

Poured Out on All Flesh

The Spirit, World Pentecostalism, and the Renewal of Theology and Praxis in the 21st Century

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Abstract: The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed a renaissance in pneumatology and related topics in the theological academy. While the role of pentecostalism in the emergence of this conversation may be debated, that pentecostal scholars and theologians engaged in the project of pneumatological theology at the turn of the twenty-first century cannot be denied. This essay suggests that the Pentecost motif of the Spirit's outpouring on all flesh has the potential to serve as a central and organizing axiom for a pentecostal and pneumatological theology, and programmatically sketches how such a pentecostally-inspired theology participates in and also contributes to the renewal of the church catholic, of the theological academy, and of the church's performative engagement with the world.

INTRODUCTION

Pentecostalism can be said to be a revival and renewal movement. In the United States, the Azusa Street revival in 1906 precipitated a century of renewal: the birth of the modern Pentecostal fellowships (and denominations), the Latter Rain movement, the charismatic streams in the mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches, and the Third Wave revivals of Toronto, Brownsville, and Pensacola, among other.¹ When set in global context, these north American pentecostalism² have emerged alongside and in interaction with other Pentecostal, charismatic, and indigenous charismatic Christian movements in the global south.³ In this essay, I attempt to prosecute three interrelated sets of claims regarding pentecostalism as a continuing catalyst for renewal in the twenty-first century. First, I suggest an interpretation of world pentecostalism drawn from the Pentecost narrative regarding the Spirit as being poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:17); this thesis concerns world pentecostalism as a catalyst for the renewal of the church. Second, I propose

that the many tongues of the Day of Pentecost and of world pentecostalism invites reconsideration of the biblical claim regarding the Spirit who leads us into all truth; this second thesis concerns world pentecostalism as a catalyst for the renewal of the theological academy. Finally, the gift of the Spirit, then and now, witnesses to and heralds the Day of the Lord promised by the prophets of old; this third thesis concerns world pentecostalism as a catalyst for the renewal of the world.⁴ As will become clear in what follows, the revival of the twentieth century anticipates but does not constrain the renewal of the twenty-first century. The task of renewal theology today is to discern from whence the Spirit has come, and attempt to follow the winds of the Spirit wherever they may blow.⁵

POURED OUT ON ALL FLESH: WORLD PENTECOSTALISM AND THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH

One reading of the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh in Acts 2 is that the early church understood itself as a new people of God, no longer limited to the Jews, but also including the Gentiles. Luke's 'history' of the early church narrates its evolving self-understanding wherein its borders were extended from Judea through Samaria to the ends of the earth. Hence the 'end of the story' – the arrival of Paul in Rome, the heart of the empire that served also to represent the known world – confirms its beginning, when the crowd from around the known world gathered at Jerusalem and was swept up (baptized) by the Spirit in the 'founding' of the new people of God, the church as the body of Christ.

The earliest modern pentecostals understood their own experiences as an extension of the biblical story, the 29th chapter of Acts, as it were. The book of Acts, especially the Pentecost narrative itself, quickly became central to the living out of this story.⁶ In what follows, I suggest three aspects of how the pentecostal understanding of the church seen through the book of Acts – the church as charismatic, as inclusive, and as ecumenical – has not only contributed to the vibrant contemporary discussion on ecclesiology, but can also further serve to renew the church in the twenty-first century. We will note in due course that this is a renewal not only of theological understanding, but also of ecclesial practices.

The Spirit Gives Many Gifts: Toward a Charismatic Ecclesiology

Most obviously unfathomable about the founding of the church is that she emerged on the Day of Pentecost through the utterance of many tongues. The cacophony of tongues at Azusa Street was no less intelligible to fundamentalists on the right (who believed the charismatic gift of tongues had ceased with the end of the apostolic age) and liberals on the left (for whom supernaturalistic Christianity was a leftover from the pre-modern era).⁷ It was in part for this reason that early modern Pentecostalism quickly came to be known (pejoratively, at first) as the ‘tongues movement’, with its distinctive testimony of tongues as the evidence of the gift (baptism) of the Spirit. Of course, what was distinctive about Pentecostalism was not only glossolalia, but the unique configuration of beliefs and practices which some called the fourfold- and others the fivefold-gospel: Jesus as savior, Jesus as healer, Jesus as baptizer, Jesus as coming king, with Holiness-pentecostal folk adding Jesus as sanctifier (Dayton 1987:17-22). The ‘supernatural’ workings of the Spirit in this classical Pentecostal framework focused on salvation, healing of the body (understood holistically), and tongues-speech (and interpretation).

The charismatic renewal movement in the mainline Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s and 1970s, however, received tongues and healings as part of a larger number of the spiritual gifts or charisms, especially as delineated by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 12:7-9). Not only did this mean that the charismatic renewal never focused on tongues or healing to the neglect of the other gifts, but in many ways, the wide range of the charisms came to be seen as normative for, rather than as additions to, Christian faith and practice.⁸ While from a sociological perspective this can be seen as the charismatic renewal movement ‘routinizing’ the supernaturalistic excesses of classical Pentecostalism, I suggest instead an ecclesiological interpretation of the trajectory from Pentecostal revivalism through the charismatic renewal and beyond. In this perspective, what emerges over the course of the twentieth century is a distinctively charismatic ecclesiology which understands the church to be constituted first and foremost not by apostolic succession (ecclesial structure) or apostolic teaching (ecclesial doctrine) – even if these are not to be neglected – but by apostolic practices (ecclesial charisms).⁹ In short, the pentecostal contribution may be suggested as reviving or restoring to centrality the role of the charisms in the life of the church.

Yet, this restoration involves not only the list of charisms identified by Paul, but also an expansion of the church's imagination regarding the gifts of the Spirit. This expansion can be said to have occurred along at least two lines. First, while St. Paul does go on to focus on tongues and interpretation (1 Cor. 14) – hence providing some justification for classical Pentecostal emphases on these specific gifts – his discussion of the charisms does define them as the means through which the body of Christ is edified (1 Cor. 12:12-26), even as he identifies love as the greatest gift (1 Cor. 13:13). The Corinthians are thereby urged to both ‘pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts’ (1 Cor. 14:1),¹⁰ since it is precisely the gifts exercised in love which builds up the church and its many members. Second, once tongues and healings are no longer the most important charisms, then the list in 1 Corinthians 12 becomes representative rather than exhaustive. In this case, other gifts of the Spirit come into focus, including the ‘grace gifts’ of Romans 12:3-9, the ‘office gifts’ of Ephesians 4:7-13, and the ‘service gifts’ of 1 Peter 4:7-11. Expanded in this direction, a charismatic ecclesiology emphasizes the wide range of spiritual gifts, always undergirded by love, itself the gift of God through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5).

In retrospect, the Pentecostal revival and the charismatic renewal movement have contributed to the emergence of a distinctively charismatic ecclesiology. Prospectively, however, such a charismatic self-understanding will also inform the practices of the church of the twenty-first century. This dialectical relationship between theology and practice will be seen repeatedly in what follows.

Many Gifts for/through Many Members: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Inclusion

We have now seen that the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh resulted in the many tongues and in many gifts. We have also seen that the many gifts are for the edification of the many members of the body of Christ. What we have not yet pointed out, however, is that the many members include those who are ‘weaker’, ‘less honorable’, and less respectable (1 Cor. 12:21-26). Elsewhere in the Corinthian letters, Paul is concerned about the foolish, the low, and the despised (1 Cor. 1:27-28), and about God's power as manifest in and perfected through suffering and weakness (2 Cor. 11:16-33 and 12:7-10). Not coincidentally, I suggest, the gift of the Spirit is not only not held back from but explicitly extended to those who were most oppressed and marginalized in the ancient world:

women and slaves (Acts 2:17-18). In each of these cases, the ‘weak’ and the oppressed are not only recipients of divine favor, but are also, precisely through endowment of the gifts of the Spirit, instruments of God’s activity in and for the world.

The early modern Pentecostals understood themselves as participating in this end-time re-enactment of the Pentecost narrative. As proclaimed by Peter (from the prophet Joel), most startling at Azusa Street was not only the expression and manifestation of the gifts in and through the lives of women, but also the presence of Asians, Hispanics, and African Americans at the mission. Not surprisingly, women received the anointing of the Holy Spirit and went forth from the revival across the nation and to the four corners of the earth as pastors-teachers, prophetesses, evangelists, and missionaries. To be sure, some classical Pentecostal denominations did not proceed to ordain women, and many Pentecostals retain a hierarchical understanding of male-female relations in the home. Yet on the whole, an egalitarian impulse was pervasive among classical Pentecostals who understood that God was no respecter of (male) persons in choosing to pour out the Spirit on daughters and maidservants as well.

As important for world pentecostalism was the leadership provided at Azusa Street by the black Holiness preacher, William J. Seymour, which was guided, at least briefly, by the conviction that ‘the “color line” was washed away in the blood’ (Bartleman 1980:54; see also Irvin 1995). For these earliest Pentecostals, the multiracial and multiethnic constituency of the Azusa Street revival was simply an extension of the original church birthed by the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Of course, one generation had not passed when racial segregation separated whites and blacks, and this continued through much of the twentieth century. Yet the ‘Memphis miracle’ in October 1994 was a significant event for the reconciliation of white and black classical Pentecostals (see Macchia 1995, and the articles on the ‘Roundtable: Racial Reconciliation’ in the spring 1996 issue of *PNEUMA*). Of course, by this time, unprecedented growth had been documented in pentecostal churches in Korea, China, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa, not to mention among the multiracial pentecostal megachurches of North America. In short, world pentecostalism now not only embodied the multilingual character of people of God forecasted on the Day of Pentecost, but also manifested the emergence of long marginalized voices insofar as the center of Christianity was now seen to have shifted from the Euro-American west to the global south (see Jenkins 2002).

Another way to put the point being elaborated on here is that the early church’s vision which included women, slaves, the weak, and the otherwise oppressed as agents of the Spirit of God has

been retrieved and reappropriated by world pentecostal Christianity. In a sense, while feminism had long argued for women's rights, world pentecostalism had embraced women as its church founders and leaders and been a church of women; while the civil rights movement had long resisted discrimination and oppression, black pentecostalism (in North America) itself became the church of the resistance; and while liberation theology had long championed the rights of the poor, pentecostalism had become the church of the poor.¹¹ I would add that in view of St. Paul's conjoining the charisms of the Spirit and the weaker and more vulnerable members of the body of Christ, the place and role of persons with disabilities in the present and future of world Christianity should not be underestimated. (see also Yong 2007) In each of these domains, the work of the Spirit is to enact righteousness, justice, and peace (cf. Is. 42:1-4 and 61:1-2), and this is accomplished by the Spirit's giving herself in power to the people of God so that this might be accomplished. Precisely because the Spirit has been poured out on all flesh, world pentecostalism has distinctive contributions for the shaping of a postpatriarchal, postcolonial, and postmodern world.

It is precisely because sexism, racism, classism, and ableism remains within and without the pentecostal churches that a Pentecostal and pneumatological theology of inclusion needs also to be understood performatively in material and ecclesiological terms. We cannot only talk about an inclusive community or only anticipate an inclusive kingdom of God, but we also need to prophetically address the -isms which divide the church and actively seek a fresh outpouring of the Spirit which alone brings repentance, healing, and reconciliation to a broken world. In this case, an inclusive ecclesiology requires a pneumatological spirituality and praxis as well, on which more in the next two sections.

One Spirit, Many Members: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Ecumenism

We have already begun to sketch central features of a pneumatological ecclesiology derived from a re-reading of the Pentecost narrative in world pentecostal perspective. In this reading, the Spirit's outpouring on all flesh results in both a charismatic community and in an inclusive community. These elements combine in a pneumatological ecclesiology to suggest that the church is a charismatic and inclusive fellowship (see also Yong 2006). The latter insists that the church is an egalitarian community constituted by people with differing languages, ethnicities, races, cultures,

and abilities, while the former means that the charisms of the Spirit are given freely, to all, and for the common good. Hence each member gives to others in certain respects, but also receives from others in other respects. Interdependence, reciprocity, and mutuality are central modes of ecclesial relationship (cf. Acts 2:45 and 4:32-37).

In addition to being a charismatic and inclusive fellowship, however, a pneumatological ecclesiology derived from the Pentecost narrative also emphasizes the church as people of God called out and set apart by the Spirit. This quality of being set apart means that the church is both holy and being sanctified at the same time. Sanctification, however, not only involves the cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24), but also includes liturgies of baptism and the breaking of bread, the disciplined submission under the apostolic teachings (as preserved primarily in Scripture), and communal worship (Acts 2:41-47). Sanctification thus spans the ‘distance’ between justification (baptism) and what the East calls deification and what the West calls glorification (the uninhibited worship when we shall see him ‘face to face’). All are, of course, gifts of the Spirit as well – the former (justification) being the result of the resurrection of Christ by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 4:25) and our participation in that new life through baptism, and the latter (deification/glorification) being sealed by the Spirit who is the pledge of our fully embodied redemption as God’s own people (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; and Rom. 8:22-23). A pneumatological ecclesiology therefore opens up to a renewed theology of justification, a renewed theology of the liturgy (of baptism and the Eucharist), and a renewal eschatology.¹²

In each of these areas, new insights provided by pneumatological perspectives hold forth promise both for ecumenical relations and for ecumenical theology in the twenty-first century (e.g., Rosato 1978, Outler 1989 and Lederle 1990). If the challenges posed by ecumenical division do not seem capable of being resolved either through structural-institutional organization or through doctrinal-theological agreement, perhaps the many tongues of Pentecost is suggestive of a new model of ecumenical relationship which features unity precisely through diversity (see Solivan 1998 and Macchia 1998). In this case, what is important is not any homogeneity of languages but precisely the diversity of tongues declaring the wondrous works of God (Acts 2:11). A pentecostal and pneumatological theology of ecumenism would therefore understand that the one body of Christ is also the one fellowship of the Spirit (Phil. 2:1; cf. 2 Cor. 13:14 and Eph. 4:3-4) that is comprised of many members (communions, churches, denominations, fellowships, movements, etc.) (See Kärkkäinen 2002b, esp. chs. 3-5).

In short, the pneumatological ecclesiology sketched here both emerges out a pentecostal rereading of the Pentecost narrative on the one hand, and also suggests a kind of theological vision for pentecostals to be church in the twenty-first century on the other hand. If modern pentecostalism was a revival movement which reinvigorated the churches, then contemporary pentecostal theological reflection not only describes the pentecostal experience of being the church, but also presents to the wider ecumenical community some normative proposals about how to understand itself doctrinally and live out its convictions practically by the power of the Spirit. So now the renewed and renewal church of the twenty-first century is neither only the people of God, nor merely the body of Christ, but is especially the charismatic fellowship of the Spirit.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH: WORLD PENTECOSTALISM AND THE RENEWAL OF THE THEOLOGICAL ACADEMY

We would be mistaken to conclude from the preceding, however, that pentecostalism favors some kind of functional unity at the expense of the unity provided by the truth. After all, the manifestation of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was not only cacophonous noise that produced bewilderment, but an undeniable comprehension: ‘each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ... in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power”’ (Acts 2:6-8 and 11b).¹³ Further, the Spirit of Pentecost is not just any spirit, but is the Spirit who exalts the crucified savior and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:22-36). Finally, in the Johannine account of the promise and gift of the Spirit, her name is not only *Parakletos* but also the *pneuma tes aletheias* (Spirit of Truth; see Jn. 14:17, 15:26, and 16:13).

To be sure, the early days of the Azusa Street mission produced as much confusion as occurred on the Day of Pentecost. Pentecostals were quickly labeled as those who pursued emotional and subjective experiences, and the tradition of anti-intellectualism which developed within the movement did nothing to quell the concerns of its critics. Still, pentecostals have always been a people committed to the authority and centrality of Scripture. I suggest, however, that pentecostals have from the beginning been informed by a distinctive epistemology and hermeneutic

– what I have elsewhere called a pneumatological imagination,¹⁴ which is situated on the margins, which is embodied and affective, and which is constituted by plurality – that has in turn shaped their theological sensitivities and dispositions. In what follows, I explicate on this pneumatological imagination and discuss how it has enabled pentecostal scholars to engage distinctively the theological conversation at the level of the theological scholarship, the wider academy, and the theology and science dialogue.

Toward a Pneumatological Imagination: Renewing Theological Scholarship

In what ways has pentecostal-pneumatological imagination engaged and even renewed the Christian theological conversation? One way to trace this process of engagement is to observe the three waves of pentecostal scholarship that has washed ashore since the 1960s.

First came the historians who were motivated by the desire to preserve first-hand accounts of the early revival before eyewitnesses deceased. Earning the PhD degree required confronting historiographical and metaphysical assumptions regarding the nature of causality prevalent in the discipline of history. With this came the realization that the scholarly history of classical Pentecostalism could not be told as if it happened ‘suddenly from heaven’ (see Brumback 1961). At the same time, these first historians unearthed a wealth of historical data printed by early Pentecostal publishing houses (Wacker 2001). Along with this came the realization that Pentecostals had their own theological views and convictions, but that these were found not in scholarly tomes in theological libraries, but in their own genres of literature that included pamphlets, testimonials, and personal narratives of their encounters with the Spirit of God.

A secondary material insight that emerged was that the various Pentecostal stories were told from perspectives derived from ‘the underside’ of history. To be sure, not all classical Pentecostals were from the lower classes, but substantial numbers of them were. As pentecostal historians have continue to retrieve these voices, they have been led to ask further about other marginalized voices from the underside of Christian history. Unsurprisingly, pentecostals began to realize they could empathize with many others voices who have been relegated to the margins of the church, including those associated with revivals and awakenings of the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries; the ‘enthusiasts’ of the seventeenth century; the *Schwärmerei* of the Radical Reformation; the wide

range of charismatic movements of the Middle Ages; the Montanists of the third and second centuries, etc.¹⁵ Much historiographical work remains to be done, including serious rethinking about the history of Christian doctrine and Christian thought from the perspective of charismatic renewal movements throughout the centuries. Telling the truth about the history of the church involves not only the ‘objective facts’ of what happened, but also the ‘subjective accounts’ (from all sides) of why things happened as they did.

The second wave following the historians was the biblical scholars in the 1970s and 1980s. Since their closest theological cousins had for a long time been the fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals, these early PhD in biblical studies instinctively reacted to the cessationism pervasive in these circles (e.g. Ruthven 1993). In response to the cessationist charge that pentecostals were exegeting their experiences rather than the biblical text, the counter-argument was developed that cessationists were exegeting the Bible on the basis of their own lack of experience of the charisms (Menziez 1979). This led pentecostal biblical scholars into dialogue with the discourses of postmodern biblical interpretation, reader-response theories, and postcolonial hermeneutics, among other alternatives then emerging in the wider theological academy.¹⁶ What was intriguing to pentecostals was that these approaches both took seriously the foreground of biblical text and its intersection with the world of the reader, and were engaged in the task of legitimating rather than dismissing readings of scripture from those who found themselves on the margins. At the same time, pentecostals could not fully align themselves with these postcritical perspectives, especially when they did not recognize the normative authority of the Bible.

Yet from this, I suggest, a *via media* emerged which can be called a renewal hermeneutics (which is plural rather than singular) of Scripture (Stibbe 1993:77-78). Such a distinctively pentecostal hermeneutics recognizes the important role of experience – not that of the Enlightenment, nor that of ‘fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men’ embraced by modern liberal theology, but rather an experience derived ‘from the margins’. Further, such an account privileged not the proposition, the doctrinal statement, or the creed (even if these should not be dismissed), but the testimony, the lament, the confession, and the narrative. Hence, the pentecostal experiential matrix is constituted by an affective epistemology informed centrally by the affections, a discursive mode shaped especially by orality, and an existential orientation fundamentally open to spontaneity. Finally, renewal hermeneutics involves a polyphonic perspectivalism shaped by the multiplicity of readings ‘from the underside’ that are open to the

Spirit's illumination.¹⁷ Pentecostal biblical scholars have begun to apply various aspects of this specifically renewal hermeneutics in their re-reading of Luke-Acts, the gospels, other New Testament letters, and even the different portions and books of the Old Testament, even as such interpretive projects in turn re-shape and mold their hermeneutical approaches.¹⁸

The third wave of pentecostal scholarship has been the theologians beginning in the late 1980s. The question here has been whether or not there is a distinctively pentecostal theology. The dominant trend even into the early 1990s was that pentecostal theology reproduced evangelical theologies along with the order of the theological loci as systematized by the Reformed scholastic dogmaticians of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, with the addition of chapters on the baptism of the Spirit and the spiritual gifts (usually healing) toward the end of their texts (as in Horton 1995). But was not pentecostalism a 'third force in Christendom' (besides Catholicism and Protestantism), and did not the pentecostal emphasis on the Spirit restore to centrality she who had for a long time been theologically marginalized as the 'shy' or 'hidden' member of the Trinity (Dusen 1958b; Bruner/Hordern 1984)?

In dialogue with a number of other theologians, I suggest that pentecostalism can participate in and contribute to the renewal of Christian theology in the twenty-first century in at least the following ways. First, pentecostal scholars can not only acknowledge but also interrogate how their encounter with and experience of the Spirit might function axiomatically to inform its theological reflection and give it its own distinctive pentecostal and pneumatological shape (see Dabney 1996 and Dabney 2001a). Second, pentecostal spirituality can make important contributions to the contemporary discussion regarding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Land 1993). Third, the pentecostal pneumatological imagination can also provide an alternative point of entry into rethinking a wide range of theological topics and even doctrines (e.g., Volf 1991 and Volf 1998). Finally, Christian systematic theology itself can benefit from a pneumatological (as opposed to creational or christological) reframing, a 'starting with the Spirit', as it were (see van Dusen 1958a; Taylor 1973; Pinnock 1996; Dabney 2001b; Yong 2005e). The result is not only the articulation of a distinctively pentecostal theological identity, but also the enriching and even renewing of the wider Christian theological conversation.

Toward a Pneumatological Anthropology: Renewing the Academy

But I propose that the contributions of the pentecostal pneumatological imagination extend beyond the theological disciplines to include the wider academy. This is in part because tightly demarcated disciplinary boundaries no longer hold in the postmodern context. But beyond these developmental shifts, the very nature of pentecostal spirituality and religiosity also raise fundamental questions about what it means to be human which are the domain of various disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences.

In the humanities, for example, pentecostal spirituality provokes reflection on a wide range of matters. Most obviously, how might the pentecostal experiences of the charisms in general and of glossolalia in particular invite fresh thinking about the philosophy of worldviews or the philosophy of language (See Palmer 1998 and Smith 2006)? Further, how might the distinctively pentecostal epistemology (introduced briefly above) engage discussions regarding pedagogical theories in contemporary education circles (Johns 1993)? Last for our purposes (but certainly not least), how might pentecostal accounts of encountering God compare and contrast with those found in classical literary genres such as mystical writings, pietist devotionals, or the sacred writings of other religious traditions (on which more below)?

With regard to the human and social sciences, much work has already been done to explicate various aspects of pentecostalism. Diverse schools in the disciplines of psychology and sociology have long been drawn upon to analyze the pentecostal mind and psyche, and to clarify how the many pentecostals have functioned as social movements. Yet such scholarship has also served to expose as implausible simplistic psychological and sociological explanatory theories, whether regarding glossolalic spirituality as symptomatic of immature personalities or regarding enthusiastic religions as deprivation movements produced by rapid social change. More recently, scholars of globalization, sociologists, political scientists, and economists have come to realize the importance of factoring global pentecostalism into their analyses (see Yong/Zalanga forthcoming). In the process, of course, the phenomenon of world pentecostalism has been illuminated, even as reductionistic explanations have given way to more dialectical, holistic, and multi-dimensional analyses. Part of the reason for this is certainly the postmodern context which invites researchers and scholars to take seriously the self-understandings of their research subjects. In the case of world pentecostalism, this secures an explicitly theological moment – when, for example, the Holy Spirit

or the spiritual domain is invoked (or confessed) as an explanatory mechanism – that resists rationalization into other categories.

Since pentecostal perspectives on what it means to be human will always include this pneumatological dimension, scholarly pentecostal engagement with the wider academy promises to restore certain ‘premodern’ notions such as spirituality, miracle, and transcendence to the academic conversation. At the same time, pentecostal self-understandings of these ideas will also be transformed within this wider discussion. I suggest, however, that this dialogical process is not only permissible but actually required given the pentecostal conviction that truth emerges at least in part out of a multitude of voices.¹⁹ Put another way, the Spirit’s outpouring on all flesh means that the wondrous works of God may indeed be declared by many witnesses, even if unconsciously so from the perspective of those doing work in the social sciences (see Yong 2005a).

The pentecostal pneumatological imagination hence proceeds from the conviction that the Spirit who leads us into all truth does so in part through the many disciplines of academia. Pentecostal scholarship is thereby inherently multidisciplinary in terms of requiring distinctive methodological perspectives and interdisciplinary in terms of involving the active collaboration of scholars and researchers working from different starting points. Hence the renewal of theology is not only informed by other disciplinary perspectives, but (we may hope) potentially serves as a catalyst for the renewal of these disciplines as fields of inquiry.

Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Creation: Renewing Theology’s Dialogue with the Sciences

To discuss pentecostalism from the standpoint of social-scientific perspectives raises the further question, what about pentecostalism from the standpoint of the natural sciences (see Yong 2005d)? This question is not as far-fetched as it may initially appear, and that for at least two related reasons. First, pentecostal spirituality, as we have already had occasion to mention, is essentially embodied. Glossolalia, tongues-speech, physical healing, the lifting up of the hands, the dance, the shout, being ‘slain in the Spirit’ – each of these are concrete bodily experiences at the boundaries of where God meets the world, where transcendence and immanence coincide. But secondly, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit itself heralds the arrival of the Day of the LORD with representative signs in the

heavens above and the earth below (Acts 2:19-21). The prophets of old also foretold that the justice, peace, and righteousness brought about by the outpouring of the Spirit would be signified by the wilderness being transformed into a fruitful field (Is. 32:15-18), even as other biblical authors speak of the material world as created through, sustained, and renewed by the breath (*ruah*) of the LORD (Gen. 1:2; Job. 34:14-15; and Ps. 104:29-30).²⁰ In short, given our pentecostal convictions and our pneumatological imagination, human bodies and the material world may be understood just as much through the hermeneutical approaches of pneumatological theology as they are through the empirical methodologies of the sciences.

This means that pentecostal scholarship will benefit from a sustained dialogue with researchers working in the natural sciences. The cognitive neurosciences can shed light on the neurological pathways whereby human beings encounter the divine, even as the biochemical sciences can expand our understanding of the complex genetic, physical, and environmental elements which sustain and nurture human sociality and religiosity (see Yong 2005b). As important, advances in the biomedical sciences will continue to have implications for how not only pentecostals but also all Christians understand healing.²¹ Finally, the wide range of physical sciences – including the cosmological, geological, paleontological, and evolutionary sciences – surely have shed light on questions related to the origins of life, of the human mind, of the human psyche or spirit, and of human experiences like altruism and morality.

On the other hand, as with the social sciences, pentecostal perspectives can help keep the empirical sciences honest with regard to their tendency to subsume all things under naturalistic or materialistic explanations. Further, pentecostal intuitions about God the Spirit as present to and active within creation will generate holistic metaphysical frameworks that undermine false dichotomies – e.g., between mind and body, between matter and spirit, or between nature and transcendence – so prevalent in modern science. Finally, albeit most controversially as well, pentecostal encounters with the paranormal – in demonic possessions and exorcisms on the one side, and with regard to the ministries of angels on the other – also spawns a vision of a richly inhabited and multi-layered world that challenges but also needs to be disciplined by the cosmological and natural sciences. In all of these cases, pentecostal openness to transcendence derived from attempting to follow after the Spirit on the margins and at the boundaries of the known world reopens multi- and interdisciplinary questions about the relationship between God and the

world, between nature and culture, and even between the divine and the demonic that were thought to have been resolved with the advent of modern(ist) science.

The realization that the horizons of the pneumatological imagination include the entire created world opens up theological space for pentecostal scholars to engage the dialogue between religion (or theology) and science even as it invites research scientists who are also pentecostals to think through their scientific practices theologically.²² In other words pentecostal theology enables scientific performance even as scientific research enriches theological reflection. Further, it is not unreasonable to suppose that this dialectical conversation can contribute to the formulation of a pneumatological theology of creation which will in turn inform the kind of environmental or ecological theology so desperately needed in our time. By this I mean that pentecostal intuitions regarding a world that is infused with the presence of the Spirit who has indeed been poured out on all flesh can not only reform, reshape, and renew our thinking about the nature of the material world and its relationship to God the creator but also orient us to live appropriately in a world that is alive with the activity of the Spirit of God. Most importantly, because the saving work of God includes the redemption of the cosmos (e.g., Rom. 8:19-21), our knowledge of this world as revealed through the natural sciences anticipates the truth of God that will be finally be revealed. Hence a pneumatological theology of creation is informed by a plurality of disciplinary ‘tongues’, and this in turn enables our performative engagement with the world in more truthful ways.

‘SENT TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH’: PENTECOSTALISM AND THE RENEWAL OF THE WORLD

Even as the Jews are convinced that the election of Israel is meant for the blessing of the world, so also Christians believe that the church is given for the sake of the world. The book of Acts is interested not only in telling the story of the gospel’s arrival to the ends of the earth, but also in how this happens. From the Lukan perspective, the gospel is carried by members of the charismatic fellowship of the church: ‘you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8).

The early modern pentecostals were convinced from the book of Acts that they were an end-time missionary army with the gift of tongues that enabled them to preach the gospel to every

person in his or her own language before the coming of the Day of the LORD (Goff 1988:74-76; Faupel 1996a). Even when they began to realize their glossolalic utterances were incomprehensible to those they were addressing, pentecostals have never abandoned the conviction that the filling (baptism) of the Spirit brought with it a power to bear witness to the gospel that is not otherwise available. In this last section, I will suggest that the evangelical testimony borne by world pentecostalism in the twenty-first century can be characterized by significant shifts on three interrelated fronts – with regard to social justice, with regard to the cultural arena, and with regard to the world religions – which combine to present a pneumatological vision for the renewal of the world.

Many Witnesses: Renewing Society

Pentecostalism began and continues first and foremost as a missionary movement. Its message has revolved around the four- (or five-) fold gospel of Jesus as savior, healer, baptizer, and coming king (or including Jesus as sanctifier). Pentecostal missionaries, evangelists, and pastors hence preached the gospel, laid hands on the sick and interceded for their healing, and prayed for the baptism of the Holy Spirit for all who were wishing for a deeper experience of God. And why not, if the same Spirit who anointed Jesus to preach the gospel and heal the sick is also the Spirit who now empowers the followers of Jesus to bear witness to his name and to do even greater things than he did (cf. Jn. 14:12)?

Yet the works of Jesus involved not only healing the sick, but also, under the anointing of the Spirit, preaching to the poor, releasing the captives and oppressed, and announcing the liberative Day of the LORD (Lk. 4:18-19). So Jesus delivers those oppressed by the devil through exorcisms, and heals lepers and other persons with severe disabilities, but does so in order that these individuals could be restored and reconciled to their communities. Further, Jesus is concerned not only about healing individuals but about doing so on the Sabbath in order that its original meaning and function might be restored, even as his interactions with widows and parables about them reveal both his compassion for an oppressed category of persons and his concern for justice. Most importantly, Jesus proclamation of the impending kingdom of God resulted in his death at the hands of political rulers who were threatened by his message. Jesus' ministry, in other words, included a

social and political dimension that went beyond his concern for individual lives and bodies. Hence, should not those empowered by the same Spirit also do these works of Jesus?

Pentecostals have increasingly begun to theorize (theologize) about how their religious convictions have informed their socio-political attitudes and activities. This is the case whether we are discussing classical Pentecostal pacifism during the first world war; Latino pentecostal civil rights activism and theology; Afropentecostal liberation theology; or contemporary pentecostal social ethics.²³ In each of these cases, and many others, pentecostals have argued that the gift of the Spirit empowers the Christian witness not only in terms of kerygmatic speech, but also in terms of prophetic action. The witness of the Spirit, in other words, both conjoins speech and action and includes the socio-political dimension.

A more holistic pentecostal missiological paradigm therefore includes at least the following interrelated elements. First, insofar as pentecostals have been touched by and continue to encounter with God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, they cannot but bear witness to this transformative reality; hence their witness will always include a narrative moment that testifies to the ‘this is that’ of the biblical kerygma. Second, insofar as pentecostals have been touched by the Spirit, their witness will (or should) always be sensitive to the whole situation of their audience; hence their witness will (or should) always be borne by a sensitivity, empathy, and compassion for others.²⁴ Finally, insofar as pentecostals are moved to enact the works of Jesus by the power of the Spirit, their witness will include both prophetic and activist components that confront the injustices of the world and work with others who bear the same witness – both within and without pentecostalism and even the wider Christian community – to promote righteousness, reconciliation, and peace.

Whereas earlier I discussed similar themes under the rubric of a pentecostal theology of inclusion (§1.2), here I am specifically expanding the sphere of those deliberations with regard to the Christian mission to the ends of the earth. If human life cannot be neatly divided into social, political, and religious domains, then how can pentecostal prayer, preaching, and missionary endeavor not engage the socio-political realities of our time? But to do so, I suggest, is to participate in the work of the Spirit who has been poured out for the renewal of the world.

Many Voices: Toward a Renewal Theology of Culture

Focusing on the socio-political arena raises a further matter concerning pentecostal witness: the question of culture. Pentecostal missiologists have long been concerned about this issue, in large part because the largely evangelical approach to missions which has influenced them repeatedly frames the task of Christian mission as that of translating, contextualizing, or applying the gospel in and to different cultural realities. This begs a number of problematic assumptions: that the missionary is ‘in charge’ of the translation, and that those being missionized are passive recipients of the gospel; that we can disentangle the eternal, unchanging, and essential core to the gospel from its first century Jewish Mediterranean context; and that the new vehicles of language and culture in which the gospel is presented are merely ‘accidents’ which do not affect what is translated. More recent pentecostal thinking on culture, however, reveal shifts in several directions.

First, the Pentecost narrative is increasingly understood as anticipating the redemption not only of the diversity of languages but also the diversity of cultures (see Yong 2003a). Language and culture are distinct, but not unrelated, and the gift of many tongues can be understood as the gift of many cultures. This is not to uncritically baptize all that occurs in the many cultures of humankind (more on this momentarily), but it is to affirm that the image of God is both embodied, environmentally rooted, and socio-culturally situated. More important, it provides theological rather than politically correct rationale for embracing cultural diversity, and in so doing anticipates and even hastens the Day of the LORD which will include members from every tribes, languages, peoples, and nations. In this reading, the Day of Pentecost is but a prelude to and a foretaste of what is to come, when the glory and honor of all the nations (Rev. 21:26) will participate in the light of the city of God.

From this starting point, then, emerges the realization that the relationship between gospel and culture is much more dialectical than previously understood. This is not to relativize the gospel, but to acknowledge the ‘hermeneutical spiral’ whereby readers and reading communities receive the gospel in their own terms (languages) but are also simultaneously transformed by the gospel (see Osborne 1991 and Tate 1991). Hence there is a need for what might be called a ‘theologically responsible syncretism’ which is able to be vigilant precisely because of the awareness that we might be able to receive from culture a witness to the gospel.²⁵ From a missiological perspective, however, such a posture flows forth from the ‘principle of indigeneity’ long ago intuited and since

operative in pentecostal discourse.²⁶ In this paradigm, indigenous perspectives, values, and leadership are to be embraced, albeit not uncritically. The many tongues of Pentecost thereby prefigures the capacity of many languages to receive the gospel on the one hand, and to bear its own distinctive witness to the gospel on the other hand.²⁷

Last (for our purposes), but not least, this more pneumatological understanding of culture opens up theological space for pentecostal scholars to engage in the task of formulating a more comprehensive theology of culture. What about pentecostal perspectives on technology, not only with regard to the implications of medical technology for pentecostal healing practices (briefly mentioned above), but also with regard to modern telecommunications which pentecostals have adopted from its earliest moments? What about pentecostal and pneumatological perspectives on music and the arts, both with regard to the centrality of music to pentecostal worship, and with regard to the perennial question concerning the arts as expressing the deepest and most profound sensibilities of the human embodied spirit?²⁸ How do these realities manifest in the wide range of human cultures bear witness, if at all, to the work of the Spirit, and to the gospel of Christ?

These questions are not merely rhetorical. Rather, they are related both to the human quest for truth and to the human need to interact with the world in more truthful ways. With regard to culture, a pneumatological approach increases understanding, enables discernment, and empowers engagement. The renewal of the world includes the renewal of culture and its various domains, including but not limited to the linguistic, the technological, music, and the arts. Not everything in the realm of culture is to be naively received (hence discernment is so essential), but perhaps more will be redeemed and manifest in the kingdom than we realize (hence also the need for a theology of culture that empowers our performative engagement with the various cultural domains).

Many Spirits: Toward a Renewal Theology of Religions

The question of culture is inevitably connected to the question of religion. As I have written at (some would say, exhausting) length about a pneumatological theology of religions elsewhere (see Yong 2000 and Yong 2003b), let me quickly summarize what I see as three of the most important scholarly and theological issues that will continue to demand our attention well into the twenty-first century.

First, pentecostal witness of proclamation, dialogue, and service will (must) continue, but this needs to be sensitive to the complexities of the religiously plural world in a post-9/11 era. Second, the matter of spiritual discernment is as important today as ever, not least because the religious traditions of humankind manifest spiritual realities and potencies (see McDermott 2007), but also (even more importantly) because human religiousness is intertwined with culture, politics, economics, and social life in many ways. But discernment requires paying close attention, most difficult when what is to be discerned is other religious traditions. Finally, while there is as much untruth as truth in the religions (as there is also much untruth in various expressions of Christian faith), they are nevertheless instruments of God that remind us, correct us, and even educate us. But at the theological level, we can no longer be satisfied with superficial descriptions and analyses of other religious traditions. If the complexity of pentecostalism refuses stereotypical clichés and reductionistic explanations, so also do other faiths. Theologies of religions must therefore be engaged with the religions in a sustained manner, seeking thick descriptions and formulating more adequate comparative categories.

I suggest that it is precisely a pneumatological approach to the religions which provides theological (rather than, again, merely politically correct) justification for engaging them on their own terms. Insofar as pentecostals themselves have longed to be heard in their own voices (rather than through the pejorative categorical constructs of others), so also does the Spirit's outpouring on all flesh provide a kind of intersubjective field of encounter whereby neighbors or even strangers can communicate and perhaps even develop friendships. In other words, the pentecostal conviction that the Spirit empowers empathetic witness also enables the kind of hospitality needed for a world of many faiths.²⁹ More simply, pentecostals following after the Spirit will be led, in the appropriate circumstances, to adopt a more dialogical posture which brings with it a concomitant set of hospitable practices.

It is from this vantage point that I speak of a renewal theology of religions. Such a theological orientation renews and transforms Christian understanding and practices vis-à-vis the religions. Further, such a renewal theology opens up avenues of engagement with persons in other faiths which, we might be so bold to believe, will result in their own renewal and transformation, perhaps even the renewal and transformation of their religious traditions. Finally, a renewal theology of religions believes that nothing, not even the religions, is excluded from the redemptive power of God who has poured out his Spirit to renew the whole world.

RENEWED AND ALWAYS TO BE RENEWED: PERFORMING RENEWAL THEOLOGY

I have attempted in this paper to map some trajectories of pentecostal research and scholarship, especially in terms related to the centrality of pneumatology in pentecostal theological discourse. A few summary comments are imperative. First, world pentecostalism is neither monolithic nor static; insofar as its various traditions continue to evolve, and so will pentecostal theology remain fluid and dynamic. Second, rather than being definitive in any respect, the preceding is programmatic in the extreme; it attempts to survey various scholarly projects, provide in some ways a ‘state of the question’, and identify fruitful trajectories for further research. Third, pentecostal theology can never be merely cognitive or creedal theology, but must also be spiritual, affective, and pragmatic theology; hence the preceding is not only descriptive, but also prescriptive insofar as it stakes out various paths of engagement and invites – or should I say, ‘commands’(!) – ‘walk therefore in it’. Yet, fourth, it should be recognized that the research program sketched here is rather idealized; there is much work to be done and it still may be another generation or so before some of the tasks identified above are taken up. And, fifth, pentecostal scholars and researchers should thus realize that any progress on any of these fronts will require collaboration and dialogue with collaborators wherever they may be found. In short, pentecostal scholarship and theology cannot afford to be triumphalistic. The boldness of the research program presented here is tempered by the realization that its unfolding and fruitfulness depends on the legacy, ongoing input, and corrective lenses of the church catholic, the (theological) academy, and the wider society.

For these (and other) reasons, pentecostal theology can be said to be ‘renewal theology’. It is not static, but is renewed and always being renewed (hopefully, by the Holy Spirit). Further, it is open to future encounters, to unseen horizons, to unexpected visitations of God’s breath. Finally, as I have attempted to argue, pentecostal theology is itself a speech-act through which pentecostals believe they are empowered to engage in the Spirit’s work of renewal in the church, in the theological academy, and in the world. These domains are distinct, but not separate, because of the Spirit who has been poured out on all flesh.³⁰

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The definitive work so far is Robeck, Jr. 2006.
- ² In this essay I use (capitalized) ‘Pentecostal’ and (uncapitalized) ‘pentecostal’ (and their cognates) distinctively. The former refers to the classical Pentecostal churches with roots in the Azusa Street revival, while the latter includes these along with the charismatic renewal movements and the more recent independent charismatic churches in the global south; cf. Yong 2005e:18-21.
- ³ For histories set in this more global perspective, see Hollenweger 1997, and Anderson 2004.
- ⁴ Those familiar with Tracy 1981 will recognize that my three spheres of renewal correlate with his three publics of theological engagement. Of course, none of these spheres (publics) are strictly separable from the other two. For purposes of discussion, however, we will focus on each in order.
- ⁵ In one sense, this essay can be considered a sequel to Stibbe 1993. Present trajectories in ‘renewal theology’ as mapped in the following pages can be said to have expanded in multiple directions from the biblical scholarship that dominated the period preceding Stibbe’s analysis.
- ⁶ The late James W. McClendon, Jr., made a similar claim regarding the Anabaptists who identified the ‘this’ of their experiences with the ‘that’ of the New Testament accounts. The peculiarity of the pentecostal claim is the specificity of its focus on the book of Acts. For more on McClendon’s Anabaptist project, see Yong 2002b.
- ⁷ Throughout this essay, my touch point for modern pentecostalism is the Azusa Street revival. I realize that any simplistic assumption that equates this revival with the origins of modern pentecostalism is problematic (see the works cited in footnote 3 above). However, as pentecostal raised in part and trained in North America, I can only theologize from out of the particularities of my local history and context. Hence Azusa Street serves in some ways as a paradigm for my thinking pentecostally. Note, though, that this is only *one* paradigmatic approach. Others can be drawn upon, and, as I hope to show, local paradigms are only as powerful as their capacity to illuminate global concerns and trajectories.
- ⁸ So much so that the main emphases of the charismatic renewal movement were quickly absorbed into the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church; see, e.g., O’Connor 1978.
- ⁹ The threefold distinction derives from Hunter 1996:18. For more on the idea of a charismatic ecclesiology, see Kärkkäinen 2002a, ch. 6.
- ¹⁰ All biblical quotations, unless otherwise noted, derive from the New Revised Standard Version.
- ¹¹ On the role of women, see, e.g., Brusco 1995; on black pentecostalism in North America, see Sanders 1996; on pentecostalism as the church to which ‘the poor and oppressed (the *minjung*) flock for relief’, see Anderson 2003 (quote from p. 103), and Volf 1989.
- ¹² On justification in pneumatological and renewal perspective, see Macchia 2000; on a pneumatological and renewal theology of the liturgy, see Yong 2005e, §§3.3.2 and 3.3.3; on pentecostalism and eschatology, see Faupel 1996b.
- ¹³ For superb commentary of the Pentecost narrative along these lines, see Welker 1994:230-35.

- ¹⁴ I develop the idea of the pneumatological imagination in Yong 2002a, esp. Part II.
- ¹⁵ For pentecostal perspectives on the history of Christianity, see Robeck 1992, Robeck 1985, and Burgess 1986.
- ¹⁶ See the editorial by Dempster 1993, as well as the three articles following.
- ¹⁷ On the role of the Spirit in hermeneutics, see Pinnock 1993a and Pinnock 1993b; see also Stronstad 1995.
- ¹⁸ For how the ‘renewal hermeneutic’ approaches the Bible and is itself shaped by the reading of Scripture, see McQueen 1995, ch. 5.
- ¹⁹ The biblical proverb, ‘in an abundance of counsellors there is safety’ (Prov. 11:14), further supports this epistemological conviction.
- ²⁰ Is not the *ruah* of the Lord also the Spirit of God? See Gelpi 1984, esp. 9-12.
- ²¹ Porterfield 2005, ch. 7, discusses pentecostal healing in the context of modern science (see esp. pp. 168-74).
- ²² James K. A. Smith (Calvin College) and I are co-directing a new research initiative on ‘Science and the Spirit: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Science/Religion Dialogue’ (see <http://www.calvin.edu/scs/scienceandspirit/> for details); cf. Yong 2005c.
- ²³ On Pentecostal pacifism, see Shuman 1996 and Alexander 2002. On Latino Pentecostal activism and theology, see Busto 2005 and Villafaña 1992. On Afropentecostal theology, see Beckford 2000 and Cruz 2005. On pentecostal social ethics, see Macchia 1993 and Dempster 1999.
- ²⁴ This is the point of Solivan 1998.
- ²⁵ For more on ‘theologically responsible syncretism’, see Hollenweger 1997, ch. 11; cf. also Sepúlveda 1997.
- ²⁶ The principle of indigeneity was developed by Hodges 1957.
- ²⁷ On the translatability of the gospel, see Sanneh 1989, and on the capacity of culture to bear distinctive witness to the gospel out of its own resources, see Tarr 1994.
- ²⁸ On the former matter, see, e.g. McIntyre 1976 and Becker 2004, esp. pp. 97-100; on the latter, see Sherry 1992 and Gorringer 2001.
- ²⁹ The theme of hospitality is central in a recent World Council of Churches working document on theology of religions (2005); see also Yong (forthcoming).
- ³⁰ Thanks first to Michael Bergunder and Jörg Haustein and their staff for their work in organizing the Heidelberg Workshop on Pneumatology, inviting my participation, and hosting my visit with graciousness and style. I appreciate the comments received from the Workshop audience, and the formal response to my paper by Prof. Bergunder. I am grateful also to my Regent colleague, Wolfgang Vondey, and to my research assistant, Chris Emerick, for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. The paper is improved because of all this input, but its flaws remain, of course, my own.

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