, stems from the ever-changing context in which the Christian community must theologize (2, 4). In response to the contemporary context, Mann asserts, “Certainly, sin remains conspicuous by its absence, not only in the language of popular culture, but quite possibly in the interface between Christian communities and the world around them” (2). Consequently, Mann believes continued endorsement of penal substitutionary atonement as a complete explication of the death of Jesus “is most tragic, for despite our confidence that we have the atonement pinned down, it remains anathema to the majority of people who we encounter within our towns and cities because we insist on speaking a language that was once fruitful, but is now incomprehensible” (4; cf. 71–72 where Mann objects to both penal substitutionary atonement and giving preference to one model of atonement over all others). Notions such as guilt consequent to sin as moral wrong-doing or lawbreaking, and punishing an innocent substitute to appease the wrath of God lack meaning and usefulness in the present “sinless” society, according to Mann, and thus a different model is needed (36–41).

Conversely, Mann promotes a model of atonement that flows out of a postmodern view of truth as narrative: “Unfortunately, there is no reassurance that can be given to those who desire to make statements of fact derived from a particular metanarrative. There is ‘truth’ for the self: ‘This is my truth; now tell me yours.’ Relativism reigns” (54). In this approach, “all stories have equal and potential worth as narratives that may bring meaning and illumination to the life being lived” (61; cf. 55); all stories—including our stories of atonement—are legitimized or delegitimized by whether they prove useful and meaningful (55; 61). For this reason, “no one soteriological model is meaningful and sufficient,” and the ecclesial community ought to have on offer “a myriad of
narratives” of the atonement, which individuals can “tr[y] out as templates . . . to see how they fit” (72).

Mann posits that the real plight of the sinless self is chronic shame, and this is what drives his entire project. Mann defines the “sin” of the “sinless self” as “the absence of mutual, unpolluted relating” (96). Consequent to this, “sin becomes not a state of corruption, nor guilt to be wiped out, but alienation from the Other/other, requiring reconciliation” (96). Due to the author’s conviction that truth bears a subjective-relativistic nature, any account of how Jesus’ cross-work effects reconciliation “can only ever be a personal interpretation that may or may not be recognizable as a narrative of atonement to others” (98). He believes that “if the cross is to be a dying for others, as [Jesus] intends it to be, then those who follow him there must also live by prioritizing the other, for in doing so we open our lives to that same at-one-ness: the presence of relational, self-coherence” (104). For Mann, the goal is a “sensitive” narration of “the story of Jesus,” which leads to “the sinless self who lives with shame and incoherence recognizing it as a meaningful and sufficient counter-story. He learns that to live with coherence between his real self and his ideal self is to have an awareness of, and to include, even submit to, the other” (105).

While the author’s desire to present the atonement in a comprehensible and impactful way for his contemporary context are certainly commendable, it remains doubtful that the end result represents a truly Christian perspective that continues to reflect the truth of Scripture. Rather, it seems Mann has reconfigured the message so thoroughly as to leave little of the original apostolic kerygma intact. In fact, the author is fully aware that some will regard his re-readings as “eisegesis (reading into a text the meaning one wants to get out of it) of the worst kind” (120), but he counters that one must address the problem of “meaning and sufficiency” for the sinless self (121). Contra Mann, however, perhaps individuals comprising the “sinless” society actually stand in need of a confrontation with the discordant truth of the gospel or, in some cases, simply a more adequate elucidation of a biblical worldview rather than a presentation of a reconfigured narrative that more readily and amicably relates to their own preferred stories about themselves. Mann apparently believes that our narrations determine truth. The question left unresolved is this: If the God of the Bible exists in any objective sense, then should not one’s narration of reality be legitimized or delegitimized in light of the degree to which it harmonizes with the divine intent of Scripture as determined by interpretation adhering to normal conventions of communication? Simply put, what counts is the story that God tells about us, not the story that we tell about ourselves. All said, to those who endorse an exegetically driven
theology, the harmartiology, anthropology, and soteriology of this volume most probably will appear far removed from the theological vantage point found in the pertinent biblical texts—many of which are not even mentioned in the book.

In conclusion, the scholar, well-informed pastor, or serious student wishing to have a thorough grasp of various interpretive proposals regarding the atonement may want to read this volume. Those seeking elucidation of what the text of Scripture says about atonement, however, will have to look elsewhere.

Reviewed by Adrian P. Rosen

In the preface, the author clearly articulates both what motivated this project, which began as his PhD dissertation, and his purpose in writing the book. With respect to the former, Waymeyer observes that concomitant to “the remarkable resurgence of reformed theology” within evangelicalism over the past few decades—which he regards as a very positive development—has been a trend toward an adoption of either eschatological agnosticism or amillennialism (vii). In response to the eschatological agnostic, Waymeyer rightly asserts, “Scripture reveals too much about the subject of eschatology for Christians to be content in the dark, especially those who preach the Word and shepherd the flock” (vii). In regard to amillennialism, Waymeyer observes that while those joining the ranks of reformed theology often spend several years studying the scriptural doctrine of predestination prior to self-identifying as Calvinists, they far too quickly embrace amillennialism without much study of the pertinent biblical texts “simply because they see it as an indispensable part of the reformed system” (vii). In response to such trends, Waymeyer calls for careful consideration of his “premillennial response to the most compelling arguments for amillennialism” (viii). He aims “not only to clarify the key differences between these two competing millennial views, but also to provide an exegetical critique of the two-age model of amillennialism” (viii).

Chapter 1 elucidates what exactly constitutes the two-age model of amillennialism. Succinctly put, amillennialism utilizes the two-age eschatological framework of the NT, which speaks of “this age” and the “age to come” (e.g., Matt. 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; 20:34–35; Eph. 1:21), as an interpretive grid that precludes the very possibility of an intermediate kingdom situated between the Second Coming and the eternal state. Thus, the premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 is ruled out from the outset. Waymeyer traces the historical roots of this argument back to Geerhardus Vos and explains the importance of its full development as a central argument in the debate by Kim Riddlebarger in *A Case for Amillennialism*, published in 2003 and expanded in 2013 (1–2). In addition to clarifying how amillennialism employs this argument (1–7), Waymeyer articulates the need for a premillennial response that “takes seriously the need to engage with the case for amillennialism at its most compelling point by addressing the question of whether the two-age model precludes the possibility of an intermediate kingdom” (7–8, quote from 8). The author also explicates the hermeneutical problems linked to claims that Revelation 20 is “unclear” as well as the use of
interpretive grids like the two-age model that tend to predetermine conclusions rather than trace the development of the doctrine of the future kingdom throughout Scripture (8–11). Moreover, he argues that Revelation 20 not only supplements and clarifies previous revelation, but it also readily harmonizes with it (11–14). This chapter concludes by way of a brief summation of what follows in the remainder of the book, thus helpfully orienting the reader so as to facilitate his/her tracking with the argument as it progresses (14–16).

Following this introductory chapter, the book comprises three main parts. Part 1 covers passages in the OT related to the intermediate messianic kingdom. Chapter 2 covers Psalm 72:1–20; Isaiah 2:2–4/Micah 4:1–3; and Isaiah 11:1–9. Next, chapter 3 focuses on Isaiah 65:17–25. Then, chapter 4 deals with passages from Zechariah, including 8:4–5; and 14:16–19. Finally, chapter 5 considers the crucial contribution of Isaiah 24:21–23. A recurrent theme running throughout these texts is the existence of elements such as affliction, need, oppression, poverty, rebellion, sin, weakness due to old age, and death in contexts that patently refer to the future glorious reign of Messiah (cf., e.g., 21–22 on Ps. 72:1–20; 28–30 on Isa. 11:1–9; 32–34 on Isa. 65:20, 22; 48–50 on Zech. 8:4–5; 54–58 on Zech. 14:16–19). Consequently, these passages do not appear to describe either the present age or the eternal state; this is the crux of Waymeyer’s argument in this section: Such passages necessitate the existence of an intermediate stage of the future kingdom, which follows the Second Coming but precedes the eternal state. In fact, according to Waymeyer, Isaiah 24:21–23 explicitly affirms the existence of a temporal gap (the “many days” of v. 22) that “takes place between the Second Coming and the final state of immortality” (69). The entirety of chapter 5 substantially develops this claim.

Part 2 more fully addresses the two-age eschatological framework articulated within the NT as it is utilized by amillennialism to preclude the possibility of an intermediate stage of the kingdom as taught by premillennialism. Topics treated include the following: the argument that the immediate succession of the two ages disallows the possibility of a gap in which to place an intermediate kingdom (chap. 6); the contention that the nontemporal nature of the qualities ascribed to the age to come leaves no room for the premillennial notion of an intermediate kingdom wherein temporal elements such as marriage, procreation, sin, and death continue to exist (chap. 7); and the argument that “The Resurrection and Judgment of All Mankind,” “The Destruction and Renewal of the Cosmos,” and “The Final Victory over Sin and Death” all occur at the Second Coming (chaps. 8–10 deal with these three topics seriatiom as indicated by the chapter titles).
Part 3 probes various aspects of the debate as it directly relates to Revelation 20. More specifically, the author evaluates four significant exegetical issues in Revelation 20:1–6. First, chapter 11 analyzes “The Timing of Satan’s Binding,” arguing that this must be future because 20:1–3 vividly depicts the complete removal of satanic influence from the earth, and this is incompatible with NT teaching in regard to Satan’s continued influence during the present age (cf. 177–179 for a succinct summary of the premillennial view). Waymeyer compelling argues that the “abyss” refers to “an actual location in the spiritual realm where evil spirits are confined and prevented from roaming free on earth” (183, italics removed; cf. 181–189). He also carefully unpacks the significance of both the purpose clause of v. 3b and the NT parallel passages (189–196 and 196–205, respectively). Second, chapter 12 addresses “The Nature of the First Resurrection,” contending that contextually it must be physical in nature just as the second resurrection (210–212), and offering a detailed critique of the two amillennial interpretations of the first resurrection as either regeneration or the believer’s entrance into heaven at the time of death (216–242). Third, chapter 13 discusses “The Duration of the Thousand years,” marshalling a strong argument that the thousand years should be literally interpreted. Fourth, chapter 14 seeks to clarify “The Chronology of John’s Visions,” supporting the idea that Revelation 19–21 are sequential, and refuting the amillennial argument for recapitulation, whereby Revelation 20:1–10 becomes a description of the present age between the first and second comings rather than a period subsequent to the Second Coming (Rev. 19).

There is much to commend in this volume. The author exhibits an exemplary irenic tone throughout yet nonetheless proffers a strong critique of amillennialism and a cogent defense of premillennialism, all of which is consistently based on careful and thorough exegetical analysis of the text. The evenhanded yet direct way in which Waymeyer interacts with amillennialist interlocutors such as Kim Riddlebarger, Sam Storms, Meredith Kline, G. K. Beale, Anthony Hoekema, Vern Poythress, Cornelis Venema, and others exemplifies the right balance of fairness and restraint coupled with clarity that a good scholar ought to demonstrate. The book helpfully includes a Scripture index, and the copious footnotes point the reader to a wealth of useful resources for further study. Also beneficial, the book includes an appendix on the intermediate kingdom in intertestamental Judaism. At the same time, a bibliography as well as author and subject indices would have greatly enhanced the usability of the book. Further, the organization of the volume does result in some repetitiveness due to overlap in the content treated in various chapters (e.g., the treatment of Rev. 20 in Part 3). Overall, Waymeyer has made an important contribution that demands
the consideration of any serious student of biblical eschatology. For those preaching or teaching on topics related to eschatology, the book certainly would serve as a useful resource or textbook.

Reviewed by Adrian P. Rosen

Does Tillichian theology have anything in common with Pentecostal theology? Surprisingly, yes. Nimi Wariboko, Walter G. Muelder Professor of Social Ethics at Boston University School of Theology, and Amos Yong, Professor of Theology and Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, bring into startling focus the pneumatologically inspired dialectic of both Tillichian theology and Pentecostal theology in this book. The two editors, recognizing the need for a critical conversation between Paul Tillich and Pentecostal theology, organized scholars from both the Tillichian tradition and the Pentecostal tradition to contribute to various aspects of this dialogue. The contributors of this book include Pentecostal scholars, Wolfgang Vondey, Frank Macchia, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Lisa Stephenson, Rhys Kuzmic, Steve Studebaker, Terry L. Cross, Andreas Nordlander, Tony Richie, David Bradnick, Peter Althouse, and Pamela Homes. Two Tillichian scholars, Mark Lewis Taylor and John J. Thatamanil, gave their response to the entire treatise with critical essays at the end of the book. Altogether, these scholars accentuate the potentials of a discourse between Tillich’s theological legacy and the growing Pentecostal tradition.

The overall premise of the book is the conviction that a wider theological discussion on both pneumatology and pneumatological theologies can result from a productive and critical dialogue between Tillichian theology and Pentecostal theology (3). Paul Tillich was a Lutheran existentialist, whose substantial discourse on the Holy Spirit in the third volume of his Systematic Theology became a harbinger of a Protestant correlational theology between the immanent presence of a transcendent God and the realities and questions of humanity amid history (4). On the other end, Pentecostal theology, founded from a Christo-centric spirituality, has been steadily contributing answers to human questions on the work, authority, and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the community and in human history (7). Put in its proper perspective then, Tillichian theology has something in common with Pentecostal theology in that they both have recognition of God’s divine spiritual presence and his ongoing conversation with humanity (8). With this commonality (albeit interacting with inherent contrasts), these two traditions can provide mutually fulfilling critical conversations on the revelatory presence of God in human history.

To elucidate the worthwhileness of this dialogue, the book proceeds in an engaging manner starting from Amos Yong’s introductory
contribution highlighting the convergences and divergences between the two traditions (11). It is then supplemented by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen’s discussion of Tillich’s possible position in the extensive milieu of evolving contemporary pneumatologies (19). Yong’s methodological exposition and Kärkkäinen’s pneumatological mapping lay the groundwork for the next chapters. Firstly, the chapters are composed of how Pentecostal pneumatology, in its varied aspects, can build a more concrete theological expression from the matrices laid out by Tillich’s philosophical and trinitarian theology, while supplementing or augmenting the latter’s theology with its own perspective. Secondly, the essays bring Tillich’s theme of sacramentality into conversation with various dialectics, like theology of creation, feminism and Pentecostal spirituality, Pentecostal political theology, and others. The essay by Pamela Holmes argues, from a historical and philosophical standpoint, the necessity of a conversation between Tillichians and Pentecostal theologians (197). Holmes identifies the strengths and weaknesses of both traditions and explains how both can benefit from a critical and productive dialogue. Finally, two essays form the counter-response of Tillichian scholars. These two scholars respectfully engaged, counter-questioned, and gave an apology to the previous Pentecostal thinkers. The most interesting argument was made by Thatamanil who pointed out that Tillich’s anti-supernaturalism is in contrast with Pentecostal’s supernaturalism. Thatamanil recognized the incommensurability between Tillich and Pentecostal views about spirits, demonic, etc. (230). In the end, though common ground exists between the two traditions, incommensurable areas exist too.

Personally, I think the presence of both commonality and incommensurability make the discussion of Tillichian theology and Pentecostal theology more interesting and worthwhile. The willingness of both camps to wrestle with the tensions, while recognizing areas of mutual input, can contribute to a wider understanding of the Spirit in the world. I like Tillich’s view of the Spirit of God as universalizing and primordial. This does reverberate with Pentecostal thought on the Spirit’s presence and power in the world. However, there is a line drawn between the Spirit of God as God versus the Spirit as a universal spirit concretized as a human or otherworldly spirit. Tillich’s warnings against confusing spiritual presence with human ecstasy or psychological excitement, as well as against pantheistic and supranaturalistic pitfalls, are something to which all Pentecostals should seriously adhere. Moreover, Tillich’s correlational theological method, which is essentially composed of “the dialectical relationship between the questions of human existence and the answers of God” (3), is is
something from which Pentecostals can learn a lot. In fact, it’s a good framework for theologizing.

On the other end, Pentecostal theology, informed by a revivalist spirituality, may just be what Tillich needs to fully articulate a theology of Spiritual Presence. Tillich, in my estimation, falls short of truly understanding the immanence of the transcendent God when he refuses to see spiritual charismata and miracles as part and parcel of a self-transcending religion. Indeed, Pentecostals agree with Tillich in that Jesus is the concrete expression of the divine Godhead. However, this does not mean that the Holy Spirit does not work in economic subordination in both the natural and supernatural realms, and that other spirits and demons do exist. For Pentecostals, there is a thin, almost non-existent, line between the natural and supernatural. The Spirit of God and other spirits move in both arenas. This is why I think Pentecostal theology, with its acceptance of spiritual gifts, power encounters, and miracles, can articulate a better theology of Spiritual Presence in Jesus, in the church, and in the world.

More can be said about Tillichian theology vis-à-vis Pentecostal theology. Fortunately, the multivocal volume provides a lively discussion of both. All its chapters are noteworthy and highly recommendable. It displays the maturity of Pentecostal thought in engaging other theological traditions. Pentecostalism, once thought of as an anti-intellectual, enthusiastic, and experiential-based tradition, has reached a point in history where its thinkers can now ecumenically dialogue and theologically contribute to a wider audience. Indeed, a critical dialogue like this can help contribute to an engaging and fruitful theological discussion on pneumatology and pneumatological theologies. In this regard, the book has succeeded in its overall purpose.

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