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Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern

Part I

For the next two editions, we will embark on an interesting journey down a road that, from where I sit, far too few Pentecostal scholars in the Asia Pacific have been willing to go: the development of a Pentecostal theology of social concern. With the continued growth of the church in the majority world, I believe that this issue will substantially impact the future of global Pentecostalism. Pentecostal social concern was the theme of the 21st Annual APTS William W. Menzies Lectureship Series, which we hosted on the Baguio campus from February 4-8, 2013, under the title “The Gospel of Good News: Word, Deed and Power.” Dr. Doug Petersen from Vanguard University (Assemblies of God), in Southern California was the keynote speaker. Dr. Joel Tejedro and Dr. V.J. D-Davidson were among those that also presented papers. Dr. Petersen’s lectures and these papers constitute this edition of the Journal.

Joel Tejedro’s article is an excellent example of the Pentecostal praxis of social concern. He opens with the case study of Jun Somera, a Filipino born into poverty who became a successful businessman through faith in God and a strong, disciplined work ethic. Tejedro then goes on to profile other Filipino businesspeople, who are passionate followers of Jesus and who integrate their faith into their chosen profession.

The first of Doug Petersen’s lectures, co-authored by his friend and former colleague, Dr. Murray Dempster, deals with personal redemption and transformation that is solidly rooted in Paul’s theology of the cross (Colossians 2:13-15). In the second and third lectures, which are combined here under the title “Kingdom Rules: Upside Down Discipleship,” Petersen contends that social concern impacts and informs virtually every major doctrine in the Bible. Here, he deals with God’s righteous reign and argues his case from within the Jewish culture of Palestine. In first century Israel, like civilizations the world over throughout history, the rich and politically powerful oppressed the poor. Using Mark’s narrative, Petersen compares this situation with the ethical demands of the Kingdom of God that are, to say the least,

countercultural both then and now. Petersen holds that, according to Mark, success in the Kingdom would be defined by service to the poor and disinherited, not by grasping for wealth or power.

In Petersen's final article, he lays out three challenges for Pentecostals regarding social concern: "the emergence of a Pentecostal hermeneutic, further development of an essential connectedness between social action and the biblical text, and the importance of establishing and maintaining healthy, fair, and equal relationships within the community of faith." A Pentecostal hermeneutic, which Petersen draws from his extensive involvement in Latin America, is drawn from the grassroots of how the poor read the Bible and apply it to their daily lives. In his second challenge, he articulates that God is at the center of both the biblical text and Pentecostal social action. The truth that people were created in the image of God calls for us to treat all men and women with dignity and respect—living out the ethics of the Kingdom of God daily. The third challenge relates to being the Body of Christ on earth. This command, according to Petersen, transcends social norms, especially social status, which is often determined by race, social position and the level of one's wealth or poverty. To Petersen, the ground at the foot of the cross is level, reflecting God's love for all men equally. When Pentecostal churches and believers function as God intended, the heart of biblical social concern is achieved.

V. J. D-Davidson's article focuses on intimacy with God and its impact on daily life as an expression of the gospel in word, deed and power. The author contends that intimacy with God is an aspect of Pentecostal spirituality that is often overlooked and overshadowed by the ongoing debate among Pentecostal and Charismatic scholars on *glossalalia*. But for Davidson, nurturing and maintaining intimacy with God is a focal point in our relationship with God. Enhanced intimacy with God leads to increased sensitivity to others with the result that we will express the Good News to others in word, deed and power—Pentecostal social concern.

Feel free to write me through our website, www.apt.edu.

Thanks for reading,

David M. Johnson, D-Miss
Managing Editor

THE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF FILIPINO
PENTECOSTALS: A CASE OF SELECTED ASSEMBLIES OF GOD
BUSINESS PEOPLE IN THE PHILIPPINES

Joel A. Tejado

INTRODUCTION

As a way of introduction to the case of selected Assemblies of God business people in the Philippines, let me start by sharing the story of Florentino “Jun” Somera, a faithful Pentecostal believer, who is currently serving as an elder of an Assemblies of God church and is the current Director of Agriculture in the municipality of Mallig, Isabela, Philippines. During his childhood, Somera dreamed of being a successful engineer. But Jun’s family was poor and when his father died while he was still young; accomplishing his dream became much more difficult. He was eighth of ten children and his widowed mother had no resources to support her children in school. Accepting these hardships as his driving force to reach his goal in life, he utilized his talents and skills to get out of poverty. In doing so, he acquired the virtues of learning, hard work and discipline.

During college, he worked as a student in a drafting office, where he learned to draw and paint. He also often worked as a tricycle driver or sold *pandesal* (a popular type of bread) along the streets in Mallig, Isabela. He disciplined himself by supplying “his needs only and restricting his wants” in order to sufficiently provide his five basic needs, namely: food, livelihood, education, shelter, and health. With his initiative and the collective contribution of his siblings, he completed his BS in Agriculture in Isabela and eventually was employed as the Agricultural Cooperative Development Officer of the Department of Interior and Local Government of Mallig, Isabela (DILG). He then served as one of the organizers of the cooperative organizations in

Region 2. It was during his college days that he met the Lord through his wife, who was then his friend.

During the early stage of his employment, he aimed to earn money, which was the second among his four financial objectives to: learn, earn, save and invest. He believes that people will do one of three things with their money: save, invest, or spend. Being a saver at that time, he spent his money on important things, believing that money is just like a seed that should be planted in good soil in order to produce seeds for replanting. He articulated his financial equation (income - savings = expenses) in order to formulate his own income statement and paid attention to the value of savings. So while working as a government employee, he started saving and investing his small resources by raising pigs with an initial capital of \$77.00. He then multiplied this capital, which grew to \$800.00 in 1983. After saving some money, he decided to invest his money in a good farm, believing that there is money in agriculture. Armed with the skills and “know-how” in agriculture and his principles of SAPAE (Survey, Analyze, Plan, Action, and Evaluate) in investing, he reinvested the profits of his farm into buying agricultural land until he was able to secure thirty five hectares of rice fields that produced an income of \$700,000.00 per year. He invested some of his money in 1986 in the First Cooperative Bank (FICOBANK) and became a major stockholder. He later served as one of its directors.

He acknowledges, however, that farming, like other businesses, has risks involved, such as pests, natural calamities, and price fluctuations. Thus, he always diversified his “portfolio” by putting his resources in other investments. So in addition to his rice fields, he produced coconuts, fruit bearing trees, root crops, a piggery and fish ponds on his property. He made sure that the quality of his investments ensured increasing productivity. Thus, he utilized certified seeds that increased the success rates of cropping.

In addition to his success in business, he aspired to an ethical lifestyle of honesty, integrity and the fear of the Lord. In his business engagements, he maintained excellent relationships with his employees. When asked how he managed his employees, he simply answered, “Trust, honesty, and confidence.” Given his generous heart, he ensured that his employees received incentives and rewards for their achievements and industry. In 2007, Somera became a two-term chairman of the Board of FICOBANK and was given an award as the outstanding agriculturist of the Philippines. At the age of 57, he has not stopped learning and has continued pursuing his Doctoral Studies in

Development. His children, who are all God-fearing, now manage his resources with his trusted employees.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pentecostal economics is a theory or system of management of resources by Spirit-filled Christians that describes the production, distribution and consumption of resources at the service of individual or community well-being. The challenge of globalization that increasingly permeates the socio-economic landscape critically raises an important question as to how Pentecostal mission translates its witness in the globalized economic world (Klaus 2012). More than fifteen years ago, Harvey Cox predicted that Pentecostals would fit well in the 21st century because Pentecostals are able to indigenize their witness locally and globally (Cox 1995). Such outstanding achievement of Pentecostals in the 21st century requires a critical reflection of how Pentecostals develop their witness to the evangelization of economics. Sociologist David Martin of the London School of Economics points out that although Pentecostalism is a product of marginalized religion, often overlooked by the larger religious sectors, Pentecostals prevailed by interjecting their faith and spirituality in society. Martin adds that Pentecostals are creatively resourceful and innovatively translate their conversion in the production of common good and the betterment of life (Martin 2006, 18-38).

A similar observation made by Donald Miller points out that Pentecostals “have a strong entrepreneurial drive that has resulted in major religious realignments as well as profound social, cultural and economic changes” (Sato 2010). According to Miller, “Some of the most creative faith-based programs in the world are being developed by fast-growing Pentecostal and charismatic congregations — both Protestant and Catholic” (Miller 2012). In his survey, he finds that Pentecostals “are partnering with NGOs [non-governmental organizations] on various kinds of economic development projects, particularly micro-credit loans that start small businesses within the community” (Miller). This observation is quite similar to the observation of Jenkins and Sergeant that Pentecostalism “is one of the most dynamic and potentially transformative religious movements in the 21st century,” yet “it has never received the attention it deserves in the academia as a whole and in teaching” (Miller).

An empirical study done by Akoko Robert reveals that Pentecostals have an important theology to contribute to the economic well-being of a society based on their doctrine of prosperity. Based on

his findings, Pentecostal churches started to grow when the issues they faced from economic exploitation would be addressed promptly by Pentecostal leaders through preaching biblical economics (Robert 2002, 259-376). A recent survey of Pentecostals in ten countries by Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reveals that most Pentecostals believe “that God will grant material prosperity to all believers who have enough faith” (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2006). This is of course rejected by some Pentecostal scholars because of the excessiveness of prosperity theology in the movement. Thus, the task to formulate a Pentecostal theology of economics that is faithful to the biblical tradition and to what Pentecostals believe and practice is a coherent and an important aspect of Pentecostal theology in the 21st century. Scholarly debates on how to frame a Pentecostal doctrine of economics argue that it should be based on four frameworks: distinctive doctrine, value ethics, models, and praxis (Robert 2002:361; Hunt 2011).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methods used for this study are a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches of enquiry. Using a guided questionnaire that fleshes out the ways and forms of Pentecostal economic participation, this study was carried out through in-depth personal interviews of prominent and distinguished Filipino Pentecostal business people, visiting them in their homes and business sites. In some cases, group dynamics and lively conversations among Pentecostal believers engaged in business were utilized in this study. As a result, this study analyzes the economic framework practiced and developed by Filipino Pentecostals based on what they believe as Pentecostal believers.

Research Participants

The respondents of this study are all Filipino Pentecostal business people; ten of them are male and thirteen are female. The majority of them are serving as deacons and elders in their respective local churches, but some of them are bi-vocational; they are business people who at the same time serve as pastors. Others, however, are faithful members of the local church. Most of these business people have completed their graduate and postgraduate studies. A few of them have only completed their elementary and secondary education. Based on the data, the majority of the Pentecostal business people have served

in the church for sixteen years or more. The data shows that the respondents are mature members in the local church and have been involved in the ministry for many years. Only a few of them have served less than fifteen years. The majority of the respondents are business proprietors. Some are employed in a company or by the government and at the same time are self-employed or own some businesses (see Appendix 1 for full biographical data).

Given the theoretical and empirical component of this study, I will strongly argue that Filipino Pentecostals are developing an economic participation that contributes to the well-being of local communities. To prove this, I will present case studies of individuals and company businesses owned by Filipino Pentecostals who are making a significant contribution to the creation of common good and well-being of individuals and communities.

An important component of this study is to construct a biblical theology of economics based on a Pentecostal perspective. I will argue in this study that the Pentecostal movement has a legitimate basis for their economic practice by virtue of their theology of creation, redemption, and pneumatic theology of the Holy Spirit. Since poverty and corruption are still the major blockade of development for Filipinos, this study encourages Filipino Pentecostals to be economically responsible, translating their witness into the production of common good of the society.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Conversion to Christ

When asked how they came to a personal relationship with God, the majority response of Filipino Pentecostal business people shows that their conversion started at home through the godly influence of their parents, peers or spiritual leaders who brought them to God. Conversion occurred in many ways, like personal evangelism, a crisis situation or friendship network with other Christians. One respondent, who owns a hotel, said,

I was saved through the help of my wife and our Pastor. They encouraged me to get closer to God. As I fought through life's trials, I never gave up my faith in Him. He is the only resort when I have problems that I can hardly solve. There is peace in Him, and I never fail to thank Him for my

everyday life, even in my busiest days. Prayer for me is very important (Espejo 2011).

Basic Christian discipleship and value formation are highly valued by the respondents as important components that shape their values and perspectives in life. Most of the respondents are products of non-formal and formal discipleship at home or in church during the early stage of their lives. Homes were important places to discover their calling in life. The influence of (or example set by) their parents became a paradigm shift to experience personal change and transformation. At the heart of this, love for God and for their neighbors was instilled at the early stage of their lives. This study shows that the drive to excel and succeed came from the virtues they acquired from other people who influenced their lives. The ability to pursue excellence comes through dramatic spiritual conversion and discipleship process.

Experiences of Poverty

The sting of poverty became the dominating influence that drove Filipino Pentecostal business people to strive and excel in life. Poverty is the root cause of many problems in the world. Poverty is characterized by hunger, broken homes and families, poor health, low income, and poor shelter. Poverty comes in many ways such as unemployment, poor educational systems, bankruptcy in business, sickness, results of war and alienation from families. When people have nothing, faith and trust in God are essential for not losing hope and keeping their dreams alive.

The role of education and wise management of resources are pivotal and important tools of personal empowerment for releasing oneself from poverty. Some respondents in this study did not experience the effects of poverty because of the industry of their own parents or, at the early stage, they learned to be wise and thrifty with the resources they had. Now that they are successful, they think they are called by God to fight for the rights of the poor and the oppressed.

The respondents were not quick to suggest that working overseas can be a potential tool to get out of poverty. But rather, there is a strong suggestion from these Filipino Pentecostal business people that in order to succeed we have to develop local skills and resources that are available as a tool for economic well-being. Cooperation and family solidarity is crucial to building one's life. As one respondent

said, after her parents died, she and her siblings had to help one another succeed in life. They learned to be responsible for themselves and use whatever they had to survive and succeed. One respondent testified:

I was born into a poor family. So I need to work while studying when I was a child. I used to go to the farm with my parents to help them with their work. When I grew bigger I worked in a shoe company, tailoring and driving. Driving was my work before I put up a business. So from childhood, I've been working in order to live. Even though I learned how to accept the life I have, I am not angry with life because I believe everyone has a chance to improve his/her life in God's time (Baluan 2011).

Spirituality and Economics

With respect to the relationship of Christian spirituality to economic well-being, the respondents are quick to suggest that prayer is a gateway to personal and economic growth. Filipino Pentecostal business people believe that when we call out to God, he answers us. Prayer is the best weapon, and often prayer is the avenue to receive wisdom in their business undertakings. Developing a deep personal relationship with God only comes through prayer.

The value of prayer for the respondents creates a hunger for God's presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is instrumental in experiencing a deeper grace from God. It was because of prayer that some of the respondents received the power of the Holy Spirit. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is perceived as power, but the impact of this power is holistic in its nature. In other words, while Filipino Pentecostal respondents subscribe to the belief that this power enables us to actualize the mission of Jesus on earth, this power is the same power that enables us to create wealth and resources for the Kingdom of God.

Most respondents read the Bible regularly for personal empowerment. The word of God builds lives and communities. At the same time, it is a source of wisdom. As one of the respondents puts it, "the word of God is rich in providing business principles." The concept of witness for the respondents is not limited to the verbal proclamation of the gospel, but it can be practically demonstrated by the creation of common good in the community.

Theological Basis of Creating Wealth and Resources

Almost all the respondents acknowledge the power of God's word in providing wisdom and business principles in their own business. While only a few of the respondents have been theologically trained, there are emerging theological patterns that are obvious in their statements. First, while respondents recognize the importance of faith and trust in God, they believe that, as children of God, we should be models of industry and honesty in our work. One respondent who bases his business principles on the parable of the talents pointed out that all of us have been given individual talents to use. We should seek to develop them in order to that we might grow and become productive. Work, according to the respondents, is both commended and commanded by God, who exemplified working during the six days of creation. In the same manner, God commanded that the community of His people must work for a living. Resting is the result of working. Laziness and covetousness are condemned by the respondents.

The respondents also believe that the poor would not experience poverty if they were industrious and used whatever available resources they had to succeed. Investing one's resources in a worthwhile business project is highly suggested by the respondents. The respondents believe that wealth and resources should be replicated and produce an increase. A Pentecostal believer owning thirty-five hectares of rice fields in Isabela pointed out that "replication" or reinvesting the profits of your business will guarantee success and productivity (De Leon 2011, 2).

The respondents are quick to suggest that saving wealth and resources has an abundance of references in the Bible. The respondents believe that Pentecostals must save their resources wisely. Three theological bases are suggested by the respondents: (1) Christians must learn a lesson from the frugality of the ant, which saves its own resources while working during summer time; (2) The example of Jesus in saving the leftovers after He fed the five thousand was also mentioned by the respondents as a basis of biblical savings; and (3) The principle of wise saving for the work of the Kingdom of God is encouraged by the respondents, in contrast to saving for self-aggrandizement and self-gratification.

Giving is highly valued by the respondents. The majority of the respondents encourage God's people to share their resources with the Kingdom of God. One respondent believes that giving ten percent

of her income is the secret of her success in business. Another respondent acknowledges that wealth is a gift from God, and therefore it should be used in the work of the Lord.

There came a time in my younger years when my parents had financial problems because my father resigned as an employee. It was a big decision for my parents because my father wanted to start his own business. He believed that through hard work he could succeed. My father is a Christian by birth. He has a cousin who was a missionary who helped him introduce the principle of Malachi 3:10. That helped him religiously share the blessings he got from his business. In return, God has been very generous to us until now (Menoza 2011).

There are limitations on giving, however, especially when the receivers become dependent and stifle initiative. Giving is not only limited to providing money, but it also includes information and knowledge, technological skills, or training and opportunities.

Business Development and Processes

Education is always the starting point of a successful career in business. Although not all the respondents have completed higher education, they believe that business is an art that should be learned. The respondents of this study value personal and professional development the most. They are avid followers of new trends in business. They are not afraid to utilize new information and technologies to upgrade and expand their businesses.

Experience or business immersion is another prevailing suggestion among the respondents. Many business ventures were developed before the respondents were able to receive the fruit and products of their labor. Almost all the respondents admit that they started from scratch, but because they employed an innovative spirit at the early stage of their business careers, they were able to make their businesses grow. One of the respondents said,

From Manila where my husband had been based, we came home to Isabela, and with the little money he got selling his share of a business, we went to Mallig, Isabela and started a dry goods store, which eventually evolved into a rice and corn business. We even became a tobacco dealer. Life was hard back then, but with a lot of perseverance and thriftiness,

we were able to save enough to give our children a good education. Later on we also dealt in pesticides (Jesusa Uy 2011).

Filipino Pentecostal business people highly recommend basic fundamental principles of economic well-being by encouraging Christian believers to foster a hard-working spirit. Work is both commended and commanded by God. It was God who modeled working. God himself is a working God. When the Torah was given on Mt. Sinai, God stipulated that Israel must work for six days and rest on the seventh day. It is from this idea that Filipino Pentecostal believers in the business world suggest that Pentecostals must be a working people. Another respondent noted:

Pentecostal economics is closely connected with the work of God. The respondents acknowledged the divine mission of one's resources in the work of God.

We started selling Baguio vegetables. We worked hard and our business grew. Then we went into the business of foreign currency exchange. Later, we added a funeral home service. We are thankful for honest people that we hired because they showed the same concern with our business. Our business succeeded because of them. Most of all, we recognized that God has given us our business for a purpose, and so we are glorifying him by investing some of our resources in God's mission by providing scholarship assistance to Bible School students and ministers. We believe this is the reason God has blessed us (Luz Villaloboz 2011).

Economic Values

The concept of work is closely linked to man's responsibility as the steward of creation, according to the respondents. A human being is created to work and contribute to the well-being of their communities. We work to survive, earn, and make a profit for our future. The respondents believe that Christians should develop a strong work ethic. We have to be honest and trustworthy in the market place. Work is a part of worship that should be enjoyed as a gift and blessing from God. Christians who enjoy working will make themselves a channel of blessings, and it will keep them out of trouble.

Aware of the teaching of Jesus on the parable of the talents, Filipino Pentecostals believe that we should learn the art of investing resources in a worthwhile project that will increase our resources. Investing one's resources in a good project can create employment and alleviate poverty. Investment can increase your income and secure your future for the sustenance of your family. In relation to the church, one respondent encourages God's people to invest because it is difficult to work actively in the ministry with an empty stomach or a weak and unhealthy body. Filipino Pentecostal business people also encourage God's people to invest in religious projects, such as the building schools, charitable organizations, and church planting projects. What is not acceptable to them is using their money for immoral and illegal purposes. Overall, the respondents have a high level of understanding of the advantages of investing our wealth and resources for the Kingdom of God.

With respect to how we perceive and handle money, the respondents suggest that money should be invested in worthwhile projects that will rebound for the benefit of all. Since wealth is a gift from God, it should be used properly. As one respondent put it, "Do not let money control you, but you will be the one to control money." The respondents acknowledge that wealth owned by God's people must produce righteousness and common good. One said:

Wealth may refer to knowledge, position and possessions. It is a gift from God. Whether we are born wealthy or not, we need to use it properly. We may use it to gain friends. Wealth can become our master, but don't let it rule our lives. Use it wisely instead. Use it to be more capable of serving the Lord. Share it with people who are in need, and the Lord will bless us more (Francisco 2011).

When it is handled inappropriately, money creates multiple problems. The respondents are aware of the negative influence of money and condemn the use of it for prostitution or gambling. While the respondents perceive wealth as temporary, there is a high level of perception from the respondents that money is powerful and it can be an instrument for the production of common good. The respondents believe that money should first of all provide the basic necessities of a family. But money can also produce the development of quality education and information, jobs and employment, and empowerment of charitable organizations. God owns our wealth; we are only stewards of

it, according to the prevailing perceptions of Filipino Pentecostal business people.

Business as Mission

When asked the purpose of business, the respondents highly acknowledge that wealth and resources are gifts from God, and those who have been gifted in creating wealth and resources must recognize their spiritual mission. The respondents believe that wealth should primarily be used for the production of common good, especially for the expansion of God's mission on earth. The respondents are quick to suggest that their business was given by God for the well-being of their own families. They also recognize the missiological implications of wealth by acknowledging that wealth and resources should be used to help the poor, provide jobs for the unemployed, and most of all, to bring people to Jesus Christ.

God gave me this business because I think He wants me to help to some people. Through the business I have helped others by giving them work, especially those who cannot find a job because of lack of education. A degree of education is not required in our company. People who can do the hard work and have good health are being hired. Maybe that's my mission in life – to help others (Reyes 2011).

For the church, wealth and resources should be used to support the ministry of pastors and churches. Since the mission of the church is to propagate the gospel to other parts of the world, the respondents highly suggest the giving of resources for missions. The respondents also believe that Christians must take seriously the needs of the whole person. The gospel has the power to bring the whole person into healing and wholeness, which includes spiritual, social, economic and political well-being. Christians must be reminded that the redemptive work of Jesus is focused on the redemption of the whole person and the whole creation. The respondents also believe that Christian business people should be driven by biblical ethics. The ethics of love, transparency, and honesty in work can serve as a counter-culture for rich people that exploit the poor.

Implications and Recommendations

Despite the importance of economic resources in the expansion of the rule of God and its explicit relevance in the teaching of the Bible, it appears that the authority to teach moral economics has been given to secular experts who are knocking at the door of our local churches. Based on the observations above, this study suggests first that Filipino Pentecostals must examine and come up with a biblical doctrine of economics that should be integrated in our Sunday school classes, Bible studies and the curricula of Pentecostal Bible Schools.

Second, while Filipino Pentecostals believe in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, this empowerment should not be limited only to the verbal proclamation of the gospel. It should also be translated into the betterment of life.

Third, because Filipino Pentecostals emphasize obedience to the Great Commission by sending missionaries to open and restricted countries, Pentecostals must disciple their members to produce economic resources that support the mission of God. On the other hand, missionaries who will be sent out should not be afraid to utilize business as a way of reaching the lost. The increasing popularization of business as an instrument for mission must be integrated as an important component of mission strategy in reaching the lost.

Fourth, because Filipino Pentecostals are often perceived as socially irresponsible people, Pentecostals must be more socially and economically responsible. Pentecostals must learn the art of self-reliance and self-supporting ministry. Based on the study, there are increasing observations that Pentecostals, compared to the general population, know the “hows” of economic development. They are not ignorant or left behind with respect to knowledge and information about economic development. Evidence reveals that they believe in continuing education, creativity, and innovation in creating wealth and resources. The perceived assumption that Pentecostals have a too “other-worldly mentality” is inconclusive and does not necessarily apply to economic development. There is a growing suggestion from Pentecostals that what they are doing in the present world is a physical testimony that a time will come when God rules over all creation.

Conclusion

This study lays out the contention that Filipino Pentecostals have an important role in the shaping of moral economics, and they have the potential to make a contribution to the economic development of local communities. We find that Filipino Pentecostal business people are marked by industry and innovativeness in the areas of investment and accumulation of their resources. This study demonstrates that the way they do economics is in the direction of the production of common good. Thus, the task of formulating a Filipino Pentecostal theology of moral economics has started. Filipino Pentecostal believers, by virtue of their rich spiritual theology and praxis of ministry, must translate this witness into the production of economic well-being for their people and communities.

REDEMPTION AND TRANSFORMATION:
A THEOLOGY OF NEW LIFE "IN CHRIST"

Douglas Petersen and Murray Dempster

Ideally, the gospel should change people. In reality, a gap exists between ideal behavior and what churches actually practice. Paul wrote to try to bridge the gap between the ideal and the real, and that bridge is the theological foundation for all ethical instruction.

The formation of Paul's theology is grounded in his conversion on the Damascus Road: the forgiveness of sins and new life "in Christ." The formation of the moral virtues of character is the consequence of being "in Christ."

The centrality of the cross, the resurrection, and especially Paul's conversion, are the foundational pillars in the formation of his theology. Paul was not a doctrinaire, except about the cross. The success of mission and our ability to exemplify the essence of hope to the world depends on us getting this right.

The Damascus Road Conversion (from Saul to Paul)
Acts 9:3-17: The Formation of Paul's Theology

In Paul's testimony, he singled out one fact from his former life: He persecuted the church. (Phil 3:6; Gal. 1-13; I Cor. 15:9). Why? What was Paul's rationale?¹

The announcement by Jesus' followers that that Jesus, an executed criminal, was the Messiah was inconceivable to Jews like Paul. Since the Jews believed that a criminal "hanged upon a tree" was cursed by God (Deut. 21:23), they abhorred the claim that the crucified Jesus was the resurrected Lord. For Paul, as a devout Pharisee and Jew, Jesus was simply a cursed criminal.

¹ I follow Luke Timothy Johnson very closely here.

Furthermore, Paul did not think of himself as a terrible sinner. He kept the law and treated the Torah—law of Moses, Prophets, and other OT writings—as the absolute norm for measuring human and divine righteousness. Paul persecuted the church because he was "jealous" for Torah. So Paul's conversion story is found in the context of his zealous persecution of Christians as a righteous Jew.

At this time, the most fundamental tenant of Judaism was "Yahweh is ONE GOD... the Lord our God is One Lord." This radical monotheism made the Christian confession that "JESUS IS LORD," a particularly odious heresy to Saul. Paul writes, "I was as zealous, a persecutor of the Church." Since he desired to spread his reign of terror, he went to the High Priest and received the proper documents to go to Damascus and bring back any disciples—man, woman or child—for trial and execution.

Paul's meeting with the resurrected Lord changed everything. On the way to Damascus, he is knocked off his donkey to the ground . . . suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.⁴

The crucial part of this text for understanding the formation of Paul's theology is found in Saul's inquiry for the identification of the heavenly source of his encounter.

Paul heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Paul: "Who are you, Lord?" To his astonishment the answer came back, "I am Jesus who you are persecuting." The light went on in a flash. He reasoned, "If God raised Christ, then God could not have cursed him for his *own* sin, but for others'. Right standing before God must be based on justification through Jesus Christ.

Paul then connected his basic Jewish confession, the Lord God is One Lord, with his newfound confession, "Jesus is Lord," which for Paul, was the same as confessing "Jesus is *Yahweh*"!

After his Damascus Road experience, Paul was taken to Ananias' house and his sight was restored. The story of his conversion from Saul to Paul culminates with, "immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God. . . and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ" (9:20-22).

Paul regarded the new age as having begun with the resurrection and Jesus not simply as the Jewish Messiah, but as a "new Adam," the start of a "new creation." The Gentile mission then was grounded in Jesus' resurrection as Lord of all humanity.

These are formative ideas in Paul's theology: Jesus is Lord/Jesus is the Christ. For Paul, Jesus is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Theology Illustrated: Images from Colossians 2:13-15

People are dead in sin and there is absolutely nothing they can do about it. They are as powerless as dead people to break the chains of condemnation! Paul, a wonderful preacher, seeks to find images that would show how completely God in His mercy through Christ destroyed, banished, and indeed wiped out the condemnation against us. He offers two of the great image pictures in the New Testament.

His first picture is an execution. In the ancient world, the indictment against a criminal was nailed to the tree on which he was crucified. Our sins are written out like an IOU—signed by the debtor admitting the sin. There is an indictment against us and we have admitted that the charge is true, in effect our own death warrant. But, God blots it out, wipes the slate clean as though it had never been. In his amazing grace, God erases the judgment and it no longer exists.

God then takes the indictment and sets it aside—double nullification—and He nails it to the cross of Christ. The practice in the ancient world was to nail the indictment against the victim to the cross. The indictment against Jesus was nailed to the cross above his head. Similarly, Paul reminds his readers that the indictment against us was itself crucified.

Paul's second picture of how Christ destroyed the condemnation against us was the triumphal parade of a Roman general on his return from battle. The victorious general marches through the city with his soldiers and behind them—the spoils of war—a wretched company of kings, leaders and people he has conquered.

Because of conversion, Jesus has stripped the powers and authorities, made them His captives and put them to shame. In Jesus' triumphant procession all the powers of evil are present for everyone to see, conquered forever. Paul's vivid picture is a vision of the total adequacy of Christ. Sin is forgiven; evil is conquered. Christ is sufficient. That is the plan that God had for us "before the foundation of this world."

Paul views conversion as the distinctive religious experience, a transformation experience foundational to the emphasis in his letters. He focuses on the risen Jesus and the importance of life "in Christ," which is illustrated by treasure in jars of clay (2 Cor. 4:2).

For Paul, theology was proclaiming what God had done for the believing community through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This proclamation is what it means to have new life "in Christ."

**Ephesians – New life “in Christ:”
The Basis of Character Formation**

For Paul, conversion, the consequence of Christ’s transforming power, meant to live “in Christ.” As a teacher of the early Christian communities, Paul’s “thought” was formed in response to real-life problems. He was a radical thinker, reconciling social opposites. The problems that Paul faced in the new communities, however, tended to involve cognitive dissonance – a situation created when reality does not agree with expectations.

Ideally, the gospel should change people so they could overcome differences between Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free. In reality, there was a disconnect between belief and behavior. If believers are part of a new creation (in Christ), why do the powers of the world still dominate? As mentioned earlier, Paul’s writing to bridge the gap between the ideal and the real provides us with the theological foundation for all ethical instruction.

Paul’s appeal was, “If you could only understand who you are in Christ.” Paul worked on the premise that for any who have experienced conversion, Christ’s strong transforming power through the resurrection results in living “in Christ.” For Paul, living “in Christ” meant to turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to power of God (principalities and powers), to receive forgiveness of sins as well as an inheritance. This is also what it meant to live in the community of faith.

When Paul, the prisoner, wrote the letter to the Ephesians at the end of his life, the battle for the “universality of the gospel” had been won. With time on his hands, Paul wrote some of the highest flights of theological thought in the New Testament – “from the foundations of the world . . . to the fullness of time.”

The central theme of Ephesians is what it means to be “in Christ.” God has a plan: the reconciliation of all things. The plan, established before the foundations of the world, sets the believer free from the things of this world.

Paul wrote some heavy theology in order to tell his readers about some very practical things. He wanted them to have unity in the church (ch. 4). Since they were “in Christ” they needed to behave themselves and stop acting like pagans. He taught them how to build Christian families (ch. 5). In order to have unity, behave themselves, and have a Christian home, they had to learn how to fight the devil (ch. 6).

But Paul's readers had a vision of God that was too small. If they were to be successful, they needed a greater vision of God in order to receive new insight regarding who they were in Christ Jesus and to understand the mystery of Christ. So Paul wrote the following:

Redemption in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14)

- ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places in Christ*,
- ⁴ just as He [*elect*] us **in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,
- ⁵ having predestined us to [*adoption*] as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted **in the Beloved**.
- ⁷ **In Him** we have [*redemption*] through His blood, [*the forgiveness of sins*], according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,
- ⁹ having made known to us the [*mystery of His will*], according to His good pleasure which He purposed **in Himself**, ¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things **in Christ**, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—**in Him**.
- ¹¹ **In Him** also we have obtained an [*inheritance*], being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will . . .
- ¹³ **In Him** you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, [*the gospel of your salvation*];
- **in whom** also, having believed, you were [*sealed*] with [*the Holy Spirit of promise*], ¹⁴ who is the [*guarantee of our inheritance*] until the [*redemption*] of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (emphasis mine)

Note the quality of Paul's prayer. He does not pray for their health and welfare. He prays that they would have a new insight, a new comprehension of who they are and what God has done for them through Christ. Look what God has done for you! Look at who you are!

A Prayer that they would understand the greatness
of their position in Christ
(Ephesians 1:16-19)

¹⁵ Therefore I . . . ¹⁶ keep asking
¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,
¹⁸ that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened;
that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,
¹⁹ and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

You were dead, now by grace through faith you are alive
(Ephesians 2:2-10)

¹⁻² And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world; . . . we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Brought Near by His Blood (Ephesians 2:11,13,19)

¹¹ Therefore remember that you . . . were without Christ, being aliens and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and

without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁹Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

The Mystery Revealed (Ephesians 2:1-4,9)

¹⁻⁴For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus [pray that] you may understand . . . the mystery of Christ . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ,⁹ and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ . . .

Appreciation of the Mystery (Ephesians 2:14-19)

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . ¹⁶that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height—¹⁹to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Romans: Paul Unpacks Some of the Great Doctrines of the Church

According to Paul, his readers needed to learn to think theologically and theology is working out what God has done for us through the events of the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ. Conversion, as mentioned before, the consequence of Christ's transforming power, means to live "in Christ" and life "in Christ" has a fundamental ethical dimension.

Propitiation (Romans 3:24-25): "For all you believe are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, when God put forward as a propitiation for sin through his blood..."

Redemption: Along with Romans 3:24-25, Ephesians 1:7: "In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace that he lavishes on us."

Reconciliation (Romans 5:10-11) “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

Justification (Romans 5:1) “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“In Christ” there is propitiation, there is redemption, there is reconciliation, and there is justification. This list could go on: salvation, atonement, adoption and so forth. By tracking this formative level of Paul’s theology, an important insight may be gleaned. Paul’s theology focuses on who Jesus was as “the Christ.” Apart from a few historical references (Rom. 15:3; 1 Corinthians 11:23), Paul sees Jesus always as the Lord Jesus Christ, a theological figure. Paul focuses on the theological significance of Jesus’ life, on his person, on the Christ who revealed God.

The Formation of the Moral Virtues of Character: The Consequence of Being “in Christ.”

For Paul, theology is working out what God has done for us through the events of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection and the gospel reconstructs what daily life was to look like within the community of faith. Transformation required radical changes, changes with a fundamental ethical dimension. Paul admonished the Corinthian believers to avoid sexual activity outside of marriage because their bodies would be raised from the dead; it mattered what they did with them (1 Cor. 6:14). They had experienced transformation and they were to act like it by living holy lives.

Among the redeemed, in contrast to cultural norms, even the differences that distinguished one’s religion, race, gender, and socio-economic status were to be leveled, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). This was the reversal of the order of things.

The Theological Indicative/Moral Imperative Relationship
(Romans 6:6-11—see also Romans 13:11-14; Eph. 4:20-31; Col. 3:1-17)

Paul demands that believers make a choice between contrasting alternatives: e.g. flesh/spirit; law/grace; disobedience/obedience, etc. Note that the fact declared to be true in the theological indicative is not the same as the deed done in the moral imperative.

Theological Indicative:

- “Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him . . . (Rom. 6:6). A fact declared to be true
- “For he who has died is freed from sin” (6:7). A fact declared to be true.
- “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (6:8). A fact declared to be true.

Moral Imperative:

“ . . . So consider (reckon) yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11). An imperative “to Be” and “to Do.” But what dynamic in the moral psychology of believers translates the facts into a deed? The answer is *reckoning* “the old self dead and the new self alive” (Rom. 6: 6, 11). “Reckon yourself” emphasizes the will that transforms the fact into a deed. Paul’s understanding of reckoning is tied, no doubt, to the cultural practice of Roman capital punishment law that illuminates the text. In Rome, the criminal was *legally dead* at the hour of crucifixion. *The person was considered as dead, reckoned as dead, even though the final breath may not occur until hours or even days later.*²

Paul’s argument: When Jesus was crucified—you were crucified with Him. *That is a theological fact!* It may take time for the old man to expire—but he can already be reckoned as dead.

The identification with Christ is tied in Paul’s theology to the relationship between the “old self and the new self.” While the theme of the “old self” versus the “new self” concerns Romans 6:6-8, the key concepts of Paul’s argument are found in Romans 6:5-11. To be “in Christ” is a crucifixion of the old self and a resurrection of the new self who is “to walk in the newness of life” (6:4).

² J. Christian Weiss, *The Perfect Will of God*.

The Formation of Moral Character—Put On/Put Off

Crucifixion and resurrection are not merely historical events for Paul. Crucifixion and resurrection shape the moral psychology of those who are “in Christ.” Paul demands a choice be made between sharp alternatives: e.g. flesh/spirit; law/grace; disobedience/obedience, etc. (i.e. “put off” and “put on”?)

Romans 13:11-14

Put off	Put on
The works of darkness	The armor of light
Reveling Drunkenness Debauchery Licentiousness Quarreling Jealousy	The Lord Jesus Christ

Ephesians 4:20-32

Put off	Put on
Your old self in its lusts, corruptions and delusions	Your new self according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness
Falsehood (25) Sinful anger (26) Stealing (28) Evil talk (29)	Truthfulness (25) Self-control, honest work (28) Sharing with the needy (28) Edifying speech (29)

Note that here “put off” and “put on” are not tied to the contrasts of darkness and light but to the old self and the new self.

Put away	Be
Bitterness Wrath Anger Wrongdoing Slander Malice	Kind Tenderhearted Forgiving (32)

Colossians 3:1-17

Put off	Put on
<i>Put off the old self with its practices.</i>	<i>Put on The new self, which is being renewed in the image of the Creator. In that renewal there is no longer: Greek and Jew, Circumcised and Uncircumcised, Barbarian and Scythian, Slave and Free</i>
Fornication Impurity Passion Enmity Greed Anger Wrath Malice Slander Abusive language Lying	Compassion Kindness Humility Meekness Patience Forbearance (13) Forgiveness Love (14)

Note the contrast between practices of earthly nature and virtues of the new nature

Galatians 5:19-25

In the flesh (16)	In the Spirit (16)
Works of the Flesh (19-21) (Practices of the sinful nature) (Behaviors of conduct)	Fruit of the Spirit (22-23) (Virtues of moral character) (Traits of character, dispositions of character--Identity!)
Fornication Impurity Licentiousness Idolatry Sorcery Enmities Strife Jealousy Anger Quarrels Dissensions	Love Joy Peace Patience Kindness Generosity Faithfulness Gentleness Self-control

Factions Envy Drunkenness Carousing	
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The moral problems in Paul's churches laid open deep differences that threatened to destroy the unity of community. They needed moral discernment. Paul does not offer a set of moral guidelines, but rather he uses the events of the cross and resurrection to provide the theological framework for moral behavior. Moral transformation must take place before members can be part of God's final victory.

For Paul, the community was a living organism in which the health and life of each part of the body depends on the life and health of the whole organism (12:12-31).

The daily behavior of a disciple must be based on theology. Readers of the Ephesian letter, Paul reasons, can't live like they should unless Christ has transformed them, unless they recognize that one must become the kind of person from whom the demands of Jesus naturally flow.

For this reason, Paul prays for them"

"I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:14-19).

He also exhorts them: Christ, by his grace, has taken away death, given you a whole new life, you are a new creation. All this is a free gift of God. God has elected you, adopted you, redeemed you, and sealed you with the guarantee of his Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that raised Christ lives in you. So now live like it. Because of all Christ has done for you, live a life that is worthy! In the words of Paul, *"I implore you [I beg you] to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (Eph. 4:1).*

**Conclusion - The Cross and the Resurrection
(Back to the Beginning)**

The Christian faith—following Jesus—is grounded in the fundamental witness of Paul’s prayer: the cross and the resurrection. The explanation for our salvation—of the mystery from unbelief to belief—lies beyond human explanation. But those of us who, by faith, do believe are then asked to exemplify in our lives and witness the theological virtues of faith, love, and hope in all we do.

To understand who we are in Christ is to enter into a life of discipleship, following the crucified and risen Christ. Such discipleship calls us to be the community of faith, to minister to those to whom Christ ministered, the poor, the outcasts, those on the margins of society.

As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to proclaim the good news that the Lord who was crucified has risen! To a world plagued by despair and criticism we are, by our actions, to exemplify the essence of hope – that suffering and despair are not the final judgments upon God’s creation.

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IMPACTING THE FUTURE OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC CHURCH

KINGDOM RULES: UPSIDE-DOWN DISCIPLESHIP

Douglas Petersen

*Virtually every major biblical teaching undergirds and demands social concern and helps to shape its character.*¹

Jesus' teachings in the Gospel of Mark provide the marching orders for holistic ministry, i.e., discipling people to faith in Jesus Christ, and demonstrating our own faith through our actions and service among the needy. The purpose of this article is to establish that the transformational experience of salvation, the ethical actions of social concern, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, as they are seen primarily in the Gospel of Mark, are inextricably linked together in any expression of holistic ministry.

Focusing on Mark 8:22–10:52, the core of Jesus' teaching on discipleship, I contrast the social and ethical norms of power, authority, control, knowledge, status and wealth, which were accepted in first-century culture, with the ethical standards that Jesus required of his followers under the rules of the kingdom of God. These two ethical systems are polar opposites. Jesus taught that greatness in leadership, as God measures it, directly relates to our actions on behalf of the marginalized and disenfranchised. These include: the poor, the sick, the disabled, the unclean, outcasts, outsiders, and especially, or perhaps specifically, children.

¹The three dimensions of social action are often described as: (1) relief, or providing short term assistance to people in the midst of a mess; (2) development, or equipping people with the tools to move towards self-sufficiency; and (3) structural change, or addressing the societal structures that enable or not well-being, justice, and dignity. See Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 139.

1. ***THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD***

Mark's account, the first of the Gospels to be written, begins with a bang—no birth narrative, no build-up, just a single statement: “The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1). It continues by recounting that when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at his baptism, he was anointed to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God and to inaugurate God's right to reign through his ministry. Mark follows the baptism account with Jesus' startling announcement, “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the good news” (1:14-15).² The central theme of Jesus' mission and message was “the good news of the kingdom of God.” The Messiah, the king of this kingdom, had come!

The Miracles, People's Response, and Religious Opposition (1:16–3:6)

The nature of Jesus' identity as the Messiah revolved around powerful deeds of exorcisms and miracles, and his teachings about the kingdom of God. After Jesus cast out demons, news about him spread everywhere (1:28). People brought to him “all who were ill” until the “whole city” had gathered at the door (1:32–34). When Jesus healed a leper his popularity grew so much that he could no longer enter a city. He stayed in the countryside (1:45) or went to the seashore (2:13), but the people still came to him from everywhere. One time when Jesus entered a home, the press of people was such that men cut a hole in the roof of the house in order to lower down a paralytic so that Jesus could heal him (2:3–12).³

On the surface, Mark's telling of Jesus' powerful deeds synced perfectly with Jewish expectations about the coming Messiah. When the “time is fulfilled,” the Messiah would usher in God's kingdom. The mere fact that God proposed to bring in his kingdom was no secret. People expected it. They also expected that when God

² See Gordon Fee, “Kingdom of God and the Church's Global Mission,” in *Called & Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, eds. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 7–21. In this brilliant essay, Fee summarizes the concept of the kingdom of God in the teachings of Jesus and its significance for the global mission of the church.

³ For the most comprehensive treatment of miracles in the Bible, see Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

instituted the kingdom it would be with apocalyptic force exercising his power over all creation. Led by the Messiah, a great day of messianic salvation, as foretold by Isaiah, would bring good news to the poor, sight to the blind, the ability to hear to the deaf, and freedom to the oppressed (Isa 35:5–6; 61:1–2). God would right all the wrongs caused by exploitation and injustice, and the hated Roman regime would finally be overthrown. The coming of the kingdom would result in a reversal of the order of things. While the crowds loved Jesus, the religious establishment hated him. And the disciples, whom Jesus called to be with him, were just confused.

Clearly, when Jesus announced the new rule of the coming kingdom, people were beside themselves with excitement and anticipation. They came in droves to see Jesus and to bring to him the sick, disabled, and demon-possessed. The crowds, captivated by his miracles, were “amazed” and “astonished” exclaiming that they “had never seen anything like it.” It was not long before Jesus’ own disciples were asking, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” (4:41).

In contrast to the excitement of the ordinary people, the religious establishment reacted with growing hostility; Jesus did not seem to recognize their authority. He broke their rules. They were the guardians of God’s affairs on earth and they intended to use their positions of power and authority to enforce the rules. They determined to control both Jesus and the crowds. When these leaders discovered they could not control Jesus, they began to plan his death.

Jesus, the Disciples, and the Mystery of the Kingdom (3:7–8:21)

It is evident from Mark’s Gospel that at times, even his disciples were uncertain about Jesus. They were confused. They did not understand (5:31; 6:52; 7:18; 8:17–21). Certainly, Jesus acted like the Messiah. He cast out demons, healed the sick and disabled, and even raised the dead. He calmed the storm, fed thousands, and walked on water. The disciples saw plenty of miracles. These signs of the kingdom were exactly what they expected from the Messiah. However, the great reversal wasn’t happening. Jesus didn’t seem to be doing anything about the powerful, the religious, the rich, or the Romans. Rather he was spending his time with the poor, the sick, the insignificant, the outcasts, and the children. Furthermore, what Jesus said to the disciples in private about the nature of life in the kingdom of God made no sense at all. What was the problem?

In actual fact, the kingdom of God—the dynamic, redemptive reign of God—had come in power. God had broken into history in the person and mission of Jesus to deliver people from the grip of evil. By casting out demons and healing the blind, the deaf, and the mute, Jesus was establishing his right to rule. The miracles and wonders of Jesus’ ministry were critical signs demonstrating that the kingdom of God had come. The future had broken into the present. The kingdom was God’s gift to defeat sin and evil; it was good news to be believed. This good news meant that in Jesus Christ there was forgiveness for all and people would be set free from Satan’s tyranny.

But the kingdom was also a mystery; much of what the disciples saw and heard was not quite what they expected. The kingdom, which Jesus said would appear fully at the end of the age, was now operating in hidden form manifesting itself imperceptibly, invisibly, and secretly in people’s lives. Moreover, Jesus taught that the Messiah, forgiver of sin and performer of spectacular miracles, would also have to suffer at the hands of the Romans. Everything changed and yet nothing changed! How was this good news?

Quite simply, the disciples didn’t get it. They were painfully slow to understand Jesus’ kingdom agenda (6:52). The miracles they understood, but the rest—not so much! Mark illustrates the conundrum with which the disciples wrestled: The kingdom of God with all its power had indeed broken into the present, but the Messiah who ushered in this kingdom and did great miracles, was also the Messiah who must suffer and die. And this “good news” required a human response—repentance, a complete turnaround of life, dependence on God’s mercy, submission to his rules, and a life of discipleship, which meant in essence “to become like Jesus” in self-denial and self-sacrifice on behalf of others (8:34).⁴ This is what Jesus’ disciples were slow to understand. If miracles could unlock the window to their understanding, then when Jesus walked on the water (6:48) or fed the multitudes from almost nothing (6:33–44; 8:1–9)—then they should have had the key; and yet they remained locked out. Shortly after the second miracle feeding, the disciples grew hungry and began “to discuss with themselves that they had no bread” (8:16). Jesus asked them how many baskets of food were left over after the feedings, and without missing a beat, the disciples answered, “Nineteen.” Jesus, surely in frustration, asked them, “Do you not understand?” (8: 21). The irony escaped the disciples.

⁴Fee, “Kingdom of God and the Church’s Global Mission,” 13.

2. ***KINGDOM RULES: UPSIDE-DOWN DISCIPLESHIP*** ***(8:22–10:52)***

As Mark approached the middle of his telling of the gospel story, he focused like a laser on what Luke Timothy Johnson calls, “the drama of discipleship.”⁵ The setting for this drama took place during the journey Jesus and his disciples made toward Jerusalem (8:22–10:52). During this period, the crowds and the religious leaders faded into the background. Jesus directed his full attention on the disciples as he laid out the elements of a “pedagogical project” designed to reshape their understanding of the Messiah’s mission, which in turn would define their own.⁶

The curriculum revolved around the theme that Jesus, as the Messiah, must suffer, die, and be resurrected. His disciples had trouble understanding this concept, so Jesus continued to teach them, both by showing and telling, the true nature and cost of discipleship. The disciples had witnessed his miracles and correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah, but they never dreamed that the Messiah would have to die. Richard Hays states the dilemma precisely: “The secret of the kingdom of God is that Jesus must die as the crucified Messiah.”⁷ Nor could the disciples comprehend that if they entertained any hopes of greatness in this new kingdom, they too must take up the cross and follow Jesus through a life of suffering and service. Indeed, for the disciples, the mystery of the kingdom would represent a reversal of the order of things in ways that they had never imagined. Life under the new rule of God required a dramatic change in the rules of leadership.⁸

From beginning to end, Mark sets his narrative against the backdrop that that his audience knows how the story turns out.⁹ Mark

⁵Luke Timothy Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 174–175 and *Jesus and the Gospels* (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2004), 26–27.

⁶Johnson, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 26–27.

⁷Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 76.

⁸Since Jesus’ teachings were directed specifically to the Twelve—to those in whom he placed his ultimate trust and to whom he passed the torch of kingdom mission, I will use the terms “leader/disciple” and “discipleship/leadership” interchangeably.

⁹For a veritable treasure chest of online resources for the study of the New Testament and the Gospel of Mark see Rev. Felix Just, S. J., “*The Gospel according to Mark*,” <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Mark.htm> (accessed May 29, 2012).

sequences the stories and teachings in this section to make it appear as though the confusion of the disciples goes from bad to worse, moving from merely a lack of comprehension to a full-blown misunderstanding of who the Messiah really is and what is required of them as followers. In his narrative, Mark does not concern himself as to whether the disciples understand who Jesus really is. As his readers are well aware, after the resurrection and the Day of Pentecost, the disciples clearly did understand. Instead, Mark's primary concern is for readers to answer for themselves the open-ended question, "Who do you say that I am?" (8:29).

In response to this question, Mark weaved together a beautiful tapestry¹⁰ that demonstrated the disciples' rather difficult journey toward understanding the nature and character of Jesus and what the ethical attitudes and behaviors of authentic leadership should look like under God's reign (8:22–10:52).¹¹ In just 118 verses, Mark uses a variety of literary techniques to reshape the disciples' perspective of the Messiah and establish a pattern of what the ethical attitudes and behaviors of authentic leadership should look like under God's reign. Moving rapidly through seventeen episodes, cutting rapidly from one scene to the next while interacting with more than a dozen characters, Mark keeps the focus on the teacher and his students. As the narrator, Mark provides the kind of information that guides readers to align themselves with "God's point of view," the reversal of the order of things, rather than with the cultural and ethical norms that represent a "human's point of view."¹²

Leadership Norms Contrasted with Kingdom Discipleship

As we work through the episodes that follow, we must be careful not to read into the stories our own cultural attitudes framed by

¹⁰ Jerry Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel: Texts and Subtexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *Speaking of God: Reading and Preaching the Word of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995). On the Gospel of Mark, Camery-Hoggatt is recognized as one of the best scholars in the world. I am privileged to have Jerry as a colleague. His office is twenty feet from mine and he is never too busy to answer my questions. The content of some of our discussions is reflected in this chapter.

¹¹ For a detailed treatment of Mark's use of literary devices in his telling of the story, see David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story*, 2nd edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

¹² David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark As Story*, 2nd edition (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 45.

accepted social and ethical standards of the twenty-first century. If we do, we will miss the reasons the disciples were “amazed” and “astonished” at what Jesus was asking of them, and continues to ask of us. A brief review of the order of things in the world of leadership in the first century may be helpful.

People who have grown up in more or less democratic societies, far removed from first-century beliefs and practices, may find it difficult to comprehend the massive power imbalance that existed between those in authority at the top of the ladder of civil, political, and religious society and the women, the children, the poor, the unclean, and the outcasts at the bottom. It is even more difficult to fathom that the shared social and ethical standards—beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors—that sustained and reinforced these societal structures were understood by almost everyone, from top to bottom, to be the order of things, the way God had allegedly ordained them.

To get the full import of the reversal for which Jesus was calling, we must recognize that the ethical and social norms of Jewish antiquity were the acceptable standards of an orderly society. The Jewish leaders adhered to a set of values and traditions that were justifiable and normative within Judaism. For Jewish authorities, and certainly for Romans, leadership was synonymous with power, authority, influence, and control.¹³ Wealth was considered a symbol of the blessing of God. Leaders held posts of honor and power, and derived their identity from their status. Additionally their position of power ensured that they were able to hold on to their power. To some degree, all leaders exercised religious, economic, and political power because these spheres were so intertwined as to be indivisible.

Leaders acted as agents. They spoke and acted on behalf of the group they represented or the one who sent them. Both Jewish and Roman leaders believed that God authorized their right to rule, even though they had allegiances to others. Jewish leaders were accountable to the Romans and in many ways dependent upon the popular support of the people. Since these religious leaders feared both the Romans and the people, it was impossible to “love the Lord with all their minds”

¹³ Many scholars have argued that by the time of the first century, Jewish culture was not culturally monolithic. The cultural norms of the Mediterranean world, most overtly represented and dominated by the Romans, such as honor and shame, status and role, patron/client relationships and the concept of reciprocity, had penetrated Jewish culture, having a much stronger impact on Jewish society than had been previously acknowledged. In any case, while this may be true, these types of social and ethical norms, perhaps to a lesser extent, were already part and parcel of the fabric of Jewish culture.

because they were dependent upon other human powers who wielded more clout than they.

Leaders did not like to serve. Service, in first century culture, was neither noble nor honorable, but was viewed by all leaders to be the labor of women and slaves. Leaders used their power to ensure that those below them served them; they “lorded their authority over others”; they used their power to secure their positions. Their role, as they understood it, was one of domination rather than service. They guarded the temple, kept the rules of the religious and social order, and, at all costs, did whatever they needed to maintain their own power and control.

These social, economic, and political norms enabled the continuation of an orderly and predictable society that was already precariously located within the larger environs of a chaotic world. To replace existing attitudes and behavior in such a context with the countercultural and paradoxical demands of Jesus could never be accomplished through human efforts. It is little wonder why the disciples were “astonished” by the nature of Jesus’ demands of discipleship.

Jesus’ teachings were perceived by his disciples as countercultural and by the authorities as subversive and revolutionary. The disciple who followed Jesus was not to act anything like the religious and political authorities. Behaviors that were highly prized—characterized by position, power, authority, influence, and wealth—needed to be reversed. Jesus challenged the traditional social and cultural norms with Scripture. He accused the leaders of his day of being hard-hearted because they substituted human traditions for God’s intentions (7:9–13). Worse, they were blind and deaf to the rule of God and to the Son of God through whom this rule was inaugurated.

Mark wanted all to see that the cultural norms that everyone accepted—whether in Judea or in Rome—were contrary to the ethical demands of the kingdom. This upside-down way defined authentic discipleship. The manner by which followers of Christ treated the people without earthly power or influence—the unimportant, unclean, outcasts, children, women, beggars, blind, foreigners, and widows—would be the measurement of their success.

It is with Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Messiah, a critical turning point in the disciples’ journey toward discipleship, that Mark begins the heart of his gospel in which Jesus is heavily engaged in teaching his disciples (8:22–10:52). Throughout this entire section, Mark introduces a new subtheme that carries with it a sobering

implication: What happens to Jesus will happen to his followers, too. The disciples must learn that for them, as for Jesus, leadership is service, defeat is victory, and death is the pathway to life. Mark embeds the narrative with three specific predictions of the coming passion (8:31–33; 9:30–32; 10:32–34). The predictions are quite explicit, but the narrative indicates with equal clarity that the disciples failed to understand their meaning. Following each prediction there is a dialogue with the disciples that indicates that they were blind to what Jesus was saying to them. It is not insignificant, then, that the entire discipleship section is bounded on either side by stories of blind men (one at Bethsaida, 8:22–26 and Bartimaeus, 10:46–52).

On the front end of this section is a story about the two-staged healing of the blind man from Bethsaida, and on the back end, a story of the healing of blind Bartimaeus from Jericho. In between these two healing stories, Jesus revealed the core content of authentic discipleship, by foretelling his suffering, death, and resurrection (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). After each of these “passion predictions,” the disciples were more confounded, as they seemed determined to shape Jesus’ announcement according to their own expectations. In response to their misunderstandings, Jesus combined teaching with riveting visual examples, a show-and-tell approach, to hammer home the ethical norms of authentic discipleship.

The Blind Man at Bethsaida

The first bookend surrounding this section of Jesus’ teaching is the healing of a blind man of Bethsaida. After Jesus touched the blind man the first time, the man could see, but not very well. The man said, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking” (8:24). It was only after Jesus touched the man a second time that his sight was completely restored. Certainly, Jesus healed the man out of a heart of deep compassion, but by placing the story where he did, Mark established a critical pedagogical stake that will become evident after Peter’s confession of faith. The disciples could see too, but like the blind man, not very well. They needed a second touch that would not come until after the resurrection. This story, the healing of the blind man, sets up this entire section.

Lose Your Life in Order to Save It (8:27–9:29)

Mark uses the story of the blind man of Bethsaida to redirect the focus from the disciples’ earlier question about Jesus, “Who then is

this [man]?” (4:41) to the more central question Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?”(8:29).¹⁴ Peter’s immediate response, “You are the Christ,” a recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, was the right answer. But in this first passion prediction (8:31), when Jesus announced that the Son of Man must suffer, be rejected, die, and after three days rise again, Peter was flabbergasted. He had just declared Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah, and he couldn’t comprehend all this suffering and death talk. Jesus’ words made no sense to him or to any of the other disciples. Of all the expectations the disciples may have had of what the kingdom of God might look like, the concepts of service, suffering, and death were not among them.¹⁵

Peter’s confession made explicit the blindness of the disciples.¹⁶ Peter rebuked Jesus, and Jesus returned the rebuke by saying that Peter was thinking from a human point of view (8:33). But from God’s point of view, Jesus had to suffer, and further, that all who wished to follow him were “summoned to a similar vocation” to lose their life in order to save it.¹⁷ Jesus taught, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel will save it” (8:34–35). Peter’s declaration that Jesus is the Messiah was “a shadow of the truth,” but he was really like the blind man who saw “trees walking” after Jesus’ first touch. Peter and the rest needed a second touch in order to see clearly.

Mark followed Peter’s confession with two episodes to underscore how little the disciples really understood: the transfiguration of Jesus (9:2–8) and the healing of the boy with an unclean spirit (9:14–29). In the first episode, Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a “high mountain” (understood in Scripture as a place of divine revelation), where the three disciples caught a glimpse of Jesus in his divine glory as king. Even Moses (the Law) and Elijah (the prophets) affirmed that Jesus was the Messiah. But after Peter suggested that they set up three booths, one for each of these personages, God himself spoke: “This one is my beloved son, Listen to him! . . . And suddenly the disciples no longer saw anyone except Jesus alone with them.” The transfiguration

¹⁴Hays, *Moral Vision*, 75.

¹⁵Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Living Gospel* (London: Continuum, 2004), 52.

¹⁶Camery-Hoggatt, *Mark*, 157.

¹⁷Hays, *Moral Vision*, 79.

pointed to the future of the glory of Christ, that the suffering to which Jesus referred after Peter's confession was but for a season. But Peter (James and John) still didn't quite get it. The glory of the transfiguration enraptured him. But that the purposes of God would also include a road of suffering and service escaped him completely.

The splendor of the transfiguration quickly became a fleeting memory for Peter, James, and John. As they descended from the mountain, they were confronted with the reality of evil. A man, desperate for help, had brought his child to the disciples. "Teacher, I brought you my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it slams him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth and stiffens out. I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it" (9:17–18). As Jesus turned to the boy, the evil spirit immediately acted out, throwing the boy to the ground in convulsions. When Jesus asked the father how long these horrific episodes had been going on, the father responded, "From childhood" (9:21). Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, saying, "You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." The evil spirit shrieked for the last time, convulsed the body of its victim, and then left the boy (9:5–27).

To be sure, Jesus performed this exorcism because of his love and compassion toward the boy and his father. But there was a lesson to be taught as well. The disciples, like the blind man who saw "men like trees walking" after Jesus' first touch, were incapable of seeing the full picture of the glorious but suffering Messiah. Similarly Mark related the story of the boy who was a deaf mute to demonstrate the disciples' incapacity to hear or speak of the mystery of the kingdom of God. Mark wanted to stress that it was not enough to know that "Jesus is the Christ." The disciples must also face the terrible consequences of that reality. Mark's narrative structure, mirroring this double understanding, required that Peter's statement of faith be deepened into a commitment of faith. The call to discipleship was and is more than following a miracle worker; it was and is also about taking up the cross.¹⁸

¹⁸David E. Garland, *Mark* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 80.

To Be First, You Must First Be Last (9:30–10:31)

In the second passion prediction, Jesus again foretold his death, announcing that, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later” (9:31). Despite the recent mountaintop experience, the disciples started arguing among themselves as to which of them was the greatest. Jesus’ rebuttal to their arrogance was sharp. He overturned the social norms of leadership with his next statement, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (9:35). From now on, leadership in God’s kingdom would be characterized by a life in the service of people whom society deemed unimportant and had no power to repay the kindness.

These standards of measurement were different than anything the disciples had ever heard. No wonder they were surprised when Jesus even placed children on the stage as the main characters of his attention. The centrality of children in Mark’s Gospel is often treated as an aside, misinterpreted, or missed altogether by both contemporary scholars and readers. It is unlikely, however, that the earliest audiences missed the point.¹⁹

Mark told two stories about Jesus with children. Each of them was set in a different context (9:33–35; 10:13–15). Between these two interactions with children, Mark placed three other episodes, which, when read in isolation seem unrelated, but when linked together illuminate the two stories that frame them. In other words, the two interactions with children deepen our understanding of each of the three episodes.²⁰ The interchange between Jesus and his disciples in each of these scenes emphasizes the themes of service and humility—the reversal of the order of things.

In the first story of Jesus with the children, Jesus introduces an essential element for this new upside-down type of leadership. He took a child in his arms and made a startling statement: “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me” (9:37). The word for

¹⁹ Wesley D. Avram, “The Missional Significance of Children: A Look at the Gospel of Mark” devotional presented at the Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, CT, (April 30, 2006). See also John T. Carroll, “Children in the Bible,” *Interpretation* 55, no. 2 (April 2001), 121–134.

²⁰ The reader is also prompted, through a series of strings that connect them, to recall at least two other distinct but similar children’s stories that Mark had told earlier.

“welcoming,” *decomai*,²¹ implies serving and was generally used in the context of hospitality. How the disciples welcomed a child, Jesus said, was a measure of how much they really welcomed him. Furthermore, how they welcomed him was then a measure of how much they welcomed God! The treatment of children—the least of all—was the new measurement of greatness.

The irony in Jesus’ statement was obvious to the reader, for children were at the bottom of the social scale.²² While children were not marginalized in Jewish antiquity in the same sense as were the poor, the unclean, or the outcast, children were the most vulnerable because of their utter defenselessness. They were completely dependent upon adults and so their social standing was at the bottom of familial structures. In an adult world where leaders fought to retain power, children were totally unimportant; in effect they were nonpersons. But according to the upside-down kingdom, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” In other words, Jesus established that greatness would be measured by one’s service to children in contrast to the normative measures of power, influence, control, or wealth. For this reason, children moved to the top of the list of leadership priorities. Furthermore, a leader’s actions could not just be mere expressions of tokenism or displays of affection, but as Judith Gundry-Volf insists, “True greatness meant not just love but service that . . . places children at the center of the community’s attention as prime objects of its love and service, and requires all who would be great in the community to serve children.”²³ In dramatic fashion, Jesus redefined care for children as a mark of greatness.²⁴

The scene shifts momentarily to underscore the disciples’ lack of understanding of this. Still bound by a paradigm of leadership that prized authority and control, the disciples complained to Jesus about

²¹ The NRSV translates *decomai* in the second children’s story as “receiving” (10:37).

²² It is important to recognize that there is a fundamental difference between the unimportance and insignificance of children and the nonperson status of the outcast. In the Old Testament, the Jews believed that children were a gift of God, and served as a symbol of the guarantee of the covenant between God and the people of Israel. Children were occasionally instruments of God’s activity. In the sense of personhood, children had immense value. However, similar to the outcast, children had little value from a perspective of leadership. To leaders, children were at the bottom of the food chain.

²³ Judith M. Gundry-Volf, “The Least and the Greatest: Children in the New Testament,” in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 43.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 43, 44.

others who were casting out demons in Christ's name without their expressed permission (9:38–41). Ironically, the disciples were anxious to put a stop to these, who they saw as unauthorized outsiders, casting out demons, even though these were successful and they, the disciples, were not (9:14–29). In trying to control outsiders in this way, the disciples were attempting to exercise authority in the very way that Jesus was trying to reverse.

Subsequently, the story returns to the importance that Jesus placed upon welcoming children as the quintessential marker describing the nature of transformational leadership or kingdom discipleship. The verbal thread referencing “Christ’s name” links the prior episode about controlling outsiders to this one when Jesus declared that no act of kindness to the least of these is too small. Jesus cautioned the disciples that no matter what they might do, they must never be guilty of putting a “stumbling block before one of these little ones. . . . It would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea” (9:42).

Children were of such inestimable value to God that the disciples were to welcome children, protect them, and never harm them. The disciples found it inexplicable that the path to kingdom greatness included concrete acts of service to the least in their community and that the manner in which they treated children could be a measure of their love for Jesus.

The next scene illustrates the same point from another angle. Parents were bringing their children to Jesus in hope that he might touch or bless them. This was not unlike the accounts of relatives and friends bringing the sick, the possessed, and even the dead which are scattered throughout Mark. But rather than welcoming the opportunity to demonstrate what leadership should look like under the new rules of the kingdom, the disciples confronted and scolded the parents for bothering the Master.

Earlier in his Gospel, Mark recounts similar stories of multitudes bringing their sick in hope that Jesus might just touch them. These stories reveal that there was no extent to which people would not go in order to get near to Jesus. They begged, cajoled, cried, or just tried to get close enough to touch the hem of his robe.

Given Mark's penchant to include stories of a kind, it would not be too much of a stretch to think that Mark intended the reader to recall at this point in his Gospel the previous stories of the healing of the demon-possessed daughter of the mother from Phoenicia living in Syria (7:24–30), or the raising from the dead the twelve-year-old

daughter of Jarius, a leader of the synagogue (5:21–24, 35–43). He may have hoped they would remember the woman with the flow of blood who only wanted to touch the hem of Jesus' robe. Jesus restored her to health and fertility, making it possible for the woman to have a child (5:25–34). None of these stories, including the one we treated earlier about the boy with an unclean spirit, romanticize a joyful world of beautiful, happy, and healthy children. The stories are about sickness, desperation, and despair. The children are suffering such severe disabilities that it would be easy for anyone to feel uncomfortable in their presence. Although Mark does not explicitly say so, this scene of parents bringing the children to Jesus so he might touch them may well have been set in a similar context. While it is possible that the disciples were overcome by the immensity of the task and simply didn't know what to do in the face of such need so that they were prompted to overreact, it is more likely that they were behaving in typical fashion for their time and culture.

Just as they did in the case of the unauthorized exorcists, the disciples simply wanted to exercise control. In the midst of Jesus' massive popularity, they were after all, the guardians of the gate.²⁵ They would decide who got access to Jesus. They did not believe that the parents or their children should be wasting Jesus' time. Whatever the case, the disciples had already forgotten that children were to be served first. For this reason, the disciples rebuked the parents, failing to see the place that children had in the kingdom of God. Jesus was indignant with the disciples' actions and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it. After saying this, he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them" (10:14–16).

It is evident that in the first episode the way one welcomed children was the way one welcomed Christ. Slightly but significantly different in the second episode is that Jesus did not tell his disciples to become like little children, but rather he said, "The way one receives or welcomes children is the way one receives the Kingdom of God."²⁶

²⁵Garland, *Mark*, 384.

²⁶Luke Timothy Johnson, *Living Gospel*, 57. The theological significance of "receive the Kingdom as a child" is an interesting debate, but not central to this essay where the focus is on the essential character of Christian leadership.

How they treated a child was a measure of how seriously they operated under the rule of God. To be great would entail putting children first.

In another story, that of the rich young ruler, Mark presented a vivid contrast between the ethical standards of the kingdom as represented by its treatment of children and the ethical standards of the day. Too committed to his own possessions and glory, the rich young ruler could not bring himself to do what Jesus asked of him—namely, to sell everything he owned and follow Jesus. After the rich young man left, Jesus remarked to his disciples that it was “hard . . . for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God” (10:24–25). The disciples were astonished. If this young man with all his money was lost, they asked, “Then who can be saved?” (10:26). The disciples, like everyone else, equated riches with God’s blessings. As astonishing as it may have been for the disciples, the truth was that greatness in the kingdom could no more be obtained by wealth than it could by power and authority. The rich young ruler, unable to put Jesus first, stands in the pages of Scripture as an example of failed discipleship.

Can You Drink the Cup? (10:32–45)

In 10:33–44, Jesus once again foretold his death—the third passion prediction—and added in graphic detail that the Son of Man would be delivered over, condemned to death, mocked, spat upon, scourged, killed, but three days afterward would be resurrected. For the third time, the disciples misunderstood. With Jesus’ impending death, James and John, still coveting positions of authority, asked for places of honor when Jesus was seated in glory (10:37). Jesus retorted, “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?” They had obviously heard the part concerning that Jesus would rise again, but they seemed conveniently deaf to the part about his suffering and death! In response, Jesus told them that worldly leaders measured greatness by their capacity to exercise authority and reminded them that they were not to imitate that (10:43). The path of the disciple passes through suffering and service. Jesus taught, “Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:44–45).

Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, those who follow him (disciples) receive true life. Indeed, this true life is the gift of salvation now and forever. The power of Satan, as Gordon Fee writes, “is on its way out; its stranglehold on humanity in every form—sin,

sickness, oppression, possession, injustice—has received its deathblow.”²⁷ Recipients of this good news are forgiven because of God’s grace and mercy. It follows that because they have received such inestimable grace and mercy, true disciples extend it to others in abundance. This messianic salvation not only sets them free, but by the power of the Spirit they are also enabled to imitate Jesus. The mystery of the kingdom is that the suffering servant, who was crucified, is the Messiah, and he is the Messiah precisely because he suffered. In this light, the true disciple must take up his cross and follow in Jesus’ footsteps. The purpose of this chapter is to establish that the transformational experience of salvation

As briefly discussed earlier, the instantaneous healing of the blind beggar named Bartimaeus is the second of two bookends (10:46–52) Mark employs in the middle of his Gospel. The first bookend is the character of the twice-touched blind man of Bethsaida (8:22–26). In viewing these two stories at the beginning and end of the discipleship segment of Mark’s Gospel, the irony is evident. In contrast to the disciples’ misunderstanding and hardness of heart, the blind man from Bethsaida and blind Bartimaeus—two people who could not even see—recognized that Jesus was the Christ.

In the story of Bartimaeus, a blind beggar was sitting on the side of the road just outside Jericho when Jesus, the disciples, and a large crowd were leaving town on their way to Jerusalem. When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was in the crowd, he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (10:47). Several irritated people in the crowd told him to be quiet, and there was no indication that the disciples felt any differently, thus reflecting their continuing ignorance that the new rules of life in the kingdom “involved serving precisely the weakest.”²⁸

Ironically, while Bartimaeus was considered a public nuisance because of his blindness, most scholars hold that identifying Jesus as the Son of David in his cry for mercy displayed prophetic insight.²⁹

²⁷ Fee, “Kingdom of God and the Church’s Global Mission,” 14.

²⁸ Craig Keener, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 489. In addition to Keener’s commentary, see also Sherman G. Johnson, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 182; A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 85; Morna Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967); Vincent Taylor, ed. *Gospel According to St. Mark* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1963).

²⁹ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, eds. *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville: Sacra Pagina, 2002), 319.

When he asked “that [he] may see again,” he got even more: “your faith has saved you.” Bartimaeus emerged from the story as an exemplar of faith and a real-life example of how a leader should respond—to see and follow Jesus.³⁰ This is what being a disciple means.

3. *AN OPEN ENDING: A CHARISMATIC COMMUNITY*

Whether the final chapter of Mark ends in verse 8, or as some scholars posit in verse 20, the conclusion is the same—namely, that all of these events had to take place in order for the disciples to finally understand what Jesus was saying. After the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples, like the blind man from Bethsaida after Jesus touched him the second time, “began to see everything clearly.” The disciples would never have understood the miracles and teachings of Jesus without the cross, resurrection, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Within twenty-five years, this little ragtag band of disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit, crossed geographic, linguistic, cultural, sociological, and demographic frontiers proclaiming the good news of the gospel and planting churches from Jerusalem to Asia Minor and into Europe. The Holy Spirit baptism and empowerment, available to all believers after the Day of Pentecost, equipped the disciples and the entire community of believers to do and teach all that Jesus did and taught.³¹ The ministry of Jesus as the Anointed One by the Holy Spirit inaugurated the kingdom of God in human history.

The kingdom of God, the central theological concept used by Mark in his Gospel to describe Jesus’ mission and ministry, set the agenda for the ministry of the believers in the early church community. The kingdom mission and ministry of Jesus are transferred and made operational within the charismatic community by the empowerment of the Spirit at Pentecost.³²

³⁰ I am indebted to my colleague, systematic theologian Frank Macchia and his brother, Michael Macchia, for their generous time and input working through with me the implications of the stories of the blind man from Bethsaida and blind Bartimaeus of Jericho.

³¹ Murray W. Dempster, “Evangelism, Social Concern, and the Kingdom of God,” in *Called & Empowered*, eds. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 49.

³² *Ibid.*, 23.

The Acts narrative, continuing the story of Jesus after the Gospels end, offers an organizing principle for a holistic ministry infused by the power of the Spirit. In Acts, the Holy Spirit is presented as the one who empowers the church to overcome the entrenched gender, economic, cultural, and religious barriers of a divided world within its own community. Accordingly in the outpouring of the Spirit on the entire Christian community at Pentecost, the unfolding of “God’s will for justice becomes an empowering dynamic.”³³ The charismatic community not only enjoyed the visible signs of the promised kingdom age, but by the power of the Spirit, they also exhibited the “reversal of the order of things” by breaking down the barriers between Jew and Gentile, male and female, rich and poor, and slave and free. By the time the story of Acts concludes, the Spirit-empowered community of faith had taken the gospel everywhere in word and deed.

Mark’s account is brilliant, finely and carefully crafted. He wrote his Gospel to people who were enduring suffering. Mark arranged the stories about Jesus to remind the reader that though Jesus may have seemed like an unexpected Messiah, his suffering and death were not an accident. Jesus was the Messiah, God’s Son. By the time Mark told his story, the disciples were paragons of faith. Mark believed that if hearers would allow it, what Christ had done in and through the disciples, he also could do for them.

It is important to understand that Mark’s Gospel is also a story of the present. As a modern-day reader two millennia later, I, too, must wrestle with the same confusion as that of the disciples. I must make some sort of judgment. I must come to a position, but the rhetorical structure of the narrative rigidly limits the kinds of positions I am free to take. If I agree with the disciples or share their misunderstandings, I will come under the judgment of the story’s implied point of view. Indeed, Mark manages my response to Jesus’ teachings, and the methods by which that management takes place are clearly visible. Mark accomplishes his ends by stating the point, then belaboring it, then driving it home into my heart over and over.

I confess that I also struggle with the issues that troubled Jesus’ disciples and often for the same reasons. Sometimes I don’t understand, misunderstand, or don’t want to understand. I tend to tailor Jesus’ teachings to my own interests. I read what I want to read. The ethics of the kingdom are still a complete reversal of what we accept as

³³ Murray W. Dempster, “Pentecostal Social Concern and the Biblical Mandate of Social Justice,” *Pneuma* 9 (Fall 1987): 148.

normative in the twenty-first century. I freely recognize that I have no chance to imitate Jesus' model of service in leadership without the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in my life.

One Father's Day a few years past, my wife, Myrna, gave me a plaque to hang in my office, as a constant reminder of what really matters:

One hundred years from now,
It won't matter what car I drove,
What kind of house I lived in,
How much I had in my bank account,
Nor what my clothes looked like,
But, the world may be a little better
Because I was important in the life of a child.

- Unknown

THREE CHALLENGES TO PENTECOSTAL SOCIAL ACTION

Douglas Petersen

Is it possible for Pentecostals, utterly dependent upon the Spirit for empowerment, to practice a moral imagination that envisions a future with creative and innovative social action programs? I believe the answer is yes. These programs, the fruit of linking theological reflection, the authority of Scripture, and the reality of concrete human experience, can make a difference in the individual lives of people and even in civil society. A moral imagination that includes Spirit baptism as an empowering focus in pursuit of justice could be a unique contribution of the Pentecostal tradition to evangelical social praxis.¹

Pentecostals have demonstrated their capacity to function as creative agents in their own right. They have established institutional structures that made their emergence possible. They are quick to recognize a need and then mobilize people and gather materials to meet that need. But in spite of their many successes, they still face a myriad of common challenges. I will treat rather briefly three of these challenges: The emergence of a Pentecostal hermeneutic, further development of an essential connectedness between social action and the biblical text, and the importance of establishing and maintaining healthy, fair, and equal relationships within the community of faith.

Challenge 1 – An Emerging Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Worldview, Reading and Interpreting the Bible

Despite complaints that Pentecostals have neglected “the here and now” for the “sweet by and by,” the explosive growth of Pentecostalism among the destitute provides a large-scale laboratory for us to examine their hermeneutical process and struggle to find solutions to the needs that confront them on a daily basis. Regardless

¹For a fuller discussion see, “A Moral Imagination,” 53-68.

of their diversity, all Pentecostals tend – in addressing their spiritual and physical needs – to adopt a more-or-less common hermeneutical methodology. Beginning with a supernatural/Pentecostal worldview as the starting point, this hermeneutic integrates the concrete historical reality of context with the biblical text.²

This type of contextualization offers grassroots Pentecostals a progressive and dynamic hermeneutic that, at times, may appear to be incongruous with the “rules” of traditional evangelical interpretation. Of course, theological contextualization has always been an exciting dimension of Pentecostal versatility!

Pentecostals have at their core a supernatural worldview perspective that is both overtly expressed and instilled in teachings and sermons. They approach the Scriptures with a “pre-understanding” that they are participants in God’s unfolding drama. Pentecostals are confident that they are God’s instruments even if their contextual reality may systematically deny them access to basic human rights, marginalize them to huge slums and shantytowns, or refuse them access to political and social opportunity. They have a personal sense that, in spite of their circumstances, the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon them an “endowment of power.” The way that Pentecostals read the Bible offers a clear example of their worldview in action.

Common Reading of the Bible and a Praxis Hermeneutic

When Pentecostals read the Bible (a common reading), there is an inherent consistency in the interplay of linking their Pentecostal worldview of spirituality (pre-understanding) to the reality of daily circumstances to the biblical narratives of sorrow and pain, or of power and praise, that are interpreted theologically in turn into an application that addresses the concrete realities of their daily spiritual, social, or physical contexts.

Unconsciously or not, Pentecostals read and interpret the biblical text through the lens of their own contextual realities. Moving back and forth interpretively between the world of the biblical text and the realities of the world where they live, they interpret the “meaning or significance of the text” that emerges from this process into a practical application to their actual life context and for the local community of faith.

²This argument, in part, is included in my chapter, “A Moral Imagination: Pentecostals and Social Concern in Latin America,” in *The Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts*, ed. Veli-Matti Karkkainen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 53-68.

A “Pentecostal theology/spirituality” may be best understood not by looking at what Pentecostals say, but rather by analyzing their experiential expressions or spirituality. This worldview or spirituality is codified through religious symbols and practices such as *glossolalia* and healings, supernatural interventions, participative worship, and expressions in music. By reflecting, adapting, and appropriating the Scripture into new and refreshing perspectives that are informed by their supernatural worldview, framed by their historical context, and empowered by the Spirit—a dynamic hermeneutic emerges—a praxis hermeneutic—that enables Pentecostals to “do theology from the bottom up.”

Applying the Method

Although not without risks, this hermeneutical method is remarkably trustworthy even when the interpreter is uninformed, untrained and naïve because it is done within the community of faith. I borrow and adapt a most fitting illustration from Professor Michael Sugrue. When a contemporary musician “interprets” Beethoven, the audience does not have the original Beethoven, meaning they obviously have an interpretation of Beethoven. For the audience to hear Beethoven, the music score has certain notes that are essential. If the interpreter decides to play Bach, no matter how beautifully, the audience will not hear Beethoven. If the musician decides to play her own notes, or if the musician is inept, then the audience does not hear Beethoven. The authenticity of the interpretation of Beethoven emerges, however, when the audience is no longer thinking about the musician—but rather when they find themselves simply enjoying the music of Beethoven. Where is the exact moment when one stops listening to the interpreter and hears the original? I am not sure, but I know it when I hear it!

Occasionally, to be sure, there will be interpretive flights of fancy. When error is apparent, however, the local community does not hesitate to correct it. While it may be difficult to describe exactly when and how the interpreter has transgressed the boundaries of authentic interpretation, most everyone within the community recognizes (discerns) the errors when they see/hear them.

Running the Risks

What are the guiding principles for a process like this? What avoids a purely postmodern relativist meaning of the text?³ While the answer may be cloaked in ambiguity, not everything is unclear. For example, the commitment to the fundamental tenets of evangelical orthodox doctrines is not negotiable. But much is negotiable as the following common questions illustrate:

- Is there a process of reflective thinking and action where the principles and precepts of the biblical text are not abused?
- How can Pentecostals find their way among the complexity and diversity of voices and opinions?
- How can they safeguard the text from the interpreter who reads his or her own subjective impressions into that text?
- How can they respond with contextual resolutions that are meaningful and informed by their Pentecostal pre-understanding, but remain true to the "spirit" of the biblical record?

Clearly, resolving the interpretive predicament with questions of what can be known and how, and what should be valued, is anything but an easy task. But even the risk of misinterpretation in reading and interpreting the Bible where "meaning" emerges at the intersection between one's world and the world of the text should not preclude hermeneutical practice. When readers are willing to take the challenge of the text seriously in application to their daily contexts, they are in a better position, in keeping with Christopher Rowland's observation, "to hear what the text has to say." It would seem there is little to lose, and so much to gain.⁴

³There is a certain irony in the use of the term "postmodern" to describe a hermeneutical method that until recently would have been labeled "pre-modern." In the space of just a few years, Latin American Pentecostals leapfrogged the rationality of the enlightenment and landed in the future, ahead of their time, as theological postmodernists!

⁴A recent survey of North American evangelicals underscores a biblical illiteracy that is both shocking and appalling. Pentecostals, while scoring abysmally, were nonetheless more knowledgeable and biblically orthodox than all other evangelical groups! I cannot demonstrate it empirically, but after teaching for 25 years in Central America, I have been amazed that within a few months of conversion, Pentecostal believers demonstrate high levels of biblical literacy and respect for biblical orthodoxy. The argument that experience-oriented and emotional Pentecostals think with their hearts--while the more traditional and rational evangelicals think with their heads, and therefore the conclusion that Pentecostals must be theologically suspect--is likely just another stereotype.

Some conservative theologians, especially Westerners, may be haunted by a style of postmodern theological thought that pursues questions of shifting contextual purpose and subjective meaning. Few evangelical scholars, including Pentecostals, would deny a sense of profound uncertainty about a “postmodern hermeneutic” that celebrates what may seem to be a regional fragmentation fraught with subjectivism and relativism. But can creative and dynamic theological reflection, concerning problems like poverty, sickness, oppression, and marginalization, be forthcoming, if rules and procedures about what is permissible hold the theological process hostage?

Challenge 2 – Further Development of an Essential Connectedness: Social Concern and the Biblical Text

Clearly, Pentecostals find little difficulty reading their Bibles and interpreting the guidance of the Spirit in such a way that moves them to ask for a better life for themselves and for their community. They readily show concern for other people’s material and spiritual needs. Having demonstrated theological reflective evaluation of their individual action as it relates to personal morality and holiness, now Pentecostals must recognize the need to establish an “essential connectedness” between their experience of Spirit baptism (and other experiences of divine encounter) and the practice of social action. To respond even more effectively to the extreme needs that surround them, Pentecostals would do well to focus on the formulation of a social doctrine that enables them to evaluate their own actions and stimulate new thinking, a redefinition of methods, and out-of-the-box social action strategies.⁵ Some of the most critical biblical and theological components comprising a coherent ethic of social concern are as follows:

⁵Murray W. Dempster has done the most comprehensive work at connecting a Pentecostal social ethic to Spirit baptism. See “The Structure of Christian Ethic Informed by Pentecostal Experience: Soundings in the Moral Significance of Glossolalia, in *The Spirit and Spirituality*, eds. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies (New York: T & T International, 2004), 108-140.

*Biblical and Theological Foundations of Social Concern*⁶

- God is at the center of all theological and ethical reflection and action. He is incomparable, sovereign, and unique. God is the Creator and ruler of all things. He is like no other. God is loving, just, and holy. He alone is our God and he alone is worthy of our worship.

- God created us in his own image and he desires to make himself known to every person reconciling the world to himself, through Jesus Christ, his own Son. God entrusts to us this ministry of reconciliation. Jesus has called us to be “his witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth.”

- All persons are created in God’s own image (Gen. 1:27). God endows persons with rights that entitle them to be treated with dignity, respect, and justice based solely on the reality that they bear his image.

- Moral actions should be modeled after an imitation of God’s character. The basic ethical principle predominant in the Old Testament was that as God is, so God’s people should be. As God acts, so God’s people ought to act. Actions that demeaned, devalued, or otherwise diminished the dignity of any of God’s created people were contrary to the nature of the character of God.

- The law and the covenant, established by God with His people after the Exodus event, contained an explicit prescription for what moral behavior and social justice should look like in the daily activities of life: The Ten Commandments (Exodus) and the law codes (Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy) spelled out in concrete terms that the ethical principles of love, justice, and holiness were inherent in God’s character. God’s people, therefore, were to freely extend compassion to the poor and needy including the displaced farmer, the widow, the orphan, the alien, the stranger, the hired servant, and the debtor.

- On the basis of this unfolding revelation of God’s moral character and the prescriptions for moral behavior in the law and the covenant, the people of God developed a corresponding ethical view by which to judge the quality of their social and ethical life. When their actions did not measure up to God’s character and injustice prevailed, the prophets reminded Israel that to be God’s people, they needed to act like God’s people.

- Jesus’ teachings on how life should be lived were firmly rooted in the ethical tradition of the Old Testament. Jesus taught and embodied what life in the Kingdom should look like. The Kingdom of

⁶For a popular version see, “Why Compassion is Not Enough,” in *The Pentecostal Evangel*, Sept. 23, 2012, 14-15, 18.

God that will consummate at the end of this age has already broken into the present. This supernatural reign is dynamically active among all people. Those who have submitted to the rule of the King can expect to be agents of the Kingdom for love, justice and holiness, bringing good news to the poor, sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed. This redeemed community, in its actions to bring about spiritual and social transformation, declares that the Kingdom of God has pressed into the present.

It is these principles of love, justice, and holiness that served as the moral foundation for the ethical structuring of the early church. In the Acts account, for example, (as I shall note shortly), the community of faith was to break down the entrenched gender (Acts 2), economic (Acts 4-5), cultural (Acts 9) and religious barriers (Acts 19) of a divided world. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and the experience of Spirit baptism were to provide the power as to actualize these ethical demands and put them into practice. By the time the story of Acts concludes, this Spirit-empowered community had taken the good news of the gospel to every corner of the Roman Empire.

In summary, theological and ethical reflection must begin with an understanding of God's self-revelatory nature and character. Israel's socio-ethical actions were to demonstrate this theocentric nature and character. The law and the covenant provided a prescription of what life should look like for the people of God. The ministry of the prophets reminded God's people of what it meant to live according to his character. Firmly within the tradition of the prophets, Jesus taught and embodied what life in the Kingdom should look like. This ethical construct served as the moral foundation of the primitive Christian church and the experience of Spirit baptism provided the power to actualize these ethical demands.

Challenge 3 – The Importance of “Discerning the Body” in the Community of Faith

As stated earlier, it is possible for Pentecostals, committed to a God who breaks into human history and utterly dependent upon the Spirit for empowerment, to practice a moral imagination that envisions a future with creative and innovative social action programs. This moral imagination that includes Spirit baptism as an empowering focus

in pursuit of justice could be a unique contribution of the Pentecostal tradition to evangelical social praxis.⁷

However, practicing a moral imagination is more than coming up with a few inspired ideas. A moral imagination is comprised of, indeed links together, a set of distinct parts. Being morally imaginative means embracing a systematic and entrepreneurial approach that links to and expresses the intent of the biblical text.

Social action, then, driven by a vision of the future, links together and integrates the teachings of Jesus with an aim to achieve the desired outcome.⁸ To be sure, actions that minister to the poor who surround the community of faith are essential. But if Pentecostals are to practice all that “Jesus said or did,” they will need to take seriously the ramifications of spiritual discernment, the supernatural, and divine empowerment; and they will need to start at home.

The Acts of the Apostles and the Breaking Down of Barriers

The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and its contemporary application through spiritual transformation integrated the ethical character of God’s reign into the moral fabric of the community of faith. By the help of the power of the Spirit, their task was to produce a living model, for the world to see, how the ethical demands of the Kingdom were to become operative and actualized in their own community.

From the concept of the transfer of Jesus’ ministry to the disciples by the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost one can discern in the Acts’ narrative an organizing principle for such a model. The Kingdom ethic of Jesus was to be made operational within the charismatic community by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Certain ethical strands can be established between the Acts’ account of Holy Spirit baptism and social justice and traced backward through Jesus’ Kingdom teaching in Luke and the other synoptics to the Old Testament moral tradition of the Law and the Prophets. An analysis of the transfer of Jesus’ authority for ministry to the disciples at Pentecost provides a hermeneutical foundation for the structuring of the apostolic community as the narrative unfolds. Jesus’ ministry was to fulfill the entire Old Testament—including the demands of social

⁷For a fuller discussion see, “A Moral Imagination,” 53-68.

⁸Here I borrow this framework from Patricia H. Werhane, *Moral Imagination and Management Decision Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

justice. Even though the category of justice is not utilized by Luke, the Holy Spirit is presented in Acts as the One who empowers the church to overcome within its own community the entrenched gender, economic, cultural, and religious barriers of a divided world.

In Acts 2, the gender distinctions of male and female were overcome by the empowerment of the Spirit. In Acts 4 and 5, the economic distinctions between rich and poor were overcome in the economic *koinonia* established by the power of the Spirit. In Acts 10, the cultural distinctions between Jew and Gentile were overcome within the Christian community by the coming of the Spirit. In Acts 19, the religious distinctions between the disciples of Jesus and the disciples of John the Baptist were overcome by the power of the Spirit to instigate the first Christian ecumenism. By the time the story of the Acts concludes, the gospel had gone unbounded throughout the world by means of the Spirit-empowered apostolic community. The gospel had the power to institute in the practice of the believing community the Kingdom ethic of Jesus, which fulfilled the Old Testament proclamation for social justice to reign.

Discerning the Body in Corinth and Everywhere Else

But all too often, even within the “ideal” first century community of faith, there was a disconnect between the real and ideal; a disconnect that threatened to extinguish divine life. It is with Paul’s account of the Lord’s Supper and his admonitions to the Corinthian community that I bring this lectureship to a close. In this narrative that includes the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the risen Christ, Paul preaches us a sermon. We are a mystical community and we must never forget it. In fact, everything depends upon it. We must give more attention to our relationships with one another in the body of Christ. Our task, and our absolute joy, is to receive anew the benefits of God’s grace within the context of our relationships with one another by truly welcoming everyone in our community which is, after all, the body of Christ. We are without distinction recipients of the same grace.

Our mission as a welcoming community is focused on Jesus and centered in the cross. The cross provides us the authority for what we do. The enemies of sin, suffering, sickness, poverty, oppression and injustice, are defeated and destroyed because of the power of the cross. Whatever methods we might use to address the needs of people, we must “ultimately” include God’s answer to the human predicament, the good news of the gospel. The good news, foretold in the Old Testament, and fulfilled in the New Testament through the incarnation,

cross, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is the forgiveness of sins and gift of eternal life offered to all persons who repent of their sins and by faith declare Jesus Christ is Lord.

As the people of God we are called to live a holy, ethical life that is to be lived before God and in sight of the nations. As God is in his character so we should be, as God acts so we should act. Actions and social practices that embody love, justice, and holiness reflecting God's own ethical character constitute the normative moral structure in a social ethic reflective of Old and New Testament teachings. For Pentecostals, the experience of Spirit baptism provides access to empowerment not only to evangelize or experience miracles, divine healing and other supernatural interventions of the Spirit, but the power of the Holy Spirit enables us to demonstrate in tangible terms God's own character and empowers us to be living examples of everything Jesus said and did.

When we preach to the poor, proclaim freedom for prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind and release the oppressed, our actions stand as a signpost, declaring to the world what life should look like in God's Kingdom. For the Pentecostal community of faith, a social ethic saturated with spiritual discernment and supernatural empowerment becomes a powerful tool for creative thinking and action to practice all that "Jesus said or did."

INTIMACY WITH GOD AS AN INVITING ASPECT OF
PENTECOSTALISM'S WORD, DEED, AND
POWER EXPRESSION OF THE GOOD NEWS GOSPEL

V.J.D-Davidson

Introduction

In the past few decades Pentecostal theology has seen such a rise in academic endeavour that differing trends of thought are emerging with the conflict that is inevitable in any field of study. However, the deepening debates among members of the Pentecostal body appear to have turned Pentecostal thought into something of a 'closed shop' which is dismissed as somewhat irrelevant by the wider evangelical body. This dismissal continues despite the world-wide impact being made by outward-looking socially-relevant Pentecostals exemplified in Philip Jenkins' epoch-making book that church growth challenge of Christianity in the Global South cannot be ignored.¹ In *Next Christendom*, Jenkins announced that much of this growing church body showed Pentecostal characteristics.² Yet perhaps the Pentecostal distinctives that he points to have become the barrier that restricts wider evangelical input into the discussion.

Jenkins suggests that much of the Global South's lifestyle has more in common with that of the Old Testament than the New Testament and that this then leads to, particularly in the African context, the immediate relevance of concepts such as covenant, sacrifice, ritual and everyday involvement with spirits. As a result, what emerges is something of a fundamentalist faith deeply influenced by superstition in which removal of evil spirits through exorcism is considered a normal part of Christianity. Little wonder that the wider

¹Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), n.p.

²Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), n.p.

and Western part of the evangelical body is liable to find such an approach to the Bible and focused attention to the availability and work of the Holy Spirit somewhat unpalatable. Since Jenkins links such an approach to Christianity with Pentecostalism, the wider evangelical body finds itself all the more out of its depth and, not surprisingly, unwilling to engage in dialogue.

But is this dialogue between Evangelicals and Pentecostals truly lost? At this point, we must turn to David Bosch, who, in his influential work, *Transforming Mission*, suggested that the way forward for mission in the 21st century was through ecumenism. Certainly ecumenism's major body, the World Council of Churches (WCC), seemed to have long lost its original evangelical influence through the liberal majority voice after the Second World War, but with the 2005 Athens gathering a change was seen. The title of the gathering was "Come Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile: Called in Christ to be Healing and Reconciling Communities." For the first time Pentecostal scholars were given a voice in the ecumenical arena. At a time when the Evangelical voice is getting louder in ecumenism, and Pentecostals are now joining them in order to reach the world's lost together, how much more urging does the Pentecostal academic voice need to make the message and promise of Pentecostalism more relevant to the wider evangelical body?

With an eye to wider relevancy, this paper explores the underrated dynamic of intimacy with respect to Pentecostalism's Spirit-infilling and in relation to its expression of the Gospel in word, deed and power. The particular and widely held theological perception of Pentecostalism's Holy Spirit in-filling as an empowerment for witness³ may have put an unhelpful emphasis on doing that has eclipsed the aspect of being in relationship with God. Furthermore, this paper certainly does not advocate that Pentecostalism's Baptism in the Holy Spirit is either a mark of spiritual maturity or a badge of holiness. Rather, its purpose is to examine the Pentecostal experience, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and appeal to the wider evangelical body to consider the resulting greater intimacy with God that motivates Christians in both a more vibrant witness to Him as well as socially-concerned service.

³For contemporary recognition see for instance Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2010), 9.

Although this inviting, but somewhat underrated aspect of Pentecostal spirituality has not been well attended to in the academic arena, it certainly appears in the literature as will be seen.

The ‘Purpose’ Debate

James Dunn’s, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit*,⁴ was a benchmark work in the early seventies which applied rigorous scholarship to suggest that the Pentecostal terminology refers merely to a conversion-initiation experience. Questioning the historical Pentecostal understanding of Spirit baptism as a secondary experience, Dunn’s respected thesis long held sway until his interpretation was challenged with the thesis that the purpose of Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an empowering for witness.

In the context of the Spirit in the Old Testament, McQueen, among others, sees that “to have the Spirit of Yahweh is to be empowered.”⁵ In the context of Joel 2:28-32, the promise of the Spirit appears to highlight an empowerment for prophecy.

The ‘purpose’ debate becomes finer tuned in reference to Lukan pneumatology. The step, which saw the gospel writer accepted as a theologian in his own right, also opened the way for suggestions that his pneumatology reflects Pentecostal interests throughout. Menzies, for instance, proposes that Lukan pneumatology is of the ‘prophetic’ as opposed to the soteriological.⁶ However, the wider evangelical academic body dismissed this as less than convincing. More widely, Wonsuk Ma sees ‘the primary role of the Spirit in the believer’s life as empowering them for service.’⁷ However, Pentecostal scholars disagree among themselves on crucial points of this argument. Turner prefers that “For Luke, the Spirit is the charismatic dimension of *all* Christian life and mission, not merely of the one or of the other”

⁴James Dunn, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1970), page number missing.

⁵Larry McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit – The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 41.

⁶Robert Menzies, *Empowered for Witness* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 257.

⁷Wonsuk Ma, “Pentecostal Worship in Asia: Its Theological Implications and Contributions.” Siga Arles, Lily Lim, Tan-Chow Mayling and Brian Wintle eds. *The Pastor and Theological Education: Essays in Memory of Rev. Derek Tan*. (Bangalore: Trinity Christian Centre, Singapore; Asia Theological Association, 2007), 133.

(Italics mine).⁸ Roger Stronstad differentiates meaning associated with Lukan phrases which refer to the Spirit so that “the term ‘full of the Holy Spirit’ describes the enabling of the Spirit for ministry, whereas the term ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’ describes the prophetic office and inspiration.”⁹ Regardless of the polarizing effect provoked by Stronstad, both the terms suggest a moving forwards in relationship with God as one steps into a role of greater responsibilities requiring heightened co-operation with the Holy Spirit.

Regarding this potential for heightened relationship, Turner suggests that “the [Lukan] ‘Spirit of prophecy’ . . . becomes the sole means (after Jesus’ ascension) by which the disciple is made aware of the presence and direction of the Father and the Son. . . and by becoming their revealer-teacher and guide simultaneously becomes the Spirit-Advocate through them to the world.”¹⁰ Thus, Turner points to the true and deep relationship brought by the Spirit who unites the disciples with God and, from this unity, touches the unbelieving world through expressing the Gospel in word, deed and power.

An over-emphasis on the role of the Spirit as empowering for service, however, may result in a spirituality that ignores, or worse, denies, the inevitability of times and seasons requiring rest, reflection, and renewal of ‘being’. Living with such spirituality can easily lend itself to a subtle but unhealthy works-oriented outlook and/or ministerial burnout. This is not a helpful witness for less spiritually mature Pentecostals let alone the wider evangelical body. For this reason, the purpose of this paper is to highlight the potential for enhanced intimacy with God through Pentecostalism’s Spirit-infilling rather than emphasize empowerment for service as its result. In addition, the intimacy wrought by Spiritual unity is an underrated vehicle for confidence and faith in the believer who then reaches out to the world in word, deed, and power. These word and deed expressions of the Gospel, then, are an inevitable result of God’s mysteries revealed through His Spirit to those open to such leading (1 Cor 2:9,10). This intimacy with God that enables one to think His thoughts after Him and/or speak out prophetically as a result of this relationship and keeps one open to the myriad and powerful possibilities of service to others

⁸Max Turner, *Power From on High* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 455.

⁹Roger Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 1995), 95.

¹⁰Turner, *Power From On High*, 438.

for Him when living ‘under the sway of the Spirit’.¹¹ As a result, enhanced intimacy with God inevitably results in a life that overflows with His love in willing service rather than serves out of perceived obligation based on lesser motives.

By highlighting the role of the potential for enhanced intimacy with God and resulting life-changing service, Pentecostal outreach with its renewed eye for social concern makes itself a more viable and attractive option for those of the wider evangelical circle.

An in-depth discussion of Spirit baptism (or Spirit-infilling) and the manifestation of tongues - Pentecostalism’s major distinctives among Christian denominations - is beyond the scope of this paper. The key aspects presented provide only the context for the discussion of the underrated issue of intimacy.

The question of the manifestation of other tongues as the ‘initial evidence’ of receiving Baptism in the Holy Spirit is as hotly debated these days as in earlier times. But, much of this debate is now merely between Pentecostal scholars since Charismatic believers and the wider evangelical body no longer appear to acknowledge the need for such discussion. However, since the Pentecostal outpouring was intended for all God’s people, it is necessary for Pentecostals to speak to those beyond the boundaries of their denominations.

Two aspects of the continuing debate that will be seen to find their common ground in the concept of intimacy are as follows: First, on the question of whether there actually needs to be ‘initial evidence,’ Turner asks:

Why would systematic theology suspect there should necessarily be – or even be – ‘initial evidence at all? It may theologically be predictable that God would confirm his gift of the Spirit in some demonstrable way *where otherwise the church* (or parts of it) *may have doubts* (e.g. in the admission of Samaritans or Gentiles to the people of God). But it is not clear why he should be expected to do so in regular circumstances. One does not receive the impression that the God of the bible looks particularly favourably on the human search for ‘proofs’ of such a kind, and if anything it is ‘subsequent’ and ‘ongoing’ evidence – does the life and service of the believer demonstrate the presence and power of

¹¹Earnest S. Jones, *The Christ of Every Road: A Study in Pentecost* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 91.

the Spirit? – That is the real issue, not the phenomenological character of some initial ‘moment.’¹²

From Turner’s analysis, evidence of the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit may be extracted from the change in a believer’s life and service. It may be that the ‘evidence’ or ‘proofs’ that Turner prefers are those marked by an increase in intimacy and fellowship with God – an intimacy which cannot help but result in attractiveness of being and vibrancy of doing through words and deeds that are marked by non-earthly power. Second, on the question of ‘ongoing’ or ‘alternative’ as opposed to ‘initial’ evidence, Tan May Ling notes that “our exegetical support comes solely from the Acts narrative. Two out of five accounts of Spirit-baptism did not explicitly mention tongues. May we not infer from this ambiguity that there are other non-audio/visual ‘evidences’ of Spirit-baptism?”¹³

In the same journal Macchia writes, “tongues hold potential for renewing our sense of awe and wonder in the presence of God that is so vital to a vibrant worship and personal piety”¹⁴ from which can be clearly seen the link with heightened intimacy of relationship with God. However, Macchia continues by saying “Spirit baptism is not just about tongues. We cannot lock Spirit baptism into a glossolalia straight-jacket so that the former becomes inconceivable apart from the latter. But viewed in the wider context of our discussion, Spirit baptism is fundamentally and integrally about what tongues symbolises.”¹⁵ Macchia refers to Jean-Daniel Pluss in his discussion of this symbolism: “Pluss finds value in tongues as symbolic of an in-depth experience with God and he finds power in the testimonies about such experiences, because they serve as metaphors that continue to encourage these experiences.”¹⁶ Again, a link can be seen between Spirit-baptism’s tongues and experience of an increased intimacy with God.

Often overlooked is the fact that tongues as the initial evidence of Spirit baptism was “not in the first pentecostal [sic] declaration of faith,” but was a doctrine associated with North

¹²Max Turner, “Tongues: An Experience for All?,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (July 1998): 249-251.

¹³May Ling Tan, “Response to Macchia,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (July 1998): 179.

¹⁴Frank Macchia, “Groans Too Deep for Words,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (July 1998): 164.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 153.

American Assemblies of God which hermeneutically informed Pentecostal scholars eventually had to concede was hard to defend.¹⁷

Macchia is also reluctant to line up with the tongues as initial evidence doctrine and argues:

There are many who feel that the Pentecostals have elevated tongues far beyond the teaching of scripture in granting them such doctrinal and confessional status. Some would even conclude that we have thereby elevated our own sense of self-importance as among the only bearers of the Spirit's fullness, since we are among the only ones who speak in tongues. The criticism follows that we have neglected the exclusive place of love and holiness as the only really vital marks of life in the Spirit.¹⁸

In a similar vein, Haughey writes "Before sending the Spirit, Jesus left [the disciples] with the commandment to love one another as he had loved them. With the sending of the Spirit, love was to be not a commandment to be observed but a description of the way they lived with one another. The key test of the presence of the Spirit is love."¹⁹ As has previously been offered, it would be inappropriate to suggest that the Pentecostal baptism marks one out as having achieved some particular level of spiritual maturity or, indeed, that receiving the baptism automatically accords some spiritual status or measure of spirituality. With love as the benchmark, however, the presence of God is unquestionably manifest. Love that builds up, protects, hopes and perseveres is tangible fruit of the intimacy shared with the heavenly Father who gives good gifts to all who ask.

Moving from evidence through manifestation of tongues to evidence through manifestations of love might seem to be an over-exaggerated response with an inevitable polarising effect. It is clear that Pentecostal scholarship has competing views on the issue of 'tongues as evidence (or not)' but this paper suggests that the uniting factor underlying these competing views lies in the issue of potential for heightened relationship with God. Moreover, the non-earthly Holy Spirit power that fuels purely unselfish words and deeds provides an attractive witness to a relationship with the God of unconditional love

¹⁷Walter Hollenweger, "Rethinking Spirit Baptism," *Pentecostals after a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition*, JPT Sup. 15. (1999), 166.

¹⁸Macchia, 151.

¹⁹John Haughey, *The Conspiracy of God* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1995), 56.

who is the source of that power. Furthermore, the expression of Holy Spirit power through Pentecostals need not be loud, raucous and therefore offensive to some but may also be quiet, gentle and unobtrusive²⁰ as through words and deeds of self-denial and intentional acts of grace and graciousness.

Further to the ‘initial’ versus ‘ongoing’ evidence debate, Matthew Clark suggests that tongues are “certainly not the *only* evidence of baptism in the Spirit.”²¹ The classic response to the ‘tongues as evidence debate’ surely belongs to Fee who, on the basis of historical precedent, suggested as long ago as 1976: “If the Pentecostals may not say one must speak in tongues, he [sic] may surely say, why *not* speak in tongues?” (Italics mine)²²

Rather than over-emphasize proclamation or ‘doing,’ Christians can be encouraged to welcome an increasing intimacy with God through Spirit-infilling which in turn leads to ‘doing’ their service and witness as the outflow of their ‘being.’

The issue of intimacy with God also impacts one possible reason why not all who seek the baptism in the Spirit immediately speak in tongues. This reason is perhaps grounded in the approach to receiving. It is not uncommon when believers are encouraged to seek the Pentecostal Holy Spirit in-filling, that the focus is, rather unwisely, on acquisition of the filling and manifestation of tongues rather than on Christ as the one who held out the challenge to receive such an infilling. More appropriately, believers can be encouraged to cry out for a deeper intimacy with Jesus their Lord so that, in seeking and asking for more of Him, the Holy Spirit may fall upon them or rise up through them in their praises of joy rather than cries of desperation - an outflowing of praise which provides an inviting platform for the manifestation of tongues and the potential for even greater heightening of intimacy.

A summary of the above shows that the concept of intimacy can be seen, either directly or through implication, as common ground for the differing opinions of the purpose of the Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit and, similarly, for the ‘initial evidence’ debate. In

²⁰Cf. Groeschel cited after M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1993), 99.

²¹Matthew Clark, “Initial Evidence: A South African Perspective,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1:2 (July 1998): 213.

²²Gordon Fee, “Hermeneutics and Historical Precedent,” in *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism*, ed. R. Spittler (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), 132.

addition, Turner suggests that “Luke regards the Spirit as playing an important role in the shaping of [a] new awareness of God.”²³ Ma also urges that “what stands out in the Pentecostal tradition is more than cognitive awareness of God’s being. It is rather a tangible encounter with the great God, and such experience affects the whole human being including one’s feelings and will power.”²⁴ Both of these quotes illustrate the concept of Pentecostalism’s link with the potential for a heightened relationship with God. Ma’s “tangible encounter with the great God” through the Holy Spirit infilling has the potential to take one beyond the “ought to” of service in Jesus’ name to the “love to” outlook which serves the wider community in a socially relevant way, in step with the heart of God through the leading of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Haughey notes the experiential example of the disciple Peter in that, “when the Spirit came, the power of Peter’s faith as also the faith of the other followers of Jesus, would be dramatically deepened.”²⁵ Deepened faith implies a relationship with God marked by increased trust – and in Peter’s case a heightened relationship with resulting evidence. This is clearly seen in the New Testament account of the day of Pentecost when the intimate encounter with God in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Spirit baptism worked in Peter a new confidence and boldness to step out and testify of his personal Lord Jesus Christ. Transformed faith came, perhaps, not from a revelation of knowledge that enabled convincing explanation of the Pentecost event, but rather from the joy and awe of a new and deeper intimacy with God which resulted in Peter being able to freely speak the scripture-rich truth on his heart.

Biblical Evidence for the Dynamic of Intimacy Inherent in Pentecostal Experience.

As previously mentioned, on the day of Pentecost, having been filled with the Spirit, “Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who are in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you: listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel’” (Acts 2:14–16 NIV). Peter’s understanding of Pentecost as the fulfilment of the prophecy of

²³Turner, *Power from on High*, 436.

²⁴Ma (2007), 137

²⁵Haughey, 55.

Joel gave scriptural backing for the event which was as equally amazing to some as it was offensive to others.

McQueen suggests that Peter drew on verses from the slightly wider context of Joel 2:27 – 3:3 (NIV) i.e.:

Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be ashamed. And afterwards, I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens. . . In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel. . .

In these verses McQueen sees Yahweh “assure his people of his presence among them” and further that with respect to the promises of outpouring of the Spirit, and fruitfulness within the loci of salvation blessing: “The goal of these promises of salvation is that his people may know Yahweh” (italics mine)...[so that] the promise of the spirit of Yahweh functions here as the guarantee of the fulfilment of his promises, especially the promise of the knowledge of Yahweh.”²⁶ James Crenshaw sees that the ‘recognition formula’ encompassed by the promise that Yahweh’s people will know him, “demonstrates Yahweh’s presence and uniqueness within the covenant relationship.”²⁷ However uncertain and unsure they might be, their doubts regarding the character and purposes of God would be defused through a heightened relationship with Him.

This analysis highlights the place of intimacy in a new depth of blessed awareness and knowledge of the God of the covenant. Such relationship-founded knowledge does a great deal more than challenge intellectually; rather, it cannot help but stir the heart and breathe fire into the soul in a way that influences the will to step out in word and deed.

McQueen also sees that with respect the promise of the Spirit, “Joel is not introducing a new promise here, [rather] Joel 3:1-2 continues the tradition of Isaiah... [as seen, for instance in Isaiah 32:15 and 44:3] as well as Ezekiel [as seen in Ezekiel 39:29]”.²⁸

²⁶McQueen, 40.

²⁷James Crenshaw, *Joel*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 159.

²⁸McQueen, 40.

Building on the concept of the outpouring of the Spirit in terms of a promise within the loci of wider blessing for Yahweh's people, McQueen also notes that: "the result of the pouring out of the spirit [sic] of Yahweh will be that everyone will stand in a relationship of immediacy with God."²⁹

McQueen's 'relationship of immediacy' can't help but imply something of the experience of intimacy. This is not to say that such intimacy is never abused, and abuse certainly occurs when Holy Spirit leading is taken advantage of for unsound purposes. But without spiritual intimacy the 'works of the Father' are liable to remain hidden. The New Testament paints a picture of Jesus' intimate relationship with his Heavenly Father marked by His willing and sacrificial performance of the deeds and words of the Father on earth.

That Jesus' ministry went hand in hand with that of the Spirit is very clear. Jesus went so far as to promise the disciples in the context of His teaching on the Holy Spirit as counselor and Spirit of truth, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father" John 14: 12 (NIV). It is clear that such a promise is based on the concept of relationship – relationship which is committed, consistent, vibrant and demonstrated by the loving obedience of Jesus to his Heavenly Father. The relationship is one of intimacy and this intimacy may be seen in terms of both the Old and New Testament witness to the promise and coming of the Spirit.

On the Place of Intimacy

Of Jesus and his ministry with respect to the presence of the Holy Spirit, Haughey suggests that:

The spirit gradually made him privy to the secrets of the Kingdom...any statement that Jesus makes about God or any work he does in God's name is a sign of the presence and power of the Spirit at work in Jesus. The Spirit makes Jesus conscious of God as Father, His love and providence. The Spirit inspires in Jesus a desire for union with God in his prayer, in his works, in his will. The Spirit does not develop a Spirit-consciousness as such in Jesus, but an unbroken awareness of union with the Father.³⁰

²⁹Ibid., 41-42.

³⁰Haughey, 13.

For Jesus, then, the Spirit and Jesus' doing of the works of his Father as ministry are inseparable. Further, the depth of relationship that was marked by a desire for and awareness of union demonstrated obedience and service which was a delight rather than a duty, a revelling in relationship rather than a show of spiritual authority or power underwritten by pride. The Pentecostal gift which launched the witnesses of the early church, undoubtedly testified to effectiveness in the ministry of that church in terms of life-transforming power. Without God's power there are only empty words, and without God's presence there is merely the mechanic of action without the dynamic of compassion, sacrifice and love that are of His character and communicated through intimacy with Him.

Of this latter observation, another key issue is expressed – that of the vital place of love in any expression of ministry through the Holy Spirit. Paul's recommendations to the Corinthian Christians clearly underscored the essential place of love, without which any ministry for the kingdom is an anathema. Intimacy speaks of closeness that has a care towards the other party's interests and needs. Jesus' teaching suggests that without the indwelling Holy Spirit bearing witness to His person and teaching, the disciples would be extremely limited in their knowledge and expression of God's love for the world.

The mission left to the disciples by Jesus was more than a technical exercise. It required the power He promised them and it anticipated growth in numbers of followers as well as in the knowledge and understanding of Him. Little wonder that one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. Little wonder that as they witnessed to the risen Christ, Spirit baptized believers spoke with a new confidence on the day of Pentecost. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was more than a technical accomplishment. The Holy Spirit appears to have drawn them intimately to the very heart of God so that they could prophesy according to His leading with a love-inspired delight, fearless against opposition. Intimacy, confidence and power worked together when "the outpouring of the Spirit was rightly understood as God coming near."³¹ Again, and through the concept of "God coming near," we perceive a heightened relationship with God.

³¹McQueen, 105.

On Relationship and Unity

“Pentecost affected the whole position of the disciples. In the moment when the Holy Spirit fell upon them, they. . . were changed from being merely followers of the Messiah into members of the risen Lord. . . By the Holy Spirit, Jesus is henceforth to be Lord, while loyal subjects to His dominion are, by the indwelling of the Spirit, to pass into the realization of the will of God.”³² A true commitment to Christ’s Lordship inevitably brings with it an increasing desire to grow in Him and know Him better. This not only works itself individually, but even more so in the context of the body of Christ on earth, the church. The heightened intimacy that comes with Spirit in-filling brings with it greater sensitivity to God’s will and obedience that loves to serve.

Jesus prayed that “they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent...[and further asks:] May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:3,23 NIV). Undoubtedly the church lives and grows in the unity of the bond of the Spirit and this very unity witnesses Christ to the world at large. A desire for greater intimacy with God inevitably overflows into the believer’s relationship with those inside and outside the church. How much more then should the Pentecostal gift’s enabling confidence in witness increase unity in the corporate witness of the church? The intimacy that encourages Christians in boldness and confidence equally sows inter-relational sensitivity that prefers the will of God to selfish desires. Indeed, the account of the early church in Acts chapter four, among other New Testament indications, reveals a body marked by a caring spirit for the needs of others and a practical outlook that saw attention to action as paramount. This aspect of ‘doing’ under the common Lordship of Christ can quite reasonably be linked with the fruit of the ‘being’ which came from a new unity recently begun at the Pentecostal outpouring, and which worked out in a holism of spiritual and social concern.

Conclusion

Having presented various aspects of the ongoing debates within the Pentecostal movement itself, this paper has attempted to show that the common ground of differing, even competing, viewpoints

³²G. Campbell Morgan and Charles Spurgeon, *Understanding the Holy Spirit* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995), 87.

in the 'purpose' and 'initial evidence' debates lies in the cornerstone of intimacy in man's relationship with God. It has also been shown that the Old Testament source for the New Testament Pentecostal outpouring, with its promise of knowledge of God, also calls upon the phenomena of increased intimacy in relationship as foundational to its resulting fruit.

Intimacy lies at the very heart of God's desire in relationship with man, a relationship in which His transcendence calls forth awe, yet the reality of his immanent and unfathomable love in Jesus makes intimacy in relationship with Him possible. That the Pentecostal outpouring fine-tuned the disciples' spiritual awareness along the lines of God's priorities is beyond doubt. The Pentecostal gift was promised long ago and has been received by many whose life and witness have been intimately transformed. Where the wider evangelical body also seeks intimacy with the giver of the gift, that is all the more reason to reassign greater emphasis on the 'being' aspect of Pentecostalism as the vehicle for the prompting and expressed power of witness' 'doing'.

Opportunities have now emerged for a Pentecostal voice among the wider evangelical and ecumenical body. There is a new potential for unity in service together that can touch the world with a relevant, vital, and attractive message of deliverance and salvation.

Perhaps Pentecostals should not invite Christians of other denominations to become like us, but rather to become more like Christ. This we can do by modelling the place and role of the Holy Spirit in transforming us and others through us, as we gain boldness in witnessing to the One we know and love. This boldness and deeper trust is enabled by Pentecost's Spirit-infilling and provides the potential for an increasing depth of intimacy with God. This intimacy then empowers us to invite others into that same intimacy as fruit of Pentecostalism's Word, Deed and Power expression of the Gospel.

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Theology in Context:
**A CASE STUDY in the
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Foreword by Dr. Russ Turney



About the Author

Dave Johnson, D-Miss, has been an Assemblies of God (USA) missionary to the Philippines since 1994 and has conducted extensive research on lowland Filipino culture. He is also the author of *Led by the Spirit: The History of the American Assemblies of God Missionaries in the Philippines* and is the managing editor of the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, the theological journal of the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines. He can be contacted at www.aps.edu or through his own website, www.daveanddebbiejohnson.com.

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Dave Johnson, *Theology in Context: A Case Study in the Philippines*, foreword by J. Russell Turney (Baguio, Philippines: APTS Press, 2013), xii + 204 pp. ISBN 978-971-011-594-5. Available at www.aps.edu.

The publication of Dave Johnson's doctoral work is a welcome contribution to the quest of developing an authentic Filipino theology. His book *Theology in Context: A Case Study in the Philippines* is a perceptive study on what it takes to do theology in a Folk Catholic setting. The author correctly acknowledges that although the Philippines is known to be a Christian nation and predominantly Roman Catholic in population the indigenous practices of the traditional religion are taken for granted by the people. (1) The animistic worldview is still ingrained among the Filipinos. Johnson is not convinced by the Filipino Catholic thinkers. He thinks that Catholics are doing "cultural accommodation rather than transformation through the power of the Word of God." (2) Evangelicals and Pentecostals have done only minimal studies on animism. And "no such contextual theology, liberal or conservative currently exists" that deals with the Waray worldview. (2) His research therefore considers the Waray animistic religion in relationship with folk Catholicism as well as the factors that make the Assemblies of God thrive among this ethnic group, which lives mainly on the islands of Samar and Leyte in the central Philippines. Johnson views the Catholic Waray as practicing animistic folk religion and that the Assemblies of God impact to the Waray due to the gospel proclamation with signs and wonders is an effective link that can be accented in addressing the Waray religious understanding using the revelatory Christian Scripture. (4) The author conducted interviews for his investigation. He used research questionnaires to both sample population of the common people and Assemblies of God congregations. Questionnaires are well used and effectively executed. Johnson utilized the conventions of behavioral science to gather data for evaluation.

After an introduction, Johnson identifies Pedro Sumulat as the pioneer of the very first Assemblies of God work in Catbalogan, Samar in 1960—representing the first period of Assemblies of God work in Samar/Leyte from 1960 until 1972. The second period, from 1972 to 1988, highlights the impact of Zion Bible Institute. The third period, from 1988 onward is marked by the birth of the Leyte/Samar District Council of the Assemblies of God. In the second chapter Johnson deals

with the doctrine of salvation through the love of Christ. Door to door evangelism, home Bible studies and open air crusades with Christian concerts as well as radio broadcast and praying for healing were proven to be beneficial in church planting. The next chapter deals with the “Waray culture and worldview.” Johnson is correct to maintain that a Filipino is as serious about dealing with the spirit world as he is with deliverance from sin. (46) He also views “God,” “patron saints,” “this worldly spirit beings” and “the *anitos*, the spirits of the ancestors,” following Agaton Pal, as the “four tiers” of “the Waray spirit world.” (47) The fourth chapter talks about the roles of sorcerers who are bring terror through their black magic and witchdoctors who are heal the sick through their access to supernatural power. Johnson explains what sorcerers can do in bringing illness. The following chapter introduces the theological and contextual matters like the assumption that God is far off bringing a need for mediator. The concern of a mediator is a significant Christological question among the Waray.

Johnson’s tabulated data is very helpful from chapter six onwards. In chapter six Johnson observes that the Assemblies of God believers are over ninety-five percent praying to God alone while the general population of Samar/Leyte people prays to God, Virgin Mary and the Catholic saints (87-88). The Assemblies of God people pray to God or Jesus without a mediator while the general Waray population pray to God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Santo Nino, the saints and other spirits. (91, 93; cf. 94) The seventh chapter presents the disparity between the Pentecostals and the Catholics in their All Saints’ Day activities (108-110). And in response to the Waray views of fiesta Johnson contends that “the town fiesta is idolatry because the fiesta or at least the religious parts of it, is dedicated to the saint of the area in which it is being held.” (119) In the succeeding chapter Johnson demonstrates that the belief in the spirits, sorcerers and witchdoctors as a source of sickness is relatively similar for both the general population and Pentecostals (133). Additionally, while ninety-nine point six percent of the Assemblies of God people believe that God or Jesus heals sickness, over eighty percent of the general population attributes healing not only to God or Jesus, but also to witchdoctors, Santo Nino, other saints and the Virgin Mary (139). The essence of chapter nine is the idea that the Waray are doing religious practices to protect themselves from the evil spirits. The use of amulets for the general Waray population is notably low and those who will go to a pastor for prayer of protection is a bit high (149-150). The tenth chapter deals with the transformation of the people in the Assemblies of God

churches through the preaching of the gospel. Here Johnson analyzes the effect of the doctrine of salvation among the Waray Pentecostals. “In all cases, a positive paradigm shift had taken place in their lives.” (168)

The author concludes in the final chapter that “by preaching the gospel, accompanied by demonstrations of the power of God in healing and deliverance from demonic powers...contact points can be drawn between the Waray belief system and biblical teaching that will enable the gospel to be presented to the Waray” (184). Johnson’s conclusion is based on empirical research and shaped by his missionary experience. He is to be commended for taking the pains of researching the worldview of Filipino Folk Catholicism and articulating the biblical response to this way of thinking. The purpose of *Theology in Context* is “to first understand, respect, explain and engage this worldview while comparing it to biblical revelation” with the intention to demonstrate on “how Christians can impact this worldview through an explanation and demonstration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Filipino within their cultural context.” (1) He is able to demonstrate what he intended in his research. Johnson is correct to presuppose that “all theology is written with a particular worldview in mind.” (i) Thus, he asks “not so much as whether theology is written in context, but which context does it reflect?” (i) The approach that the author pursues throughout his research is ethnography at its best. A disturbing finding of Johnson is that only one pastor—in his questionnaires and interviews—talks about the Spirit baptism which is surprising, given that the Pentecostal distinctive has not been emphasized among the Waray. (35) Perhaps, the most important result of his study is that which he has established, the evidence that the power of the gospel brings a “paradigm shift” in the lives of the Waray. Johnson concludes that from an animistic worldview, the Pentecostal Waray now view “God at the center of the universe” (193). Although this result is not unexpected it confirms what the power of the gospel can do to change the mindset of people.

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(Continued from front inside cover)

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