

Spirit-Baptism & the Prophetic Imagination

PART 2: THE DECLINE OF PENTECOSTALISM AS A REVIVAL MOVEMENT

“King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king’s house; he took everything. He also took away the shields of gold that Solomon had made; but King Rehoboam made in place of them shields of bronze.”

2 Chronicles 12:9-10, NRSV

A recap on the revolutionary power of Pentecostal spirituality

In part one of this series, I had surveyed at length, several core distinctives to Pentecostalism. I argued at length how these distinctives account for much of the movement’s power towards the worldwide indigenisation of Christianity, and as a renewal movement towards the greater Christian tradition. As earlier shared, foremost amongst these distinctives is the movement’s “oral-aural” oriented *epistemology*. I thus reviewed how consequently Pentecostals have traditionally adhered to a narrative driven hermeneutic and “story” oriented approach to preaching, ministry and congregational liturgy.

We also saw how throughout the 20th century, that the democratising nature of Pentecostal oral liturgy, empowered the movement as a seminally redemptive power towards spiritual and social-economic uplift throughout the world. We then further noted that the “orality” of Pentecostalism, “accents the intuitive” dimension of spiritual life, creating an ethos where the Pentecostal oral-aural ethos grants a heightened intuitiveness towards hearing the “word of the Lord.” The Pentecostal restoration of Christian orality thus facilitated an open posture towards the charismatic presence of the Holy Spirit and the Pentecostal experience of Spirit-baptism.

We then saw how through the radical crisis experience of Spirit-baptism, believers enter into a heightened awareness of God’s presence and anointing, which has thus also simultaneously often granted believers a decisive certainty of divine commission to be a witness of the Christian gospel. Therefore, I finally surveyed how within Pentecostal spirituality, Pentecostals have often experienced Spirit-baptism as a literal and existential baptism into biblical story-world. We argued that it is not that the Spirit-baptised believer is “more spiritual” than the non Spirit-baptised believer. But rather that Spirit-baptism orientates believers towards a more narrative-driven and centred understanding of the Bible. With a more “storying” Bible-reading paradigm, Pentecostal believers thus find their existential identity as participants within the biblical story-world heightened, and so interpret their identity as one dynamically integrated to the biblical story-world mediated through the experience of Spirit-baptism.

The present waning Pentecostalism as a renewal movement

Yet in spite of its existence within the global Christian tradition and movement as a seminal witness to the coming Kingdom, Pentecostalism is now waning as a revival movement. It wanes as all revival movements do, when they fail to negotiate the eventual and critical crossroads they must inevitably face. This is a crossroad between death as a dying, magisterially controlled traditionalism, or evolvment into a living yet matured tradition. For Pentecostalism, this evolvment would identify it as a movement that is faithful to its perennial calling and purpose, while serving as a needful communal *charism* within the larger Christian faith tradition, as a perennially prophetic and apocalyptic witness to the coming Kingdom. Pentecostalism “has come to a crossroads.”¹

¹ William Faupel, “Whither Pentecostalism?” 22nd Presidential Address, Society for Pentecostal Studies, *Pneuma* 15, no. 1 (1993): 9-27; quoted in Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 1.

All revival movements must transition this inevitable crossroads. The specific causes, consequences, and preceding and subsequent ethos and values of a particular revival may of course vary. With regards to Pentecostalism, it wanes because as a revival movement, so many of its structural and communal centres and streams throughout the world, are now both knowingly and unknowingly retreating from the movement's seminal and perennial role within Christianity. This role seminally emerged as a prophetic "voice" both within the universal Church and to the world, congruent to a peculiar ethos, story-world, and value-system. The Pentecostal ethos arose from its distinctive experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit. I will be coming back to this topic. I am optimistic enough to foresee that the movement's legacy will continue to have an indefinite influence for the better upon the worldwide Catholic Church. Yet again, I nonetheless suspect that as a movement defined by what I would regard as its most enduring paradigms, values, and ethos, Classic Pentecostalism is currently waning through a process of self-implosion.

I realise that many, particularly Pentecostals and Charismatics themselves, would find this discussion highly debatable, if not highly objectionable. I've concluded that a major reason for this conviction is that there are currently so many divergent diagnostic and prescriptive assessments made in behalf of the movement's existence. This includes even more so, how we define the meaning of Pentecostalism. Pertinent is Walter Hollenweger's proposal to speak primarily in the plural; thus, "Pentecostalisms." The plural term infers not only the diversity of doctrinal emphases and nuances within Pentecostalism, but also the movement's role and influence towards the birth and ongoing development of the worldwide Charismatic movement.

At this point, I find it helpful to begin drawing upon a simple distinction Amos Yong makes between the terms *Pentecostalism* and *Classic Pentecostalism*, which to some degree will shape my own reference throughout this project, to the movement and its derivative offshoots.² I'll usually use the term *Pentecostalism* or *pentecostalism* with reference to the movement in general. I'll use the term *Classic Pentecostalism* however, to broadly refer to those streams within the movement, which generally regard Spirit-baptism as an experience subsequent or distinct from spiritual regeneration. Along with this distinction, and with a view to the Classic Pentecostal understanding of Spirit-baptism, I would generally demark the Classic Pentecostalism view of Spirit-baptism as an initiatory experience into the vocational-prophetic anointing of the Holy Spirit for ministry and service. Consequently, this discussion first requires a digression into how within the psyche of people both within and outside the movement, the term "Pentecostalism" is currently understood

I find it helpful to recall my own journey. Besides having lived on three continents, my journey has thus far included ministry within two radically distinct church traditions. These two traditions virtually represent the antithesis of one another. First and foremost, has been my origins and subsequent ministry in Assemblies of God (AG) churches; which also represents my formal theological training. It was from that background that I have also retained some deeply embedded theological values and paradigms. Though I had not begun until the age of 40, most formative was the second graduate degree (M.Div) I undertook from Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS).

APTS decisively solidified my identity as a Pentecostal. Yet the school ethos also nurtured capacities, direct or indirectly, towards critical theological construction, reasoning and philosophical engagement. As many formally educated Pentecostals well know, that became something of a trying oxymoron; even a "cross." Prior to APTS, there was one earlier experience, which left an indelible shape on my present perspective towards Pentecostalism. That was my two plus year service in Ghana, West Africa, as a mission pastor over a small mission church. While there, I happened to read, *Double Image: Biblical Insights from African Parables*, written by former AGTS president and Pentecostal

² Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 18.

ecumenist, Del Tarr.³ That reading, coupled with my whole experience in Africa, left a deep appreciation towards the ideas of “orality” and “interpretive communities;” both of which Hollenweger argues as deeply integral to Pentecostal spirituality and its biblical and theological premises.

The second tradition I served within, though quite briefly, was Anglicanism. This involved a brief pastoral stint in a cathedral followed by another brief pastoral ministry in a charismatic, contemporary-driven, Anglican “mega-church.” I had gained some appreciation towards Anglican spirituality. While at the cathedral, I began initial steps towards entering the priesthood; that is precisely why I was on staff in the cathedral. I did this with the hope of seeking a synthesis between the two traditions. I believed that such a synthesis could be worthwhile; to some extent, I still believe so. This is because I also believe that the origins of Pentecostalism do lie within certain streams of Roman Catholic spirituality, albeit mediated through John Wesley and subsequently via 19th century Wesleyan Holiness Movement, particularly through the influence of Phoebe Palmer (who incidentally, may well be the most influential and woman theologian in the history of Christianity).⁴

At some point I realised however, I could journey no further into Anglicanism. I found myself facing the prospect of having to displace those earlier embedded values and paradigms. I decided not to risk that. On a critical note, I became even more aware of the contrast between an oral-nuanced and print-nuanced liturgical ethos. Most particularly I realised all the more that a print-nuanced liturgical ethos does indeed produce a deadening, cerebral-skewed approach to worship, which hinders any desire towards seeking an in-breaking of the Spirit’s power. This has convinced me as to why we must keep printed liturgical elements subordinate to a broader oral-based liturgical or congregational setting.

I now remain committed with an irretrievable sense of calling towards and representative of the tradition I prefer to call Classic Pentecostalism. But my experience tells me that oftentimes, Christians at the lay and local church level, do not easily comprehend hard-fast distinctions between Pentecostal and Charismatic spiritualities. Even more, they more often than not believe that these distinctions are nonexistent, irrelevant, or non-helpful towards Christian unity. I remain quite mindful of a conversation one or two years ago with an AG pastor. Upon hearing a distinction I made between Pentecostals and Charismatics, he snickered in response, with the question, “What’s the difference? It’s all the same!” I intuitively understood that his premise lie with an understanding that to be Pentecostal (or conversely, Charismatic) is simply believing in spiritual gifts and looking contemporary.

I will demonstrate however that this assumption is indeed symptomatic regarding the waning of Pentecostalism as a revival movement. I have also noticed that when believe observe or value this distinction, it is often based on an understanding that “Pentecostals” are those who emphasise that the gift of speaking in tongues is available for all believers, and often encourage its practice within gathered worship settings. This is certainly not always or even usually the case however. But at the risk of appearing divisive, I believe this does provide a contextual hint into the concerns and warrants for the discussions that follow.

Challenges threatening the future of Pentecostalism as a renewal movement

Yet to say that the movement is on the “wane,” and that a self-implosion process is underway, is not to dismiss much of the movement’s current and perhaps continued vitality for some time to come. My purpose for this opening discussion is to objectively place the movement within the normal pattern of revival movements in general. I am referring to a

³ Del Tarr, *Double Image: Biblical Insights from African Parables* (New York, NY; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994).

⁴ Hollenweger has provided substantial and helpful discussion into the Roman Catholic roots of Pentecostalism, primarily mediated through the 19th century Wesleyan-Holiness movement, as well as its deep resonance with Roman Catholic “popular religion.” Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 2, 153-189; “Pentecostalism,” (www.epcra.ch); see also Roli G. Dela Cruz, “Salvation in Christ and Baptism in Spirit A Response to Robert Menzies, ‘Evidential Tongues An Essay on Theological Method,’” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1 vol. 2 (1998): 125-147 (139-143).

pattern that is common to both spiritual and more secularly defined (non-religious) movements. One helpful model is the Sigmoid Curve. The Sigmoid Curve describes a horizontally turned S-shaped curve, wherein the top of the curve functions metaphorically as the crest of a wave. It has been said that the Sigmoid Curve “sums up the story of life itself;” the waxing and waning of all biological life cycles, of virtually all human endeavours, cultural trends and products, civilisations, and historical movements. And most particularly for our concern, the Sigmoid Curve describes the rise and fall of renewal movements.⁵ A movement’s fully optimised flowering exists at the top of curve, thus the crest of the wave. Yet it’s right there at the height, that a movement naturally experiences the forces of declension.

According to the Sigmoid Curve, the only way that a movement can insure it’s continued existence, is to initiate and nurture a second curve, prior to the full flowering and subsequent downward ebbing of the existing curve. Ideally, the new curve must start prior to crest of the wave. Furthermore, the second curve can never evolve as a complete replica of the first. The second curve will always emerge as a “different” curve, “although it builds on and grows out of the first.”⁶ But there is a paradox at work: for a movement cannot effectively enter into a new curve without simultaneously, remaining connected to the first curve. This is the paradox of curve; the “pathway of paradox,” which is the paradox of embracing change while maintaining continuity with the old curve.⁷

There are a few other theoretical observations on revival movement life cycles that require our attention. This is especially so since these models have already been effectively used to analyse critical trends transpiring within Pentecostalism, particularly in highly industrialised, affluent, or urbanised nations or localities. First to note is Sociologist Margaret Poloma’s research on the cyclical nature of institutionalising forces within Christian spiritual renewal movements. Poloma’s dated research on symptoms of institutionalisation in the American Assemblies of God remains highly relevant.⁸ What makes her work still relevant is that responding to her observations necessitate and enjoin us to several decades of both monitoring and negotiating the challenges of effectively transitioning through the current “crossroads.”

As earlier mentioned, I refer again to the critical crossroads Classic Pentecostalism is faced with, between imploding a dying, magisterially controlled traditionalism, or evolving into a living yet matured tradition. A mature tradition that is faithful to our calling and purpose, as a Spirit-given communal *charism* to the larger Christian faith and tradition, as well as prophetic, apocalyptic witness to the coming Kingdom.⁹ Poloma found that her research provided substantial confirmation to Abraham Maslow’s key observation regarding the waning power religious movements often experience in spite of their earlier emergence as renewal movements. Maslow’s research led her to believe that when religious movements enter the institutionalising phase of concretising their experiences into printed documents, “a form of idolatry comes into being.” This degradation into idolatry happens because it is oftentimes at that very point when “sacred things and sacred practices are worshipped rather than a living God.”¹⁰ I find Maslow’s thesis descriptive towards the entire rise, fall, and ongoing redemption of the Christian movement. Further along, I will further comment on Poloma’s application of Maslow’s thesis on current problem symptoms of institutionalism within Pentecostalism.

⁵ Charles Handy, *The Age of Paradox* (Boston MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1994), 50-53f.

⁶ Handy, *The Age of Paradox*, 58.

⁷ Handy, *The Age of Paradox*, 53.

⁸ Margaret M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

⁹ Poloma, “The Charismatic Movement and Loving Communities: An Analysis of Growth,” in *Faces of Renewal: Studies in Honor of Stanley M. Horton* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 245-247; “Charisma, Institutionalization, and Social Change,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 7, no. 2 (1998): 245-252.

¹⁰ Abraham H. Maslow, *Religions, Values and Peak Experience* (New York, NY: Viking, 1964), 24; cited in Poloma, “The Charismatic Movement and Loving Communities,” in *Faces of Renewal*, 246.

Another model, which must be appreciated, is David Moberg's model of religious life cycles. In a now quite dated history (1979) of the American Assemblies of God (AG), William Menzies, used Moberg's model to caution that at that very time, the possibility of an emerging institutionalisation was already at work within the movement.¹¹ Moberg's model describes five developmental stages. It begins with the original renewal, leading to stages of formalised organisation, then "maximum efficiency," leading to the "institutional stage," which finally leads to a stage of "disintegration."¹² Moberg's "maximum efficiency" phase parallels the top of the Curve—the crest of the wave illustrated in the Sigmoid Curve. Therefore, the forces of institutionalisation generally already begin emerging prior to a movement's existence at the top of the Curve.

Institutionalising forces now within Pentecostalism

So again to reiterate, and keeping in mind that Pentecostalism is primarily a historical renewal movement within the Christian Church, the Pentecostal movement wanes because as a renewal movement, it has long ago all over the world, reached the top of the Curve. The movement now exists at the critical crossroads wherein those who identify with the desire to continue its ongoing existence, must steer its development up towards the better of two possible paths. As mentioned, one path will be its now emerging implosion into a dying, magisterially controlled traditionalism. The other will be its potential evolvment into a living yet matured tradition that through its most enduring paradigms, values, and ethos, is faithful to its perennial calling and purpose, as a needful *charism* within the Christian tradition, and as a prophetic and apocalyptic witness to the coming Kingdom.

Whether diagnostic or prescriptive, these discussions are thus far all together quite alarming. But there is yet more that needs to be said. I am observing two unfortunate and disturbing trends that have been for some time transpiring within the movement. Each trend represents a contrasting prescriptive response towards insuring the movement's continued vitality as its negotiates the present challenge of effectively moving beyond the Curve—the top of the wave, by entering into a new revitalising curve prior to downward ebbing of the existing curve. As earlier mentioned, the paradox of the Sigmoid Curve is that a movement cannot effectively enter into a new curve without simultaneously, remaining connected to the first curve; the paradox of embracing change while maintaining continuity with the old curve. One trend thus prioritises continuity with the old curve. The contrasting trend represents however, letting go of the past while embracing the change that must accompany our journey into the future.

Pharisaic and Sadducee trends now plaguing Pentecostalism

For lack of a better metaphor, but a metaphor, which I find quite descriptive, I will thus call the former trend the "Pharisaic" trend. This Pharisaic trend prioritises continuity with the old curve. This trend is most analogous to Moberg's "institutionalising" phase. The latter trend, which is directed rather towards letting go of the past and embracing change, I'll call the "Sadducee" trend. A key descriptive term of the "Sadducee" trend is "relevancy. This trend thus represents letting go of the past in order to embrace change. Like the Sadducees (and in contrast to the Pharisees) of New Testament times, this trend involves also involves an accommodation to the status quo. Like the Sadducees, it may claim faithfulness to enduring principles while striving towards contextualised forms. It is inevitably also a liberalising trend whereas the former trend is more analogous towards characteristics of religious fundamentalism.

¹¹ William B. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MI: Gospel Publishing House, 1971), 380-382.

¹² Moberg, *The Church as a Social Institution* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 119-123; cited in Menzies, *Anointed to Serve*, 380-382.

Both trends—the “Pharisaic” trend and the “Sadducee” trend, are thus flawed caricatures of the real thing. Neither has been nor can be helpful towards insuring the continuity of the movement’s most enduring values, paradigms, interpretive ethos and *gestalt*, which has granted it its distinctive charism to the Christian tradition through the Pentecostal experience of Spirit-baptism. I should say that often times and in many church settings, the two trends are working together. But oftentimes within a given setting, one of the two trends will appear to be more dominant.

Problems of McDonaldization and Disneyization

I will incorporate into this discussion, two societal trends currently at work throughout the world. Unfortunately, these two trends are working within Pentecostalism, and even more so within Evangelicalism. They has emerged as societal maladies, which within both Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism (as well as even within more Protestant mainline churches) are working in tandem with the “Pharisaic” and Sadducee” which I have thus introduced. Both trends reflect the philosophy of modern and postmodern pragmatism. This is a philosophical paradigm, which has strongly contributed to the technologising of 20th century industrialised life. It will continue to do so through the 21st century information-technology driven world.

Sociologists have earlier described these maladies as the “McDonaldization” and “Disneyization” of 20th and now 21st century society. These terms call us to reflect on how multi-national companies such as McDonalds and Disneyland, effectively shape contemporary culture through how they use of the media to capture their markets and thus “colonize the popular imagination.” I am capitalising here on an essay earlier written by, Mark L.Y. Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse: Discipleship in an Age of McDonaldization and Disneyization.” As Chan has insightfully demonstrated, these trends have spread throughout the world as popularised and largely taken-for-granted, biblically viable ministry paradigms. These ministry paradigms are influencing the practice of Christian discipleship and church ministry, in manners that have shifted the “language” and ethos of local churches substantially away from the biblical story world and the narrative it envisions for the shaping of the Christian vision of reality. This has been a shift away from the Christian New Testament narrative, language, and portrayal of reality, and towards the world’s language, culture, and vision for humanity.¹³

“McDonaldization” refers to the process by which the managerial principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of society as well as the rest of the world. These are principles descriptive through terms such as efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control,¹⁴ Meanwhile, the “Disneyization” trend refers to how the principles of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate and shape contemporary culture. It now particularly do so through Information Technology.¹⁵ A few features of “Disneyization” are relevant. First is its ability and goal of structuring the thinking of people according to consumerist motives. It does this through its processes of “theming;” where “everything within an establishment is thematically linked,” in order to also fuse an ethos with consumerist icons and images of the arts, entertainment, and sports.¹⁶

Second to note is how Disneyization results in a “homogenization of tastes and desires.” This process of homogenization is not only eroding cultural diversity, but is leading to a “dumbing down” of individual self-reflection. Along with the loss of self-reflection, the

¹³ Mark L.Y. Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse: Discipleship in an Age of McDonaldization and Disneyization,” in *Truth to Proclaim: The Gospel in Church and Society*, ed. Simon Chan, A Trinity Theological Journal Supplement (Singapore: Trinity Theological College, 2002), 118; see George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, rev. ed. (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1996); Alan Bryman, “The Disneyization of Society,” *Sociological Review* 47, no. 1 (1999): 25-47.

¹⁴ Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, 1; cited in Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse,” 118.

¹⁵ Bryman, “The Disneyization of Society,” 26; cited in Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse,” 120.

¹⁶ Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse,” 122.

“Disneyization” process is also eroding any sense of critical reasoning that might question the direction or integrity of the trend itself.¹⁷ In the following discussions, I will briefly demonstrate how these trends are indeed working in tandem through the “Pharisaic” and “Sadducee” trends, as groups, churches, and individuals within Pentecostalism are confronted with the realities of institutionalism, which are again, threatening the spiritual integrity of the movement.

Pharisaic trend of institutionalisation

The “Pharisaic” trend foremost describes the actual symptoms of institutionalisation currently transpiring within Pentecostalism. As earlier mentioned this trend seeks to address the problem of spiritual stagnation and waning influence by the prioritising of continuity with the past. It thus seeks to transition the movement’s journey towards the crest of the wave—the height of its present form of existence, by prioritising continuity with the old curve. It also seeks to do so through the principle of “law;” by trying to recover earlier moves of the Spirit through processes of institutionalisation. I draw inspiration for the term from Poloma’s observation that historically, Christian renewal movements, even if appreciated as fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit, eventually lose momentum and the original spirit of renewal. The inherent response, which is a wrong response, is to recapture the original spark—, which was originally birthed and carried on rather freely and spontaneously, through establishing “new Pharisaic laws that replace the ones Jesus had freed them from.” The trend emerges when those within the movement become “enslaved by the leadership and rules of the community,” wherein “over-structuring and overregulation” now “confuse community with conformity.”¹⁸

Just today as I write this, my wife and I had visited, a very large Pentecostal church, with a setting fully indicative of the complete entertainment-driven ethos that is often passing for the biblical idea of praise and worship. Then came collection of tithes and offerings. The speaker warned the audience that if they don’t give, God’s judgement will fall on them, just as the government’s “judgement falls on people who don’t pay their taxes (eg., Rom 13:1-2). The senior pastor never corrected this exhortation. If anything, he endorsed it. But this is precisely the problem addressed when the Scripture say, “Having started in the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?” (Gal 3:3) Or, “Does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing works of the law or by your believing what you heard?” (Gal 3:5) The truth is that it is precisely this kind of guilt-driven preaching and exhorting from the pulpit, which is hindering these kinds of churches from entering into revival. Vast segments of Christian believers are indeed bound into a “dead work” form of Christian faith, and experiencing a falling from grace! (Gal 5:4) Poloma’s research is indeed telling: that with the ebbing of a once great revival, churches continue to live in only a faint shadow of what once was. They are vainly trying to find it again, but through establishing new Pharisaic laws. Laws that only replace the ones Jesus had once freed them. Consequently, what is often thought to be Pentecostal, is rather a spirit of dogmatism and a morbid legalistic paradigm towards Christian life and preaching and teaching.

“Routinization of the charisma”

I will now survey what Poloma calls the “routinization of the charisma, which is most typical regarding the “end phase” of “revival life cycles.” It occurs wherein believers seek the original “spirit of renewal” often so earnestly through calls of repentance, yet also albeit through unconscious processes of “institutionalism.” As earlier inferred, there is nothing new to this observation. For now over 40 years, caution has been raised. We find this caution illustrated in the earlier historical analysis of Menzies and numerous studies since published by Poloma. I have earlier drawn attention to Poloma’s observations throughout the last 30

¹⁷ Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse,” 121-124.

¹⁸ Poloma, “The Charismatic Movement and Loving Communities,” in *Faces of Renewal*, 245-247.

years of the 20th century on Classic Pentecostalism. Poloma carried out her research primarily with reference to trends developing within the United States; particularly regarding evidence illustrative of Max Webber's phrase, "routinization of the charisma."

Webber's phrase, the "routinization of the charisma," refers to how gifts of the Spirit no longer exist as dynamic realities but as simply ideological doctrinal tenants.¹⁹ Many observers have also drawn attention to statistics showing a continued decline in glossolalia—speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophetic utterances within congregational settings. Given the crucial role that glossolalia has historically served in expressing so many essential values and nuances regarding the ethos of Pentecostal spirituality, I would agree that this is a disturbing trend within Pentecostalism. It is disturbing because it depicts "a changing landscape" regarding Pentecostal identity, as well as regarding the Classic Pentecostal doctrine of "initial evidence."²⁰

This declension in the number of those who have experienced tongues, along with the decreasing congregational manifestation of tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophetic utterance, is certainly cause for concern since historically tongues has functioned as a major defining icon of Pentecostal experience. In keeping with Moberg's life cycle model, denominational responses to this declension, have involved even tighter control over doctrinal confessions and discussions. This has been particularly so concerning ministerial recognition and ordination policies. Attention must be given to the work of American AG ecumenist Cecil Robeck.

Several years ago, Robeck courageously raised alarm on efforts over the past few decades towards revisioning historical documents of earlier Pentecostal leaders, in an effort to prop up the "initial evidence" doctrine.²¹ Robeck is referring to writings by earlier leaders such as J. Roswell Flower and Donald Gee, both of whom testified to speaking in tongues subsequent to a Spirit-baptism experience, rather simultaneously with the experience.²² At the time Robeck wrote this article, as he himself states, it had been documented that less than 40% of AG parishioners had claim to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues. Lest we easily conclude these are trends only indicative of American or Western churches elsewhere in the world, there is sufficient literature to confirm that the problem of institutionalisation is global as well as cutting across all social-economic settings. This includes the "routinization of the charisma."²³ Robeck's past alarm thus also necessitates reflection by Pentecostal all throughout the world.

Magisterial revisioning of Pentecostal history

Robeck has also argued that in the American Assemblies of God, the General Presbyter, executive officers and the Doctrinal Purity Commission have become within the AG, an "magisterium." By use of the term *magisterium*, Robeck means an authoritative body analogous to the kind of magisterium found in the Roman Catholic Church, centrally located in Rome. In doing so, Robeck charges that there is a body within the higher levels of the American AG denominational leadership, who have made the "initial physical evidence" doctrine "at the very heart of the gospel itself."²⁴ Robeck charges that this group had been qualifying itself as providing "the only authentic or official interpretation" of Classic Pentecostal theology." Consequently, "Those who . . . ask questions regarding" their

¹⁹ Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 40; "The Charismatic Movement and Loving Communities," in *Faces of Renewal*, 230-239.

²⁰ Gary B. McGee, "More than Evangelical": The Challenge of the Evolving Theological Identity of the Assemblies of God," *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 289-300 (299); Clark, "Initial Evidence: A South African Perspective," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1, no. 2 (1998): 203-217 (211); Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 223.

²¹ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "An Emerging Magisterium? The Case of the Assemblies of God," *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2003) (203-211).

²² Robeck, "An Emerging Magisterium?" 203-211.

²³ Clark, "Initial Evidence," 211; Yee Tham Wan, "Defining Pentecostalism," *Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology* 12 (2004): 95-124 (95, 116, 120-121).

²⁴ Robeck, "An Emerging Magisterium?" 170.

"interpretation," "or who engage in unauthorized hermeneutical debates on the subject, are systematically being silenced." Robeck also observes that there have been elements who have revised key historical records in order to make them confirm to the magisterium's positions.²⁵

The implication of these trends towards theological, academic, and intellectual integrity is of course, alarming. Robeck offers us this forewarning: "the development of dogma by members of a magisterium, apart from significant discussion in cooperation with members of the Pentecostals academy, is in danger of replacing the genuine quest for truth."²⁶ Robeck foresees that these developments will only lead to increasing decline in the number of those who have been baptised in the Spirit with the experience of speaking in tongues.²⁷ And finally, the day may well come when "scholars who teach in Assemblies of God institutions or who are ordained by the Fellowship will ultimately be required to receive an official *mandatum* in order to teach acceptable Bible, theology, or church history."²⁸ Robeck believes that only an open ecumenical creative dialogue involving the exploring of varied theological tensions and contributions can help nurture an ethos that facilitates rather than hinders spiritual renewal. Yet even this appreciation towards an open dialogue must involve the moral integrity to dismantle and avoid all political witch-hunting and absolute coercion that dissolves all sense of critical reflection.²⁹

Problems of intellectual dogmatism and theological fundamentalism

Another key symptoms of institutionalism within Pentecostalism that requires critical reflection, is the problem of denominational "chauvinism." Denominational chauvinism arises from efforts to stem ideological or doctrinal exposure towards ideas that appears to challenge or contradict traditional Pentecostal or Charismatic teachings.³⁰ The movement's "drift towards ideology," is also at times evident when denominational or church leaders hamstring Pentecostal scholarship towards unquestioning propagation of static, creedalised dogma, precisely of the kind descriptive of institutionalised dogma.

So rather than promoting critical exegetical, theological and philosophical work towards theologising and engagement with contemporary settings and the greater Christian tradition, leaders construe Pentecostal scholarship as a service provider to churches for preserving easy-to-read, institutionalised dogma. Given the naive realism of the fundamentalist worldview, Pentecostals have usually, like many modern Evangelicals in general, understood "doctrines as context-free, error-free propositional truths."³¹ There is generally a failure to appreciate therefore the context-forming reality of all doctrine. This includes a failure to appreciate the inevitable influence of philosophical presuppositions, which we must consistently discern according to both their positive and negative influence upon all doctrinal or theological statements.³² I want to here stress that it is primarily right here on the matter of philosophical presuppositions, that Pentecostal scholarship must courageously critique our doctrinal expressions and spirituality because so much of Christian theology and spirituality has been shaped by the presuppositions of Western modernity.

Furthermore, Pentecostal leaders, particularly those involved in pastoral leadership or serving in any kind of theological training, generally lack the needful critical apparatus to engage their own context. This problem arises from their too often hamstrung deadlock

²⁵ Robeck, "An Emerging Magisterium?" 170-171.

²⁶ Robeck, "An Emerging Magisterium?" 214.

²⁷ Robeck, "An Emerging Magisterium?" 214.

²⁸ Robeck, "An Emerging Magisterium?" 215.

²⁹ Robeck, "An Emerging Magisterium?" 215.

³⁰ Lap-yan Kung, "Globalization, Ecumenism and Pentecostal: A Search of Human Solidarity in Hong Kong," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 2003): 97-122 (118, 121-122).

³¹ Simon Chan, "The Church and the Development of Doctrine," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13, no. 1 (2004): 57-77 (59).

³² Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 25, 151; Franke, "Reforming Theology: Towards a Postmodern Reformed Dogmatics," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 1-26 (1, 3).

within the parameters of modern rationalism, pragmatism and Fundamentalist anti-intellectualism. This is particularly so concerning the challenges of postmodernity is posing to us as a new epistemological worldview and macro cultural influence all throughout the world. Given the common “concordance” approach to Bible teaching in far too many Pentecostal churches even up to this present day, this situation is all the more worsened in Pentecostal Bible schools and colleges because oftentimes, Pentecostal academics tend to gravitate all the more towards Reformed Evangelical models of theology and hermeneutics.

This consistently results in an even more rigid form of scholastic dogmatism, increasing the malaise of intellectual dogmatism and theological fundamentalism. As earlier mentioned, also facilitating the anti-intellectual ethos of Pentecostalism are philosophical premises directly mirroring Enlightenment foundationalistic rationalism. This has occurred via the ongoing influences of Protestant scholasticism and fundamentalism. Because 19th and 20th century fundamentalism did in fact contribute to the early formative ethos of Pentecostalism, to some extent, the militant impulse of fundamentalism therefore feeds on and amplifies the symptoms of institutionalism within Pentecostalism.

The irony to this malaise however is that it rarely comfortable, if ever for that matter—with the oral culture of Classic Pentecostal culture and spirituality; the very orality which decisively contributes to the revolutionary power of Pentecostal spirituality. And this I believe is what has caused our “academic types” within Pentecost, to so often be out of sync with Pentecostal ministry. Indeed, their own academic training and mentors have poorly taught and mentored them. A glaring example I am mindful of, is an earnest remark I once heard from a Pentecostal Bible School, who sincerely believed that his primary role was to “defend” right doctrine, and “correct” false doctrine. Such a conviction is certainly quite different from the real purpose of theological training, which is to facilitate spiritual formation into Christ-likeness.

Usually following the lead of their nonPentecostal but Evangelical counterparts, Pentecostals remain hamstrung to the old Princeton “concordance” model of biblical inerrancy, whereby they read, study, teach, and posture themselves before the Bible as primarily, a scientific encyclopaedia of spiritual truths.³³ Having continued to drink deeply from the wells of modernity, Pentecostal Evangelicals remain fixated in the quest for formulating highly rationalistic apologetics, in the hope of defending Christianity “through scientifically verifiable proofs for God’s existence.”³⁴ But this pursuit has only serve to deeply ensnare Pentecostals to the modern scientific worldview. For conservative Christians, in spite of all their careful reference to the Bible as “God’s Word,” or the “Word of God,” have unwittingly undermined the authority of the Bible by constantly straining to make its contents wholly conformable to the premises of modern empirical science. What they have actually done is make modernity, and not Scripture, the measure of all truth!

Working in conjunction with institutionalising forces, is dispensational apocalypticism. Much of the movement emerged and remains entrapped within dispensational apocalypticism. The problem here is not so much with the term apocalypticism, but with the term dispensationalism. For there is a biblical kind of apocalypticism, but the modern dispensational-anchored practice of equating the biblical call to “watchfulness” is neither an encouragement nor a call to “end-time speculation. It is rather a call to be salt and light until Christ comes, whether He comes today, or a thousand years or more from today. Too often Evangelical Christians has wrongly construed “watchfulness” as anticipating the destruction of the earth; or even in desiring its destruction from a held premise that that would mean the beginning of God’s “new creation.” However, what biblical “watchfulness” actually involves is a deeply positive and concerned posture towards the present creation. For God has said, “it is good.” This means that we should earnest want to preserve and cultivate creation in

³³ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 13-14; Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic; BridgePoint Books, 2000), 108.

³⁴ Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 108; see also Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books; Baker Book House Co., 2007), 78, 97.

behalf of all future posterity. God has thus placed here for the purpose of tending the “garden;” not to mindlessly exploit it only for human consumption.

Institutionalising roles of social coercion and “group think”

Besides the futile endeavour towards renewing a revival through institutionalised dogma and behavioural control, have been the practices of preaching and teaching which Pentecostal believers have too often hermeneutically grounded on a law-based reading of the Christian Bible. Pentecostals have also too often fused their modes of teaching and preaching to guilt-driven communicative methods of social coercion. What this has created is a very unhealthy and unbiblical sectarian ethos. Now there is a healthy kind of sectarianism, which I will eventually describe and argue. But an unhealthy sectarianism, which fundamentalism tends to create, facilitates a warped expression of community. This is an expression of community based on a strongly forged group identity, which leaders albeit achieve through a high level of social coercion and thought control.³⁵

Pentecostals have also too often sought social coercion and thought control through “group think,” which is therefore another symptom of institutionalising forces. Group-think is a sociological term describing how sometimes in any organisation creative reflection, evaluation and critique is strongly suppressed through methods of social coercion. Members achieve this through shaming individual deviation from corporate culture, values, beliefs, dogmas, policies, pronouncements, and an infinite other variables signifying the cultural ethos of a given organisation or community. The problem of “group-think” becomes especially acute, when churches and Christian movements suffer the effects of institutionalisation, for “group-think” is itself an indicator of institutionalism.

Further aggregating the problem are times wherein a church convinces itself that in order to “be of the same mind,” every member must act, behave and believe wholly alike, especially as their leaders act, behave, or believe. So what happens is that the leadership of such a community discourages exposure to or undermine any doctrine, teaching, or Christian trend or voice that threatens the validity or conformity to its own set of established fixed “doctrines, policies, purposes, or values. I earlier referred to how Christians fuel the process of institutionalisation in the church through the contemporary processes of “McDonaldization.” Mark Chan thus points out, that a “McDonaldized church thus prefers unquestioning and compliant members. Better to have them [church leaders] regurgitate the few ideas drummed into them than have them think for themselves and ask too many questions.”³⁶ Even worse however is that, “What starts out as a legitimate management principles of aligning people and processes to achieve a common vision can, unfortunately and unwittingly, become an overarching strait-jacket that stifles creativity, diminishes personhood, and dilutes diversity within the church.”³⁷

Organisational group-think also creates as a strong “us” versus “them” approach towards outside groups, thus further hindering any sense of critical self-evaluation. In the Pentecostal context, organisational “group think” is even more created through authoritarian abuses of the prophetic charism and the trivialisation of prophesy. Even worse still, is when organisational group-think is sometimes achieved through the delivery of pseudo prophesy as a means of coercing people to expected behaviour norms or social coercion.³⁸ Through the premise of prophetic utterance, “authoritative interpretations of the Bible are made.”³⁹ This is sometimes further accompanied by the presumed foretelling of local, national and

³⁵ Robert Solomon, “The Crowd, and the Community: Tensions in Unity and Diversity in Asian Contexts,” *Trinity Theological Journal* 9 (2000): 79-96. (81).

³⁶ Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse,” 124.

³⁷ Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse,” 124.

³⁸ Poloma, “The Pentecostal Movement,” in *Christian Millenarianism: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Hunt (New York: New York University Press, unpublished manuscript, n.d.), 17.

³⁹ Roger Stronstad, “Presidential Address. Affirming Diversity: God’s People as a Community of Prophets,” 24th Research Conference of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (Wheaton, IL: 1984), 18-19; quoted in Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 233.

international trends which are often unquestionably affirmed through the “group speak” of a congregation. The abuse and misuse of prophetic utterance and anointing, also functions as an institutionalising force, when it accompanies the “episcopal inclination” that is so often evident in Pentecostal local church polity. The “episcopal inclination” refers to the tendency, especially in Pentecostal or charismatic mega-churches, to designate the pastor as the “Lord’s anointed” of whose authority or life, members are implicitly if not explicitly, forewarned not to take lightly or question (eg, 1 Sam 24:6; 2 Sam 1:14).⁴⁰

Lack of critical self-reflection

Within Pentecostalism, the conflation of fundamentalism within the context of 20th century modern pragmatism leads to another institutionalising force, which is the tendency to intentionally or otherwise, perceive church members primarily as functional resources for the meeting of desired quantifiable goals. In this manner, the forces of institutionalisation converge with the contrasting but equally disastrous forces of cultural accommodation, which I will later elaborate on. Because of its historical ambivalence towards theological method and philosophical engagement, Pentecostal leaders and churches have oftentimes operated through a pragmatic and utilitarian openness towards whatever available techniques or “tools” might appear readily available. They do so regardless of how such techniques or methods might stand the test of authentic biblical, theological and philosophical engagement. Pentecostal missiologist Russell Spittler observed that because Pentecostals tend to hold such a negative posture towards historical tradition and critical reasoning, much of their theology and ministerial practice, is simply and uncritically imported or absorbed from the surrounding culture.⁴¹

Pentecostal capitulation to modernity

Having also chosen to identify themselves wholly and uncritically within Protestant Evangelicalism, Pentecostals have failed to discern that Evangelicalism itself has undergone over the past half century, a thorough “capitulation to modernity, leaving it without any solid theological moorings.”⁴² Pentecostals have failed to discern the cultural malaises harming Protestant Evangelicalism because as earlier mentioned, Pentecostals too often lack any developed capacity towards critical reasoning and philosophical reflection. This is a most ironic development, given the premise that as a distinctive Christian tradition, the Pentecostal movement ought to foremost function within the greater Christian movement as a prophetic voice towards fidelity to the biblical narrative of the church as a pilgrim community, envisioning an alternative reality in contrast to the prevailing realities of this present evil age.

This pragmatic tendency ultimately arises however from the larger Evangelical turn towards defining the Church primarily according to modern categories of pragmatic functionality: churches are defining “truth” by what is quantifiably “practical.”⁴³ Pentecostal leaders thus give prominence to presumed practical theology over authentic theology, including spiritual, liturgical, or biblical, systematic, spiritual, or liturgical theology. Thus, “their capacity to think theologically about themselves and their world” has “disappeared.”⁴⁴ Even worse, church leaders commonly deem managerial and organisational methods of greater utilitarian value for leading the church, than the study or meditation of God.

⁴⁰ Chan, “Pentecostal Spirituality and the Monarchy of the Father,” *Trinity Theological Journal* 15 (2007): 62-76 (70); regarding abuses, Chan draws attention to: Stephen Parsons, *Ungodly Fear: Fundamentalist Christianity and the Abuse of Power* (Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, 2000).

⁴¹ Russell Spittler, “Implicit Values in Pentecostal Missions,” *Missiology: An International Review* 16, no. 4 (October 1988): 409-424 (414).

⁴² Chan, “The Church and the Development of Doctrine,” 65.

⁴³ Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic; InterVarsity Press, 2006), 10.

⁴⁴ David Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 130; quoted in Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 9.

Moreover, as again due to the anti-intellectual posture towards theological engagement, so many ministers simply lack both the morale and theological as well as philosophical apparatus to discern and decipher practical principles from theological reflection. They fail to see that so many of the true principles, models, systems, and structures that we so sorely need for the spiritual administration of the church, the leading of the church, curricular development, and the creation of authentic community, are actually altogether directly best found in a robust trinitarian theology of God, and the revelation of God in Christ.

As earlier mentioned, I have already identified these varied institutionalising trends as symptomatic of the “McDonaldization” of the church. This refers to trend over the past quarter century, whereby church communities are formed and guided through the managerial benchmarks of “efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control.”⁴⁵ Church leaders, particularly senior pastors and “executive pastors,” have become re-imaged as corporate CEOs or executive officers. Spiritual gifts become have become identified with human temperaments, and thus “transformed into “human resource” markers and organisational tools, profiled through psychological and temperamental profiling. Church attendees have become “functionalized and commodified, as their value becomes unwittingly determined by how they contribute to the achievement of the group’s quantified goals. The “purpose-driven” paradigm have thus taken precedence over a trinitarian-driven paradigm and philosophy of ministry and church. Spiritual warfare had become a technique driven through methods of scientific rationalism (eg, “Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare”).⁴⁶

I was once made particularly mindful of this trend, when I once witnessed how in one large church, a leadership course for leaders began on the first lesson. For in the first introductory lesson, the basis for Christian leadership was set upon a rather extensive discussion on various theoretical models of leadership, without one reference to the New Testament idea of servant-leadership, or the character of God. But this is precisely the downward trend of today’s numerically large “spirit-filled” as well as Evangelical churches. In their nuance towards pragmatic functionality and cultural relevance, they turn more so to the world’s narrative for their leadership models, rather than to the principle of servant-leadership narrated through the life, teaching and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ as storied through the Gospels. And this is often sought through the promptings of their lay constituencies! But what is the true model of a pastor, for even the administrative practicalities of pastoring, whether of a large or small church? Amongst all the possible models available already in the New Testament era, what is clearly given is that of the shepherd-teacher, and servant-leader as exemplified through the ministry style of Jesus.⁴⁷

Indeed, I have even as late, spoke with ministers of the Gospel, who have earnestly told me that they have no need for expending effort towards critical reflection or developing a sense of “philosophy,” nor towards reflecting or discussing past historical events pertaining to either Pentecostalism or the Christian Church in general. What matters according to such Christian leaders, is the present moment, and how we can best “apply” the Bible to this moment. Given the Pentecostal nuance upon “doing” rather than “theorizing,” which has “sown a strong pragmatism” coupled with “a lingering anti-intellectualism,” Gary McGee has aptly labelled this malaise within Pentecostalism as the “peril of an unreflective activism.”⁴⁸ Our peril lies is that such unreflective activism, is leading us towards the unravelling of Pentecostal spirituality, through its unbridled assimilation into the greater malaises that have and are still damaging the health of 20th and 21st century Evangelicalism.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse,” 118.

⁴⁶ Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse,” 125-130; Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 221.

⁴⁷ Hwa Yung, “Endued with Power: The Pentecostal-Charismatic Renewal and the Asian Church in the Twenty-first Century,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 2003): 63-82 (78-79).

⁴⁸ McGee, “More than Evangelical,” 299.

Problem of Fundamentalism

It's important to draw attention to a thoughtful thesis set forth by Hollenweger, who argues that in the beginning, Pentecostalism as a revival movement was arose as a critique against an emerging dead orthodoxy, of which early 20th century American Protestant Fundamentalism was already coming to represent.⁴⁹ To be fair however, Protestant Fundamentalism arose as a needful coalition for stemming the influence of 19th century theological liberalism. At that time, theological liberalism was exchanging Classic Christian belief for a generalised global spirituality. This was based on the premise that all religions represent diverse expressions of a common spiritual awareness of transcendent realities.

Consequently, many leaders of the early Fundamentalist movement worked through and found kinship within late 19th century Protestant Holiness Revivalism. Leaders found that the biblicism of Princeton theology and Plymouth Brethren dispensational framework, effectively popularised through the Schofield study Bible, provided a practical means of facilitating some measure of biblical literacy. Given that Pentecostalism arose within the spiritual and theological framework of Holiness Revivalism, the theological outlook of Fundamentalism therefore decisively provided both the original theological outlook and Bible and ministerial training methods of early 20th century American Pentecostalism.⁵⁰

As the 20th century progressed however, theological liberalism proactively engaged its cultural setting, whereas the Fundamentalist movement became increasing separatist, reactionary and militant in its ethos. Moreover, Fundamentalist leaders simultaneously focused on developing and propagating cognitive oriented apologetics for their doctrinal beliefs. Given its conflict with the theological liberal emphasis upon religious experience, Fundamentalism also involved a deep repulsion towards any role of spiritual experience in Christian understanding.⁵¹ We must remember however that while many early Pentecostals had felt a kinship with Fundamentalism and identified themselves as "Fundamentalists," the Fundamentalist Movement on doctrinal grounds— disavowed formal connections with Pentecostalism, often so with open hostility.⁵²

In spite of early 20th century Pentecostal pragmatic borrowings from Fundamentalist doctrine, Pentecostalism and Fundamentalism ultimately represent two contrasting responses to the late 19th century and early 20th century social-religious context. Fundamentalism represented a largely intellectual yet hostile militant reaction stemming from the conviction that Christian orthodoxy primarily rests upon a foundation of "right thinking." Yet in contrast to Fundamentalism's rationalistic outlook, the Pentecostal critique called for a radical experiential encounter with God through the Holy Spirit.⁵³ It can therefore be concluded that in reality, theological "liberalism and Pentecostalism are in fact fraternal twins." The reason is that whereas, "Liberalism had preached experience," "Pentecostalism suddenly produced it!" We may argue that that in view of the 19th and 20th century Christian theological liberal enterprise in its appeal to religious experience as a foundational premise to religious understanding, Pentecostalism is in reality, "the logical end of Liberalism."⁵⁴

Pentecostal accommodation to the status quo

I have already addressed at length the "Pharisaic" trend, which prioritises continuity with the old curve. Yet again, the Pharisaic" trend also altogether represents a misguided attempt to combat the problems signalling the waning of Pentecostalism, albeit through the

⁴⁹ Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 190-191.

⁵⁰ Menzies, *Anointed to Serve*, 27; Menzies, "History: Understanding the New Context," in William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 17-21.

⁵¹ Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 78-79.

⁵² Menzies, "The Reformed Roots of Pentecostalism," *PentecoStudies* 6, no. 2 (2007): 78-99 (85); Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 190-192.

⁵³ Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 190-192.

⁵⁴ George Fry, "Pentecostalism in Historical Perspective," *The Springfielder* 39 (March 1972), 182, 192; quoted in Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 192.

methods and forces of “institutionalisation.” I will now address the contrasting, “Sadducee” trend, which is directed towards letting go of the past and embracing change. As earlier mentioned, a key descriptive term is “relevancy.” The “Sadducee” trend represents letting go of the past in order to embrace change. It does so through its pursuit for relevancy. It thus also involves accommodation to the status quo.

When Pentecostals and Evangelicals seek to move forward through the methods of the “Sadducee” trend, they often claim faithfulness to enduring biblical norms as they synergise managerial and sociological scientific methods to Bible texts. Yet the truth is that they stray far from the biblical story world in their contextualising effort towards relevancy. Again, it is a trend involving a “theological liberalism.” The kind of theological liberalism it involves however is not the liberalism of 19th and 20th century Christian liberalism. It is rather a liberalism of synergising biblical and nonbiblical ideas in such a way that the result is a clear shift from biblical orthopraxis (“right practice”). More often than not, it has arose from a pragmatically driven (thus reflecting the Pharisaic trend of institutionalism) and warped understanding of human knowledge and ingenuity which is rationalised as “God’s truth;” assuming that “all truth is God’s truth.”

Arrogance of Protestant Evangelical conservatism

The problem gets deeper and even more disturbing however. This is because careful discernment reveals that so many streams within current Pentecostalism have tragically capitulated into the greater problems now plaguing the modern Evangelical church ethos.⁵⁵ Because Classic Pentecostalism became so deeply embedded within the narrative of modern Evangelicalism, the present waning of the Pentecostal movement largely reflects the present crisis of Evangelicalism. At the heart of this crisis was its failed attempt to wed and define Christian spirituality through varied expressions of the world’s culture, such narcissistic aspirations towards “self-actualisation, pop psychology, modern consumerism, sensate entertainment impulses, pragmatism, and managerial and business science.⁵⁶ Consequently, all in the interest of relevance, the language— particularly of Evangelical churches, have become assimilated into the language of this prevailing world’s culture.⁵⁷ The result of all this upon Christian discipleship has been utterly devastating!

Pentecostal capitulation to the world’s narrative

My preceding diagnosis can be summed up as an assimilation into the “world’s language.” This assimilation into the world’s “language,” all no doubt with the original intent to contextualise and freely use the “God-given ness” of truth, has now unfortunately, vastly displayed the language, symbols, and imagery indicative of the biblical story world. Ironically, much of this came about through a sincere but non-critical appropriation of “truth.” But this was an appropriation that virtually lost all appreciation towards the biblical theme of wisdom— which involves submitting even a God-given truth to the “fear of the Lord.”

The fear of the Lord involves giving space to the reality that as a check to the pride of human ingenuity, the Lord may at times work— and want us to work, in ways contrary to every natural law or truth perceived through the apparatus of human knowledge, ingenuity and innovation. The fallout towards the role of theological reasoning with the local church is of course even more damaging. I had earlier alluded to effects of Disneyization upon the intellectual life of Evangelical churches, through the homogenising effects of “theming.” This involves attempts to simplify Christian truth to such an extent, all in the interest of relevancy, that we have now developed a spiritual ethos, which manifests “a tacit avoidance of anything

⁵⁵ Webber, *The Divine Embrace*, 79-99.

⁵⁶ Webber, *The Divine Embrace*, 221-222, 229.

⁵⁷ Chan, “The Church and the Development of Doctrine,” 77; Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 9-11; Mark Noll, Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., and David Wells, “Evangelical Theology Today,” *Theology Today* 51, no. 4 (1995): 495-507 (502-503).

having to do with the Christian mind. Even worse, it is manifested as a committed anti-intellectualism that considers the use of the mind detrimental to the spiritual life.⁵⁸

This “general Babylonian captivity to pop culture,” also serves to “drown aspiring evangelical theologians who are both serious and creative.” It drowns their influence within the local church, writing off their voices as “heresy in case they propose an unaccustomed thought,” or as “old-fashioned irrelevance.”⁵⁹ The irony to all this of course is that our 16th century Reformation Fathers would no doubt be silenced within today’s Evangelical churches, as virtually everything they preached, wrote or implemented within local churches, were paradigms and principles that were theologically deep, ecumenically sensitive, and informed, and steeped in both catholic and patristic traditions.⁶⁰ All this also, within a historical setting not yet possessing widespread education, literacy or printed resources amongst the masses!

Worse even still with regards to congregational worship, is that we are increasingly displacing a genuine encounter with the Holy Spirit, with a largely sensate, entertainment driven and professionalised approach to Pentecostal church services. Again, the problem is larger than Pentecostalism, as it is largely now reflecting the Evangelical idea of “contemporary service,” and is affecting more mainline type churches. In this matter, we are indeed falling into something quite alien to a biblical idea of worship in congregational gatherings. We are exchanging gold for bronze, and attempting to masquerade our lack of any genuine encounter with the Holy Spirit with nothing more than a Sunday morning jazz performance.

Part of the problem stems from an undiscerning and fixated reliance on technology. We must reflect on the use of technology in general and Information technology in particular, within the ethos of the local church. We live in an age whereby many churches, in their continued pursuit towards relevance, are also pursuing the highest possible use of the newest available technology on the market. They do this in order to facilitate higher levels of presumed “ministerial” and administrative efficiency. The common premise is that technology, arising from “God’s truth,” is at all times, morally neutral; only a tool. But as the Bishop Robert Solomon asks us, is technology necessarily, always morally neutral?⁶¹ I should say not.

We must consider that modern technology consists of far more than simply an evolution of earlier levels of human technological innovation. Technology has become even more an approach to life, and a philosophy of life, capable of decisively shaping our worldview. To some extent, modern technology arises from and reflects the Babylonian drive within humankind, “to make a name for themselves.” Technology is thus becoming more than “simply a matter of tools and machinery. . . . It is also a philosophy, a way of looking at things.” Therefore, we must discern the danger of becoming “inexperienced citizens of a technology-created and technology-driven reality.”⁶²

Evangelicalization of Pentecostalism

Within Pentecostalism, the fallouts arising from the quest for relevancy historically began when leaders of the movement, sought to place the movement within the ethos and doctrinal parameters of 20th century Evangelicalism. This was particularly so in the United States. Evangelicals thus succeeded in their own “evangelicalization” of Pentecostalism.⁶³ They decisively sealed this when the American Assemblies of God won formal acceptance into the American National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 1942.⁶⁴ Thus was set in motion

⁵⁸ Chan, “The Cross Between the Golden Arches and Mickey Mouse,” 123.

⁵⁹ Noll, Plantinga, Jr., and Wells, “Evangelical Theology Today,” 498.

⁶⁰ Noll, Plantinga, Jr., and Wells, “Evangelical Theology Today,” 498.

⁶¹ Robert M. Solomon, *Fire for the Journey: Reflections for a God-Guided Life* (Singapore: Genesis Books; Armour Publishing, 2002), 126.

⁶² Solomon, *Fire for the Journey*, 126-129.

⁶³ McGee, “More than Evangelical,” 295; Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 193.

⁶⁴ Menzies, *Anointed to Serve*, 186.

developments which, which cost American Pentecostals certain core Pentecostal distinctives. These were distinctives that were deeply integral to precisely what makes Pentecostalism an enduring and needful *charism* with the greater Christian tradition.

The erosion of core Pentecostal distinctives is increasing up to this present day. This trend involves a definitive shift away from many of the doctrinal and cultural elements primarily indicative of early Classic Pentecostalism. We can describe this particularly as a shift from the movement's early roots within and resonance with the Wesleyan-holiness tradition, and towards a more mainstream, Evangelical yet Charismatic spirituality and ethos. Coupled with this trend and the drive towards relevance, is that Pentecostals have often lost both a knowledge towards the biblical themes of Pentecost to and a desire to allow those biblical traditions to shape the ethos of their Pentecostal churches.

Finally, there is also arising within Pentecostalism, a definitive shift away from many of the doctrinal and cultural elements primarily indicative of early Classic Pentecostalism—often with reference to the movement's early roots within and resonance with the Wesleyan-holiness tradition, towards a more mainstream, Evangelical yet Charismatic spirituality and ethos. Coupled with this trend and the drive towards relevance, is that Pentecostals have often lost both a knowledge towards the biblical themes of Pentecost to and a desire to allow those biblical traditions to shape the ethos of their Pentecostal churches.

Given the global influence of American Pentecostalism elsewhere in the world, and also the fact that the Assemblies of God has been the largest and most global reaching of other American Pentecostal bodies, the ramifications of this alliance indelibly left its mark throughout the world wide Pentecostal movement. Core Pentecostal distinctives were lost. And these distinctives continue to erode, thus threatening the future vitality of the movement, as well as what it can offer to greater Christian tradition and world in general.⁶⁵ Hollenweger long ago cautioned against valuing Pentecostalism simply as “Evangelicalism plus fire, or dedication, missionary success, speaking in tongues or gifts of healing. . . . Pentecostalism . . . is not just sub-division of Evangelicalism.”⁶⁶ For not all that Christians dearly esteem about Evangelicalism is necessarily helpful towards narrating what the “being-ness” of Pentecostalism should be. Pentecostals must acknowledge this reality if the movement is to fulfil its own role towards enriching the Catholic Church, through the core virtues indicative of their own spiritual tradition. Pentecostals need to see themselves as representing a tradition distinctively different from that of modern Evangelicalism. Perhaps we may need to go so far as to say we are Pentecostal, rather than “Evangelical Pentecostal.” We can say this without implying however, any lack of respect towards modern Evangelicalism, which is also a definitive and viable tradition within the greater Christian movement.

Tragic loss of Pentecostal ecumenicalism

Foremost of what was lost through the evangelicalization of Classic Pentecostalism, was the movement's earlier ecumenical spirit. This was due to the Evangelical suspicion and refusal to engage any dialogues with more liberal oriented churches, and thus with the National Council of Church and the World Council of Churches.⁶⁷ Yet the fact of the matter is that all through the 20th century, multitudes within more “liberal” oriented or mainline churches, has often demonstrated far greater openness to the Pentecostal baptism in the Spirit than with believers in strongly conservative and Evangelical churches. I must also draw attention to the fact that many Christians have received the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit even while belonging to very ecumenically minded churches that have enjoyed deep affiliations with movements such as the World Council of Churches.

This is a variable, which remains to this day, a troubling irony given that Pentecostal groups have often refused to entertain dialogue and fellowship with ecumenical bodies. They refuse to entertain such dialogue lest they appear less than “Evangelical,” according to

⁶⁵ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 32.

⁶⁶ Hollenweger, “Rethinking Spirit Baptism,” in *Pentecostals After a Century*, 166-167.

⁶⁷ Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 194; Menzies, “Reflections of a Pentecostal,” 10-11.

how that term is understood within 20th and early 21st century Evangelicalism.⁶⁸ So the fact is that believers within more liberal churches and traditions have often demonstrated a far greater “experiential openness” to the Pentecostal blessing than have Conservative Evangelicals, of whom Pentecostals have been so careful to align their identity with.

I must also mention the Roman Catholic “experiential openness” towards the baptism in the Holy Spirit. How do we account for the many Roman Catholics, who have remained within Roman Catholicism, and also practice some form of Marian spirituality, yet have received the Baptism in the Spirit along with speaking in tongues?⁶⁹ We should all remember the life lessons of David duPlessis, often known as “Mr. Pentecost,” who was disfellowshipped by the Assemblies of God for his association with the World Council of Churches leaders. They did this largely because of pressure that Evangelical leaders put upon the Assemblies of God to refrain from all dialogues and links with the WWC.⁷⁰ Early British Pentecostal statesman and ecumenicist Donald Gee, crystallised a true assessment of Pentecostal spirituality in contrast to both Protestant liberalism and fundamentalism when he long ago declared that “the complete answer to modernism is not fundamentalism, but Pentecost in all its fullness.”⁷¹

Pentecostal capitulation to middle-class satiation

I will now draw attention to the determined efforts of Pentecostals to win Evangelical acceptance by undergoing a thorough “enculturation of middle-class values.”⁷² Beginning in the United States, particularly within the Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism had become “a typical middle-class evangelical movement.”⁷³ Because of both “upward social mobility and the increasing institutionalization of classical Pentecostal denominations, the result is that Pentecostal churches have now become almost indistinguishable from Evangelical churches on any given Sunday morning.”⁷⁴ Pentecostalism now often if not usually exists throughout the world, as “a respectable middle-class denomination, not just in the West but also in many Third World countries.”⁷⁵ Consequently, as Hollenweger points out, the movement has lost its social consciousness, It did so having taken on the assumption too often held within modern Evangelicalism, that personal morality deserves greater attention from the pulpit than social morality. It is as if the “Holy Spirit is only interested in what happens in the bedroom and not in what happens in the boardroom.”⁷⁶ The bottom line is that Pentecostals lose their identity as Pentecostals, when they capitulate to any economic, social, or political ideology.⁷⁷ We should say this is true however for all Christians.

⁶⁸ Menzies, “Reflections of a Pentecostal at the End of the Millennium: An Editorial Essay,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998) (3-14): 10-11; Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 220-221.

⁶⁹ Roli G. Dela Cruz, “Salvation in Christ and Baptism in Spirit: A Response to Robert Menzies, ‘Evidential Tongues An Essay on Theological Method,’” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1 vol. 2 (1998): 125-147 (140-141).

⁷⁰ Menzies, “Reflections of a Pentecostal at the End of the Millennium,” 10-11; “Facing Theological Issues of the Twenty-First Century,” Conference Papers, The Fourth General Assembly : Asia Pacific Theological Association, September 26-30, 1999, Southern Cross College, Sidney Australia, ed. Wonsuk Ma (Asia Theological Association, 1999), 2-3.

⁷¹ Donald Gee, “Pentecostals in New Delhi,” *Pentecostal* 59 (March-May 1962); Quoted in Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 349.

⁷² McGee, “More than Evangelical,” 296.

⁷³ Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 193.

⁷⁴ Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, 32; Yong is here citing the work of Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, and Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

⁷⁵ Hollenweger, “Crucial Issues for Pentecostals,” in *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition*, eds. Allan H. Anderson, and Walter J. Hollenweger (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 188.

⁷⁶ Hollenweger, “Crucial Issues for Pentecostals,” in *Pentecostals after a Century*, 189.

⁷⁷ Kuzmic, “Pentecostals Respond to Marxism,” in *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, eds. Murray A. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 150.

One of the most memorable examples of Pentecostal accommodation to the status quo and its tragic loss of social consciousness, was during the 1970's and 1980's when in nations like Guatemala and South Africa, Pentecostals and Charismatics who had achieved a high level of income and social status. There and then, they often exhibited no qualms of torturing or imprisoning other Christians deemed a threat to the existing political structures; no doubt arising from unconscious, if not conscious impulses, "to defend a newly acquired social and economic status."⁷⁸ Given the success of the movement within Asia, coupled with the region's material affluence, Menzies advises that "all Pentecostals would do well to read Richard Foster's *Money, Sex and Power*."⁷⁹ We must recognise then that the ill effects of upward mobility upon Pentecostal spirituality and the movement's earlier and most enduring distinctives, are not restricted to either the Western world or to highly industrialised settings. It is a problem damaging the global movement altogether.

"The costly loss of testimony" in Pentecostal churches

Another symptom of institutionalisation within Pentecostalism becomes manifest when a church ethos discourages or controls individual exclamations of testimony, or publicly audible prayers, within a worship setting, in order "to eliminate potential problems."⁸⁰ According to Poloma, this is a practice particularly common within larger churches. Poloma has also observed that the control of public prayer and testimony has within Pentecostalism, steadily increased over the past decades. This trend directly parallels other symptoms of institutionalism within the movement, such as the decreasing number of people who have experienced or practice speaking in tongues. The problem becomes even more acute in churches that either strive towards maintaining an "upbeat" and positive looking ethos, or within "Word of Faith" oriented churches.⁸¹

At the onset of this discussion I had described at length how integral is the role of an "oral" liturgy and ethos is to nurturing an authentic Pentecostal ethos and spirituality. We should seek such an ethos and spirituality so that we are fully open to the charismatic ministry of the Holy Spirit. We should understand then, that an authentic Pentecostal oral-based ethos and liturgy, necessitates a welcomed openness towards spontaneous congregational testimony and prayer. This is notwithstanding the risk this may entail towards the orderliness or correctness of a given testimony.⁸² The proper pastoral response to this risk ought to come in the form of teaching through modelling, or private sharing. But never at the exclusion of individuals from public prayer or sharing on account of one's lack of skill in oral articulation or delivery.

Pentecostalism ought to especially model to the greater Christian tradition an appreciation towards the public expression of "lament" as exemplified in the Psalter, which takes seriously the reality of God's sometimes silence and hiddenness from us, in spite of present adversities.⁸³ The public declaration of nothing but triumphant confession is itself therefore, a major symptom that the Spirit of Prophecy is being quenched within the Church; through the forces of institutionalism. It may well be true that if the day comes where Pentecostal churches fully eliminate lament from their prayer language, such churches have essentially ceased to be "Pentecostal."⁸⁴

Perhaps I should say something here about congregational prayer. The kind of congregational prayer to which God responds through an outpouring of His Spirit, has usually come about when space for such prayer is created through letting go of all our

⁷⁸ Hollenweger, "Crucial Issues for Pentecostals," in *Pentecostals after a Century*, 189.

⁷⁹ Menzies, "Reflections of a Pentecostal," 11-12; Richard J. Foster, *Money, Sex and Power: The Challenge of the Disciplined Life* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1985).

⁸⁰ Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 202-203; quoted in Scott A. Ellington, "The Costly Loss of Testimony," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* (2000): 48-59 (53).

⁸¹ Ellington, "The Costly Loss of Testimony," 54; citing Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 202-203.

⁸² Ellington, "The Costly Loss of Testimony," 48.

⁸³ Ellington, "The Costly Loss of Testimony," 50-54.

⁸⁴ Ellington, "The Costly Loss of Testimony," 59.

printed or fixed agendas.. Oral liturgy and Pentecost-desiring prayer are inseparable. This is not to say that a printed liturgy is wholly antithetical to oral liturgy. There can be a synthesis, as the Psalter itself provides us examples of fixed prayers. But the true function of the Psalter, as with all of Scripture is to inform, shape, and comprise the vocabulary, imagery, and narrative structures of our language and speaking to God and one another. The true power of Scripture is thus released in its spoken rather than written form. This is why the Bible that "faith comes by the hearing of the Word," and not the "reading of the Word."

We must also therefore value spontaneous testimony and spontaneous prayer, and the congregational exercise of tongues. For these altogether constitute revival seeking prayer, which comes through "touching the Almighty," through the "crying out of one whole being."⁸⁵ Yet all in the name of decency and order, and from the motive of pragmatically averting all possible error, we are now programming the Holy Spirit completely out of the church service. We have scripted, orchestrated, and fixed our agenda, our musical keys, and our choruses on immovable print. Worse, we have even scripted and orchestrated our hand and body gestures to such a precise performance, that "not even God's Spirit can interrupt" our orchestrated Sunday morning performances.⁸⁶ The truth is that this is altogether nothing but a dead work. We have come to believe that the happy and gregarious atmosphere of our Sunday morning jam sessions is evidence of God's joy in our life! Revival can never come as long as we value liturgical order more than running the risk of God coming down upon us in a spontaneous but anticipated power from on high.

Decline of Spirit-baptism as Pentecostalism's central distinctive

As the major warrant for his recent text, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*, Frank Macchia stresses how this doctrine has historically served as the "crown jewel" of Pentecostal theology and spirituality. Yet that role is currently being "displaced" as a central distinctive of Pentecostalism; within both critical Pentecostal scholarship, as well as within the ethos of Pentecostal churches.⁸⁷ While I do not wholly agree with Macchia's proposals towards correcting this "displacement," which throughout this project I will periodically engage, I find his assessment most alarmingly accurate. I need to also stress that this growing loss of attention towards both referring to and experiencing the reality of Spirit-baptism, is also occurring through a growing consensus within Pentecostal scholarship, to define Spirit-baptism in a manner more closely tied with conversion-initiation. This is of course in contrast to the Classic Pentecostal conception of Spirit-Baptism as a prophetic empowerment for service, which is wholly distinct from the conversion-initiation experience.

Within both Pentecostal and Charismatic spiritualities, we have witnessed over the past decade a definitive loss of consciousness, towards the entire imagery of Spirit-baptism. This loss of consciousness is most particularly evident in how the term ought to narratively, shape a believer's spirituality, at least within the perimeters of Pentecostal spirituality. Churches are increasingly regulating any discussion of Spirit-baptism, to that of a doctrine that warrants teaching or mention, only within a new believers or discipleship class, or occasionally in times of altar ministry. These trends are naturally changing the meaning of the altar call. A true Pentecostal altar is a space where people come to make an "altar" and meet with God, and seek Him alone. It is a place of "tarrying," "until we are filled with power from high." It's a place where we go to wait upon God, until we know we have met with Him alone.

But now, rather than functioning as a means for encouraging people to seek God for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit, the altar call is now becoming more of a place for horizontal

⁸⁵ Jim Cymbala, with Dean Merrill, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire: What Happens When God's Spirit Invades the Heart of His People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 30.

⁸⁶ Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, 134.

⁸⁷ Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 20, 22-28, 33.

sharing of problems or endless guilt-driven confessions over generalised sin not birthed by any real actual conviction over any specific behaviours. Motives for coming to the altar are thus largely more negative than positive. We have forgotten that turning to God means first, turning to Him. But we've been deceived by the lures of novelty, "cutting edge" relevancy, self-actualisation, and despising any expression of genuine emotional release and heart-felt crying out to God. We are no longer leading people to drink from the wells of salvation. We are no longer encouraging people to draw near to God and offer themselves wholly to Him. We are no longer leading people to Christ alone—"the hope of glory," "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 1:27; 2:3).

I should say something here about tongues. I have earlier alluded to the decreasing number within Pentecostal churches, who have never spoken in tongues. Also of grave concern here, is that many Pentecostal churches and their leaders are discouraging the public practice of tongues. I must say that there is right now, evidence of a disturbing trend transpiring within even Classic Pentecostalism; this trend is a shift away from the congregational use of tongues, singing in the Spirit, and giving space to the word of prophesy. This is largely arises because Evangelical interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14 are winning sway over Pentecostals; much because they themselves lack the critical thinking skills to needful to engage the modern philosophical premises behind these trends. But even more so, the ultimate cause of this trend is simply that Pentecostal churches need revival as much, or more, than churches in other traditions. For through the forces of institutionalisation, they have exchanged the gold for bronze.

One of the most alarming expressions of this trend is a 2007 article published in the journal *Pneuma*, which argues that given a number of contemporary cultural shifts within the Pentecostal world, the time has come for a re-defining of Spirit-baptism. The author proposes that we shift the Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism from the language and themes arising from Luke-Acts to a more generalised affirmation of Spirit-baptism. This more generalised idea is that Spirit-baptism simply refers to "the ongoing orientation of the believer to the leading of the spirit for the sake of personal transformation into the likeness of Christ . . . and empowering the community . . . for the mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God."⁸⁸ While this proposed conception reflects several New Testament pneumatological themes, it essentially flattens out the older and narrowly understood Classic Pentecostal belief that Spirit-baptism is an empowerment for service through prophetic utterance. I find this proposal most disturbing because I believe careful discernment reveals that the origins to this proposal arise from how so many streams within current Pentecostal thought, have tragically capitulated into the philosophical pragmatism that has shaped the modern Evangelical church ethos.⁸⁹

While my observation on this trend is one of grave concern, I also realise that it indirectly points to a more constructive and emerging trend. This is a trend involving the development of a theology of Spirit-baptism that: synthesises to some extent the respective nuances of Lukan and Pauline theology; integrates and interfaces with the wider contours of Christian theology; and finally, engages and resonates with some measure of spiritual traditions expressed within both historical and catholic Christianity. By "catholic," I am not referring to Roman Catholicism but rather to recognising Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions (in contrast to Pentecostalism) as more or less shaping the broadest global expression of the Christian tradition.

Nonetheless, I am concerned about a growing movement that is seeking to conceptualise a Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism squarely anchored upon a synthesis of Lukan and Pauline theology, rather primarily upon Luke's writing. Along with this, I have observed a growing consensus within Pentecostal scholarship to define Spirit-baptism in a manner more closely tied with conversion-initiation, in contrast to the Classic Pentecostal conception of Spirit-baptism as a prophetic empowerment for service, which is wholly distinct

⁸⁸ Shane Clifton, "The Spirit and Doctrinal Development: A Functional Analysis of the Traditional Pentecostal doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit," *Pneuma* 29 (2007): 5-23 (21).

⁸⁹ Webber provides thoughtful analysis on this trend in his, *The Divine Embrace*, 79-99.

from the conversion-initiation experience. A major problem with this endeavour however is, as I will later discuss, that Pentecostalism necessitates a hermeneutic that reads Pauline theology through the distinct theology of Luke-Acts. This must remain if Pentecostalism is to remain true to its calling within the greater Christian tradition,

The Classic Pentecostal affinity towards a narrative reading of the New Testament, and particularly of Luke-Acts, must therefore not only be affirmed, but more comprehensively developed as the most viable approach towards fully explicating the centrality of Spirit-baptism in Christian life and theology. Yet I do believe we can pursue a Classic Pentecostal theology of Spirit-baptism that is open to and engaging with the greater traditions of catholic Christianity, without letting go of the movement's historical prioritising of Luke-Acts. Our failure to do so, would only implode the very genius of Pentecostal spirituality, which accounts for the movement's existence within the Catholic Church. I am thus convinced that it is possible, and necessary, to construct a catholic and globally informed theology of Spirit-baptism, that nonetheless wholly expresses the Classic Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism as an empowering experience for service subsequent and distinct from conversion. This would include an affirmation of tongues, as what I would prefer to call, the perennial "sign" of Spirit-baptism.