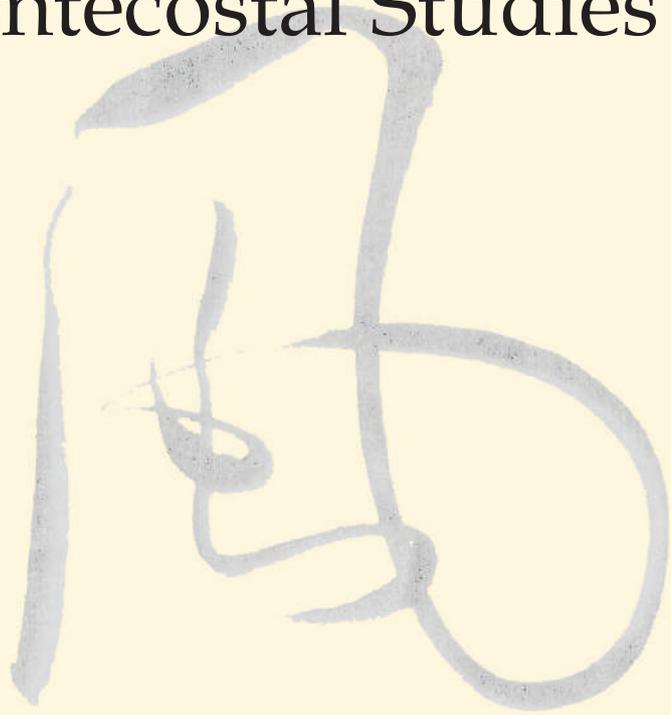


# Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies



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THE JOURNAL SEEKS TO PROVIDE A FORUM: To encourage serious thinking and articulation by Pentecostals/Charismatics in Asia in all disciplines within the field of Pentecostal studies; to promote interaction among Asian Pentecostals/Charismatics and dialogue with other Christian traditions; to stimulate creative contextualization of the Christian faith; and to provide a means for Pentecostals/Charismatics to share their theological reflections.

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IMPACTING THE FUTURE OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC CHURCH

## Editorial

by Dr. Dave Johnson

For the first time in several years, we do not have an overarching theme for this edition. However, the first four articles could loosely come under the title of Sojourners, those who live long term in a country not their own or those, namely the biblical Esther, who are part of a minority community in the lands in which they live. The last two articles fall within the discipline of biblical studies.

This issue opens with an article on Spirit Empowered Leadership (SEL) in the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement (PC), written by Lora Timenia, an emerging Asian Pentecostal scholar. In this still developing field, she notes that studies on PC leaders have yet to be developed. Given the explosion of the PC movement all over the globe and the increasing interest in it by social scientists in several disciplines, Timenia's article is a welcome contribution.

Using Gary Jay's model of "(1) development, (2) influence and (3) emergence,"<sup>1</sup> Timenia then presents a Pentecostal case study in the person of Leonora Catipon, a veteran missionary of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God, who has served in Cambodia since 1994. Timenia traces Catipon's development as a person and as a missionary through this paradigm, demonstrating how she grew from an average Filipino child to the fine missionary leader that she has become.

The late Tim Bulkeley's article follows, exploring how a male should understand the book of Esther. This article was originally done for a festschrift in honor of one of his students, Kay Fountain, who did her PhD dissertation under his guidance on the book of Esther. This gave him the opportunity to see Esther through the eyes of a conservative, Pentecostal woman rather than through the radical feminist theologians, who tended to villainize her. In juxtaposition to these writers, he then proceeds to discuss how a male might understand the story and empathize with the young queen in her struggles, wisdom and courage in working within the cultural structures of confines of her day to help deliver her people.

Jacqueline Grey, a highly respected Old Testament scholar from Australia, follows with another article on Esther. Here, Esther is

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<sup>1</sup>Gary Jay, "Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Exploring Three Dimensions," *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2020): 236.

presented a model of a citizen of a marginalized community. Set within the context of the displaced Jewish community in Susa, the capital of the Persian empire, Grey explores how the character of Esther became a role model for her community, although, unlike Daniel and his friends in Babylon, she demonstrates a willingness to morally compromise and adapt in order to be accepted. In doing so, she ascended from being an unknown member of a marginalized community to being the queen of an empire and a defender of her people.

Next, Allan Varghese Meloottu, a native of India who lives in the United States, takes us on a journey with Keralan Pentecostals who have immigrated to the United States, sharing their successes and struggles. With a world on the move today, their experience is more the norm than the exception. As is typical with immigrants from time immemorial, they brought their culture, language and religion with them. In this article, Meloottu examines the liminal nature of Keralan Pentecostalism by looking at the spiritual formation, rooted in the Kerala Pentecostal revivals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, well before the better known Azusa Street revival of 1906-09, of the second generation of Keralan immigrants. He then attempts to describe and demonstrate the role of a Kerala Pentecostal para church organization known as International Collegiate Prayer Fellowship in shaping the identity of these second generation Keralans.

In the last article under the loose banner of Sojourners, Michael Berley, not his real name, focuses on part 2 of his work on the Assemblies of God missionaries in China from 1914-1952. Part one was published in the August, 2022, (*AJPS* 25.2) and is available for free under the Journal at [www.aptspress.org](http://www.aptspress.org). Here, he focuses on the stories of two missionary couples and one single lady, whose ministries made a significant impact on the Chinese around them in the time periods in which they served. One of the couples, Leonard and Ada Bolton (his second wife) served the Lisu people in southwestern China and ultimately migrated with them to Burma (now Myanmar).

Following Berley, Roji Thomas George takes us in the field of Pentecostal hermeneutics. Specifically, he contends for using interpretative communities in a multi-cultural context so relevant to his native India. He notes that while Pentecostal praxis allows the individual preacher the right to interpret the text himself, Pentecostal scholars, practically speaking, tend to set parameters on individual interpretation. For this to happen, he contends that the interpretive community has a large role to play, based on their experiences in determining the meaning of the text. He then asks an important question, "So, we ask, should Pentecostal hermeneutics be informed by the multicultural context of its

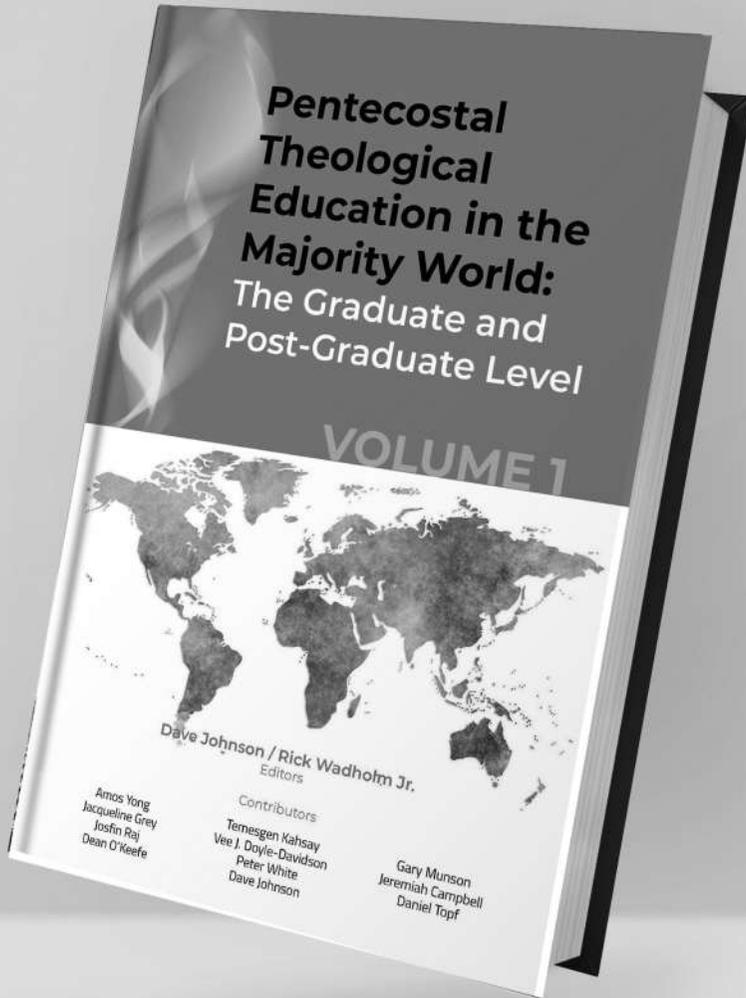
members in different parts of the world? His answer should be thought provoking by any serious student of the Scriptures.

Last, but certainly not least, Lian Mung's article deals with the roles of the Spirit, a hallmark Pentecostal theme, focused on Isaiah 11:1-5. Positing his discussion here on the charismatic and non-charismatic roles of the Holy Spirit in the context of prophetic oracles of Isaiah 1-12, he contends that the prophet envisions the coming of a new ideal ruler a new David. While Isaiah is speaking of the future, he also draws attention to the current sociological context in which the prophecy was giving by juxtaposing the ideal rule with the current tyrant of Assyria, Sennacherib, who was anything but just and righteous. By contrast, Isaiah envisions a new Davidic king, the shoot of Jesse, who will rule in righteousness and justice forever.

As always, I hope you enjoy this edition. If you would be interested in publishing an article in this journal, please see our requirements under "About Us" at [www.aptspress.org](http://www.aptspress.org), where you will find all of our articles and the books published by APTS Press.

Your fellow sojourner and student of the Bible,  
Dave Johnson, DMiss  
Managing Editor

# PTEMW Volume 1



## **Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World: The Graduate and Post-Graduate Level**

## **A Profile of a Spirit-Empowered Leader: Leonora Catipon**

by Lora Angeline Embudo Timenia

### **Introduction**

Studies on Spirit-Empowered Leadership (SEL) are still in their early stages. Although leadership plays a significant role in the growth and globalization of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement (P/CM), a comprehensive model for SEL has yet to be developed by those in the academic ranks of the tradition.<sup>1</sup> Daniel Isgrigg's literature review on SEL reveals a "discernable gap in defining the nature of SEL."<sup>2</sup>

Most studies on SEL tend to be non-empirical; also, most fit a North American context. For instance, Timothy Geoffrion's *The Spirit-Led Leader* focuses on spiritual development by offering principles and practices to cultivate spirit-oriented leadership.<sup>3</sup> Myles Munroe's *The Spirit of Leadership* proposes the attitudes of effective leaders in a pragmatic and pastoral manner.<sup>4</sup> Other works follow the same trend of being written for pastors and/or those in pastoral ministry. Together with scholarly studies on SEL, like Truls Akerlund's *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*, John F. Carter's article "Power and Authority in Pentecostal Leadership," and Wonsuk Ma's "The Prophetic Servant: The Ideology of Spirit-Empowered Leaders," Isgrigg recommends further exploration on individual leaders in the worldwide P/CM to help develop a definite SEL model.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Truls Akerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 44.

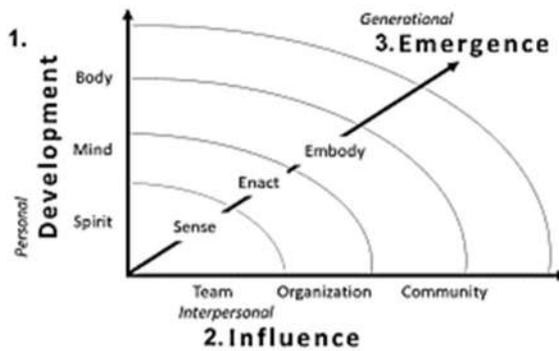
<sup>2</sup>Daniel Isgrigg, "Toward Spirit-Empowered Leadership Distinctives: A Literature Review," *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2020): 211.

<sup>3</sup>Timothy C. Geoffrion, *The Spirit-Led Leader* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2005), 26-37; Isgrigg, "Toward Spirit-Empowered Leadership Distinctives," 204.

<sup>4</sup>Myles Munroe, *The Spirit of Leadership* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2005).

<sup>5</sup>In his paper, Isgrigg uses the term 'Spirit-Empowered Movement (SEM)' as a distinct label for the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. For this present study, however, I shall use Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement (P/CM) instead of SEM. Isgrigg, "Toward Spirit-Empowered Leadership Distinctives," 211; c. f. Akerlund, *A Phenomenology of Pentecostal Leadership*; c.f. John Carter, "Power and Authority in Pentecostal Leadership," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 12, no. 2 (2009): 185-207; c. f. Wonsuk Ma, "The Prophetic Servant: The Ideology of Spirit-Empowered Leaders," *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2020): 217-34.

One model worth exploring comes from Gary Jay, written for the context of educating Spirit-empowered leaders.<sup>6</sup> He theorizes that “Spirit-Empowered Leadership (SEL), as modeled by the life of Jesus, is a developmental process best understood as a three-dimensional space created by three vectors—(1) development, (2) influence, and (3) emergence.”<sup>7</sup> Jay proposes that this model can help individuals or organizations reflect on SEL development. Below is a depiction of Jay’s proffered model.



**Figure 1. Jay’s Model for Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Three Dimensions.**

This three-dimensional model offers a promising framework for carefully evaluating SEL personally, interpersonally, and generationally.

Considering the existing gap in SEL studies and responding to Isgrigg’s challenge for more individual studies on Spirit-empowered leaders, this current research offers a single case study of a Southeast Asian leader in the classical Pentecostal family. That leader is Leonora Catipon. Although relatively unknown, her leadership and missionary service in Cambodia contributed to the establishment of the Assemblies of God Cambodia (AGC) and has resulted in the training and development of indigenous Pentecostal leaders in the country.

Ordained with the Philippine General Council of the Assemblies of God (PGCAG), Catipon has served as an intercultural leader for nearly three decades. She is the founder of Lighthouse Assembly of God in Phnom Penh, founder of Cambodia School of Mission, co-founder of Cambodia Bible Institute, and field director of the PGCAG missions in Cambodia. This study aims to narrate Catipon’s leadership development

<sup>6</sup>Gary Jay, “Spirit-Empowered Leadership: Exploring Three Dimensions,” *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2020): 236.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

and draw out contextually relevant principles that may add to the growing literature on global SEL studies.

At the onset, this study probes the question—What profile of a Spirit-empowered leader can be evinced from Catipon’s leadership development? Using Jay’s three-dimensional model, Catipon’s leadership development shall be episodically narrated from her personal development to her interpersonal influence and lastly to her emergence as a Spirit-empowered leader in an intercultural setting.<sup>8</sup>

## **Catipon’s Spirit-Empowered Leadership Development**

### **Personal Development**

#### *Conversion and Pentecostal Experience*

Leonora “Nora” Catipon was born in Lucena, Philippines, to a Roman Catholic family. Although a devout Catholic, she was ushered into Pentecostal Christianity while completing her Bachelor of Science in Chemistry degree at Far Eastern University in Manila. As the story goes, Catipon’s friend invited her to Bethel Temple (now Cathedral of Praise), a large Pentecostal church in Manila. In that church, she experienced Pentecostal worship with its live band and lively worship. Initially she was a disengaged participant; however, after weeks of evangelistic services, she was prompted by the Holy Spirit to repent and receive Christ.

Interestingly, Catipon reports that the movie “Thief in the Night” convicted her. She didn’t want to be ‘left behind’ in the eschatological rapture. Her conversion was an uplifting experience. Catipon writes:

After pouring my heart on Him in repentance, a heavy load lifted from my shoulder. I was so happy and so free. I have been a different person since then. I remember my first few months as a born-again believer; tears always fell from my eyes whenever we sang the chorus “This is the Day.” That chorus is a lively and joyous song, but I always cry whenever we sing it because I am so happy that it is Sunday again and that I can join my brothers and sisters in worshipping God, whose presence is so alive in our midst.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>An interview questionnaire was used to gather data from Catipon. Member checking was done to ensure the validity of data interpretation. Leonora Catipon, interview by the author, transcript in the Asia Pacific Resource Center, Baguio City, Philippines, April 2022.

<sup>9</sup>Catipon, interview by the author.

Admittedly, the phenomenon of tongues speech was something she didn't trust at first. As Pentecostals often demonstrated in their Sunday services, speaking in tongues seemed unusual. However, when she saw Catholic Charismatics speaking in tongues, she became convinced of the experience's validity. She received Spirit baptism with tongues speech during a renewal service hosted by Catholic Charismatics. Her initial hesitation towards manifestations like being slain in the spirit, dancing in the spirit, tongues speech, and other charismatic displays were reduced, not by the AG church but by Catholic Charismatics. Through her experience of the Spirit, she later accepted entirely the AG's form of spirituality as valid. Her journey towards a fuller understanding of Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality commenced.

### *Call to Ministry and World Mission*

After completing her college degree, Catipon returned to Lucena, where she got a job in an oil factory. Through another movie experience (a Gospel film this time), she discovered a pioneering AG church in her hometown—Lighthouse Christian Center. Since it only had a handful of members, she could serve in various roles, including worship leader, evangelist, Bible study leader, and Sunday school teacher. Because of those multiple roles in this pioneering church, she submitted herself to constant study of Scripture and attended many formative seminars. Her home church also offered an annual short-term Bible school, which augmented her Scriptural know-how. Consequently, the more she studied, the more passionate she became about serving God.

It was in April 1984 that Catipon received a call to full-time ministry. After conducting film evangelism in Agdangan, Quezon province, she felt a burden to evangelize and disciple new converts. Her desire to be a full-time clergy with the AG grew and eventually led her to desire ministerial training at a Pentecostal seminary.

However, Catipon's transition from being a marketplace Christian serving in the local church to being a full-time seminary student took a few years. She had to delay her response to vocational ministry due to Christian ministry. Finally, in 1990, she entered Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS), the premier regional seminary of the AG in Baguio City, Philippines. There she completed a Master of Divinity degree.

At APTS, Catipon encountered fellow Pentecostal Christians from different nations and also learned about the need for missionaries to Cambodia. After graduating in 1993, she offered herself as a missionary to that country. The PGCAG appointed her for full-time service at the newly established Cambodia Bible Institute (CBI) in Phnom Penh.

*Missionary Service in Cambodia*

Two weeks after arriving in Phnom Penh in October 1994, Catipon started working as CBI's registrar, business administrator, and regular faculty member. Although founded by the US AG and led by American missionary Steve Sullivan, the school's daily operation was carried out by Filipino AG missionaries. For instance, Wenifredo "Fred" O. Capapas, Jr., who arrived before Catipon, served as dean of students as well as regular faculty member and later became the school's director. Both he and Catipon served at CBI for many years and contributed significantly to its establishment and growth.

Cross-cultural communication was not easy for Catipon. Preaching and teaching with an interpreter proved to be anything but ideal; however, she could not afford language study with her limited missionary funds. Fortunately, French missionary John Cottrell sponsored her language study, paving the way for her to learn the Khmer language. Today, Catipon is fluent in Khmer, which has enhanced immeasurably the fruitfulness of her ministry. In fact, sometimes people mistake her as being a Cambodian born in the Philippines due to her fluency and cultural appropriateness.<sup>10</sup>

## Interpersonal Influence

*Journey to Spirit-Empowered Leadership*

Catipon's first step into Spirit-empowered leadership began in 1997 through a Bible study for Cambodian medical students in AGC's English Program. The small Bible study group became a church—Lighthouse Christian Assembly (LCA). As its pastor, she focused on both evangelism and discipleship. Accordingly, her leadership style in those pioneering years involved more directing and training. Later, she shifted her style to coaching, supporting, and supervising.

For Catipon, the key is in relationally developing leaders, not in maintaining the authority seat. Sothy Kong shares how he was disciplined one-on-one by Catipon:

Pastor Nora took the effort to walk me through some ministry and work responsibilities under her charge. I served under her from the year 2000 up to now. I've got the privilege to serve

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<sup>10</sup>The current author personally witnessed in 2013 how, after a conference in a village in Cambodia, the participants assumed that Catipon was a Cambodian born in the Philippines. They could not believe that she was Filipino, not Cambodian.

under her as pre-school staff (4 years), church planter (4 years), pastor (15 years), Bible school teacher (8 years), and academic dean of Cambodia School of Mission (8 years). I think I am the longest Cambodian who serves Pastor Nora. She coached and mentored me in life and ministry. She was the one who encouraged me to study in Bible school both at CBI and Bible College of Malaysia (BCM). She got me to be part of the team in all the church ministries.<sup>11</sup>

Catipon's leadership in LCA (now an entirely indigenous and flourishing church) resulted in the spiritual growth of many of its members and the development of indigenous leaders. She shares:

In the early days of Lighthouse Christian Assembly, I used to lead the young people (who are now leaders in the church and their respective fields) to the outskirts of Phnom Penh to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I exposed, modeled, and coached them on how to do ministry (evangelism, discipleship, children [*sic*] ministry, worship leading) so they grow up to be committed and able servants of God. And they are doing the same to the people under their care.<sup>12</sup>

Daniel Goleman would categorize Catipon's leadership style as "coaching."<sup>13</sup> That style is used to develop people for the future. According to him, coaching is a powerful style that positively impacts an organization's "climate and performance."<sup>14</sup> Because it often pushes people to their potential, its results are impactful in the long term.

Catipon's coaching of Cambodian leaders—not just in LCA, but also at CBI—led to the development of indigenous leaders like Sothy Kong, who is now lead pastor at LCA and director of CBI. He also served as general secretary of AGC's National Council. Other Catipon mentees include Kim Khantey, director of Book of Hope Cambodia; Eng Samath, lead pastor of Agape Church and director of Cambodia Global Action; Sous Chanroth, lead pastor of Victory Church and member of AGC's General Presbytery; Pheng Saray, instructor at Battambang Teacher's Training College; and Noun Sarin, principal of Lighthouse Shining Stars, the preschool of LCA.

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<sup>11</sup>Sothy Kong, interview by the author, transcript at Asia Pacific Resource Center, Baguio City, Philippines, April 2022.

<sup>12</sup>Catipon, interview by the author.

<sup>13</sup>Daniel Goleman, "Leadership That Gets Results," *Harvard Business Review Classics* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2017), 10.

<sup>14</sup>Goleman, 10.

Catipon's role as one of the faculty of CBI (and later the chairperson of its board) was also instrumental in mentoring pastors and Christian leaders serving in various capacities in Cambodia. Her leadership influence is so broad that the AGC's General Presbytery asked her to be one of its two national advisers. In that capacity, she assists the Presbytery in making decisions and amending their constitution and by-laws. Kong testifies:

I served in the General Council of AG for two terms as a member and the General Secretary. We always got Pastor Nora to consult with the review of the Constitution and By-laws, to preach for general conventions, and to conduct workshops/training one after another. She has played a very significant role in impacting the Assemblies of God of Cambodia . . . She is also involved in teaching and training Bible school students within Pentecostal denominations and other denominations. Many AG and Non-AG churches still invite her to minister. She can minister to all kinds of people, whether adults, married or single, youth or children. She is a person who earns the respect of many.<sup>15</sup>

As a national leader, Kong recognized Catipon's influence within the Pentecostal tradition and across denominations.

### Generational Emergence

#### *Partnership with the Holy Spirit*

Reflecting on more than two decades of intercultural service in Cambodia, Catipon recognizes the importance of the Holy Spirit's leadership in her life and ministry. She writes:

Mission without the Holy Spirit is impossible. We need the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to be able to destroy the work of the enemy in people's lives and the community. I believe that for my 27 years of ministry here, the Holy Spirit has been the motivator, strategist, enabler, and inspiration in everything I have done here.<sup>16</sup>

As a Pentecostal, her strategies always involved the Spirit. She has many stories about her cooperation with him in Cambodia. One

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<sup>15</sup>Kong, interview by the author.

<sup>16</sup>Catipon, interview by the author.

compelling testimony is about the healing of a chronic illness that led to the conversion of new believers. She reminisces:

I believe that the Holy Spirit has given me the courage to pray for the sick after preaching the Word of God, especially when there are many unbelievers in the audience. One example is when I prayed for a woman with a goiter at a Women's Conference many years ago. This woman did not believe in Jesus Christ when she attended the Women's Conference. After preaching the Word of God, I prayed for those who were sick. I asked them to put their hands on the part of their ill body and encouraged them to join me in a prayer of faith for their healing. After the 3-day conference, Yoem Heak returned to her hometown, still having goiter. After a week, her housemates asked her what had happened to her goiter because they couldn't see it anymore. Curiously she touched her neck and realized that it was gone. She was healed from goiter. She neither took medicine nor underwent surgery; all she knew was that she was prayed for while her hands were on her goiter. She attributed her healing to God. Since that day, she was not only thankful to God for her recovery but accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior... At the following year's Women's Conference, Yoem Heak attended again and brought her friend, who was an unbeliever suffering from uterine prolapse. This friend hoped to receive healing at the conference too. God did not disappoint her. In her testimony, she said that after the prayer, she felt as if there was a force that pushed up her falling uterus, and she was healed. She was healed not only in her body but also in her spirit. I can share many testimonies done through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

Being Pentecostal, Catipon believes in empowerment of the Holy Spirit for preaching, teaching, and healing. More than that, she feels that only he can transform lives and establish churches. She is a willing partner of the Holy Spirit, whom she introduces to non-Christian Cambodians as "the good Spirit."

#### *Establishing Her Vision Amid Conflict*

Catipon's leadership in Cambodia does not end with LCA and CBI. Today, she helps develop indigenous Pentecostal leaders through the

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

founding (in 2019) and operation of the Cambodia School of Mission (CSM). Unlike CBI, a formal school, CSM was created to train leaders from villages who cannot afford formal schooling.

The establishment of CSM came after Catipon resigned from CBI. At one point, her vision for raising grassroots leaders conflicted with the USA AG missionaries' intent to transfer the international AG church onto the CBI campus.<sup>18</sup> She felt that moving an affluent church to the campus would be insensitive to Cambodian students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. That conflict eventually resulted in her resigning as chair of CBI's Board:

Although Catipon's relationship with USA AG missionaries remains intact, she recognized this event as probably God's way of encouraging her to step out and independently establish a training school for Cambodia's grassroots. CSM was founded and is operated by Filipino AG missionaries and sustains itself with non-Western funds (e.g., from the LCA, her missionary account, and other Asian donors). Establishing CSM marked a step out of a cross-cultural partnership between USA AG and PGCAG missionaries and into a Filipino missionary's intercultural partnership with a Cambodian indigenous church.<sup>19</sup>

### *Raising Grassroots Leaders*

CSM trains its students to be pastors, church planters, and local ministers for free, the monies primarily coming from the above-mentioned sources. Many leaders have graduated from the school's modular training programs and evangelistic practicum. Joshua Lovelace notes that CSM graduates have planted at least twenty-seven churches and twenty-five cell groups.<sup>20</sup> Catipon confirms that, to date, forty-four students have completed the Certificate in Ministry and Mission and another twenty-three earning the Diploma in Pastoral Ministry:<sup>21</sup>

Catipon now focuses on developing grassroots evangelists and church planters in the country. In a personal communication with the author, she mentions her intent to fully support indigenous Christianity in Cambodia. Indeed, she has given

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<sup>18</sup>Catipon, personal communication to the author, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2013.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Joshua J. Lovelace, *From Seedtime to Harvest: The History of the Assemblies of God in Cambodia*, Pentecost Around the World 5 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2019), 23.

<sup>21</sup>Catipon, personal communication to the author, July 13, 2022.

almost three decades of her life to raising next-generation Pentecostal Christian leaders in the country and has yet to show signs of slowing down.<sup>22</sup>

### **Synthesis: Catipon as a Spirit-Empowered Leader**

#### Preliminary Observations

The brief history of Catipon's development as a SEL in Cambodia allows us to make a contextually relevant profile. However, before doing so, the study offers these four observations—(1) her journey to SEL began after Spirit-baptism; (2) her leadership style matured through biblical training and ministerial involvement; (3) her SEL flourished in evangelistic and indigenous church planting contexts; and (4) her SEL developed out of personal and ministerial struggle.

Firstly, Catipon's experience of Spirit baptism with tongues speech at a Catholic Charismatic renewal service affirmed the validity of the Pentecostal experience at Bethel Temple Manila. Pentecostal spirituality, of which she was initially wary, consistently upheld the continuous work of the Spirit in prophecy, healing, miracles, and charismatic worship as part and parcel of eschatological witness.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, an eschatological passion for God's kingdom evokes Pentecostal spirituality,<sup>24</sup> with evangelism, church planting, and missions being the outflows of this spirituality. For Pentecostals, the Holy Spirit is a Spirit for others and for Christ's end-time mission.<sup>25</sup> Once she experienced Spirit baptism and fully accepted the Pentecostal experience, her spirituality slowly embodied that of classical Pentecostalism.

Secondly, Catipon's continued ministerial involvement and theological training progressively matured her leadership style. Her vocational experiences at the grassroots level prepared her to mentor successors from the grassroots as well. Her theological education and involvement in the Bible-school setting ushered her into long-term teaching ministries that further honed her coaching style of leadership.

Thirdly, Catipon's SEL flourished as she continuously involved herself in evangelism and church planting. Evangelism became the soil for her SEL since her proclamation of the Gospel combined with

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<sup>22</sup>Catipon, personal communication to the author, May 17, 2022.

<sup>23</sup>Roger Stronstad, "The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke's Charismatic Theology," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Supplement Series 16 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 116-24.

<sup>24</sup>Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 13.

<sup>25</sup>Gary Tyra, *The Holy Spirit in Mission: Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 31.

supernatural demonstrations of the Spirit. Moreover, discipleship and training of both leaders and grassroots workers ensured the propagation of the Pentecostal tradition. She recognized the importance of training next-generation leaders and raising up indigenous leadership.

Here one can see an interesting feature of her leadership. Catipon carefully balanced the tensions between what Andrew Walls termed the “indigenizing principle” and the “pilgrim principle.”<sup>26</sup> On the one hand, she was able to keep converts rooted in their indigenous culture. On the other hand, she could integrate converts into the universal Christian faith culture. Ivan Satyavrata affirms that, in the global P/CM, this ability to hold both principles in tension can be seen in many Pentecostal churches and ministries.<sup>27</sup> This ability has made the global P/CM movement a *polythitic* movement with its varied streams and traditions.

Lastly, Catipon’s SEL matured out of personal and ministerial struggle. She was unable to immediately pursue vocational ministry due to family obligations and having to wait for her family’s approval before entering seminary and leaving for the mission field. However, her perseverance during this waiting period prepared her for a lifetime of perseverance in missions. In addition, as a Filipino missionary in Cambodia, she did not receive much funding, so someone had to sponsor her language study. Thus, her life in the Philippines prepared her for the struggles of missionary life in Cambodia.

Catipon’s experiences also contributed to her effectiveness as an intercultural missionary to Cambodians, who feel a sense of mutuality and recognize her as their co-Asian sister. She is even mistaken to be naturally Cambodian. Moreover, her passion for raising up indigenous leaders is evidenced by her persistence to train grassroots leaders in Cambodia in the face of minimal funding. One can only conclude that, in her life, Spirit-empowered leadership manifests as perseverance and grit in their vocational assignment. William and Robert Menzies identify this as the Spirit’s endowment of “staying power” or inspired fortitude.<sup>28</sup>

### A Contextually Relevant Profile

With the observations discussed above, a profile of a Spirit-empowered leader emerges from Catipon’s story. The following features mark this profile:

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<sup>26</sup>Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 3-9.

<sup>27</sup>Ivan Satyavrata, *Pentecostals and the Poor: Reflections from the Indian Context*, APTS Occasional Papers Series: 1 (Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 2017), 7.

<sup>28</sup>William W. Menzies and Robert P. Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations for Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 153.

1. A Spirit-empowered leader has experienced Spirit baptism with its accompanying signs— tongues speech, somatic displays (e.g., falling under the power, dancing in the Spirit, laughing in the Spirit), charismatic manifestation (e.g., word of wisdom, word of knowledge), healing, and/or prophetic utterance.
2. A Spirit-empowered leader's spirituality is evoked by eschatological affections and a passion for expanding God's kingdom (i.e., end-time missionary work). For him/her, Spirit empowerment is the power to witness with signs following. Healing evangelism (a.k.a. power evangelism) remains a popular conversion method.
3. A Spirit-empowered leader values biblical training and/or theological education without compromising field training/involvement. For instance, the *modus operandi* of AG leaders like Catipon is church planting immediately followed by establishing Bible schools and/or ministerial training centers. Church planting and biblical training go hand-in-hand.
4. A Spirit-empowered leader raises indigenous leaders and does not mold its local churches in alterity; instead, he/she holds in careful tension both the indigenous culture and the universal Christian culture.
5. A Spirit-empowered leader is one whose influence is acknowledged by people regardless of gender, ethnicity, or status. Catipon is a single, non-affluent Filipina missionary who has gained the respect of many. Without God's empowerment, she would not have gained authority in a foreign and predominantly non-Christian country.
6. A Spirit-empowered leader is flexible in his/her leadership style, adjusting to the need of the situation and constantly sensitive to the Spirit's leading. The Pentecostal cliché, "as the Spirit leads," remains a component of Pentecostal spirituality. Leaders in the P/CM, although practicing their style of organizational leadership, distinctively retain an openness to the Spirit's guidance through Scripture, prophecy, charismatic revelation, visions/dreams, and the like.
7. A Spirit-empowered leader perseveres amid struggle and conflict with a fortitude inspired by the Spirit for the fulfillment of God's kingdom purposes.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Catipon's story presents a profile of a Spirit-empowered leader in Southeast Asian classical Pentecostalism. Her personal development began in her conversion and Pentecostal experience of the Spirit. It later ushered her into pioneering work, which honed her skills and affirmed her call to the ministry. Due to her ministerial involvement, she eagerly pursued theological education, which later opened the way for her to receive a missionary call to Cambodia.

In Cambodia, she served as a leader, teacher, and pioneer. Her coaching leadership style helped develop indigenous leaders. This feature in her leadership affirms the tendency of those in the P/CM to produce indigenous forms of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity worldwide. One can theorize that the P/CM's tendency to transplant itself into its receptor's indigenous soil stems from Spirit-empowered leaders like Catipon, who can hold in careful tension both the indigenizing principle and the pilgrim principle.

Indeed, Catipon attributes her leadership to the empowering of the Holy Spirit. She considers the Spirit an indispensable partner in leadership and mission. He has empowered her not just with apostolic gifting, but also with the fortitude to persevere in the field. Many people affirm her effectiveness and interculturality. The results of her almost three decades of leadership include the planting of multiple churches, formation of grassroots Pentecostal leaders, propagation of the Gospel and the Pentecostal message, and edification of Cambodian Christianity.

In the final analysis, a contextual profile of a Spirit-empowered leader can be summed up as follows— A Spirit-empowered leader is one whose spirituality recognizes the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit, whose affections are evoked by a passion for God's mission, and whose perseverance and influence results in development of indigenous next-generation leaders. A Spirit-empowered leader's authority is recognized by many regardless of gender, ethnicity, or status because his/her effectiveness stems from cooperating with the Holy Spirit, who empowers *all flesh* for God's eschatological purposes.

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## How Can a Man Read Esther?<sup>1</sup>

by Tim Bulkeley

The biblical book of Esther has provoked widely, and even wildly, differing responses. Esther was not found among the biblical texts from Qumran, nor is it mentioned in the New Testament. It does not appear in the canonical list of Melito of Sardis.<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther wished the book had not survived.<sup>3</sup> Calvin only referenced it once in the *Institutes*.<sup>4</sup> Yet a number of the Church Fathers mention the story with approval, and by the Middle Ages it had already become a Jewish favourite (there are more fragments of Esther from the Cairo Geniza than any other book outside the Torah).<sup>5</sup>

In more recent times (British Prime Minister) Margaret Thatcher was attracted to the book, but commented that it was “gory.”<sup>6</sup> Most feminist readers have given this tale, told by men, about a woman, a more negative response. Alice Laffey’s evaluation of Esther, especially in contrast to Vashti, has often been cited and gives a good summary of this sort of reading:

She is the woman who plays the man’s game. Not only does she submit to the beauty contest, she actively participates (2:10, 2:15). Esther carefully follows Hegai’s advice on how to accentuate the positive and become the sex object par excellence. Body beautiful (2:2-3, 2:7) and successful sex (2:14) are her tickets to moving up in the world. Esther does not stand with her sister and protest the victimization to which Vashti had been subjected and that might lie in her future as well (2:14); rather, she accepts the rules of the dominant culture and works

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<sup>2</sup>Jack P. Lewis, “Esther.” In *Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity, Second Edition*, edited by Everett Ferguson, (London: Routledge, 2013), 387 cites Eusebius, HE. 4.26.13f.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Luther and Alexander Chalmers, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther* (London: H. G. Bohn, 1857), 11.

<sup>4</sup>4.12.17.

<sup>5</sup>Lewis, “Esther,” 387.

<sup>6</sup>Jo Carruthers, *Esther Through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 1.

them to her advantage. She prepares her body for a full year (2:12) to win for it male approval.

This reading of the text suggests that Esther is not the heroine but a victim. She is the stereotypical female who exerts a great deal of effort to produce a beautiful body. She competes against other women for a man.<sup>7</sup>

I once supervised a PhD dissertation by a woman on Esther and it was particularly interesting as it allowed me to watch and listen as a woman read this book sympathetically. Usually the Hebrew textual tradition and the ancient Greek version of the Septuagint are the most significant witnesses to the text of Old Testament books. For Esther we have two ancient Greek versions that though similar to each other are also different in interesting ways. Fountain's conclusions recognise, among other things, that the Hebrew text of Esther treats its eponymous heroine differently, for example, highlighting her breaches of customary and conventional gender roles whereas the two Greek texts minimise them.<sup>8</sup>

To talk of Esther as the heroine of the book (as I did in a footnote above), however, is to jump ahead, as the book opens it is by no means clear that this will be so. Esther is not mentioned until 2:7, and then she is presented as dependent on Mordecai. What is even more striking, she does not speak until half way through the fourth chapter, by which stage Memucan (a minor character) has already spoken 78 words, and the king's servants 62. By then also, the villain, Haman, has spoken 33 words. Although Mordecai also does not speak until the middle of chapter 4, he has been mentioned 12 times in chapter 2, 5 times in chapter 3, and 11 times in chapter 4, before he does speak. While Esther has also been mentioned 12 times in chapter 2, she is not named at all in chapter 3 and only 4 times before she speaks in chapter 4. Thus, in terms of both speech and textual focus, in these early chapters the story seems, as Esther's feminist detractors believe, to be about the men.

A traditionally minded (especially male?) reader may therefore be lulled, at the start, into the assumption that this book, like so many others in Scripture, fails to question traditional gender roles. The feminist readers, who have focused on Vashti's rebellion against such a

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<sup>7</sup>Alice Laffey, "The Influence of Feminism on Christianity," in *Daughters of Abraham: Feminist Thought in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2001), 56.

<sup>8</sup>Allison Kay Fountain, *Literary and Empirical Readings of the Books of Esther* (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 68, 112, 162. Another reason I was delighted to be involved in that project, the use of empirical investigations alongside "expert" readings, sadly is not reflected in my own essay.

traditional role, may also have been led into such an understanding by these early chapters.

However, the men's extraordinarily exaggerated response to Vashti's refusal of her husband's demand may suggest caution about this conclusion. Memucan's presumption that because the queen has denied the king's authority, all wives begin to "look with contempt on their husbands" (1:16-18), and his even more extreme assumption that once Vashti is put in her place then "all women will give honour to their husbands, high and low alike" (1:20), seem to be accepted with approval by all the men in the text, but seems strangely unrealistic in any real world context. Presumably the customary phallocracy of the Persian Empire had by then been more widely undermined, for by royal decree also, "every man shall be master in his own house" (1:22)! If women have been so widely "lacking" in respect to their husbands, will promulgating a law demanding obedience change their attitudes?

Supervising another woman reading Esther added a further dimension to my own reading. Angeline Song approached this book from the perspective of "realistic empathy." Song also engaged with the negative feminist readings of Esther though not primarily by closer reading of the text, but rather by engaging her own story with the biblical narrative. Among other things this perspective of "realistic empathy," her point of view as a colonised woman, sold by her biological parents, learning a mix of Confucian respect and "Asian" humility, lead Song to see how Esther's responses, often perceived as acquiescing to patriarchy, may be her only reasonable manner of resistance, or the "pragmatism of the powerless."<sup>9</sup>

Song's use of the term "empathy" to describe the connection between reader and character, through which the act of reading impacts the reader in deeper than cognitive ways, is in line with the preferences of a number of theorists and psychologists of reading.<sup>10</sup> However, most real readers have preferred talking about their experiences in terms of "identification."<sup>11</sup> Through the process of reading, and the experience of "entering the world" of the characters in a narrative, a text's readers are changed. This is the primary power of the genre of narrative prose. Cognitive Psychologist Keith Oatley sums it up like this: "the process of entering imagined worlds of fiction builds empathy and improves your ability to take another person's point of view. It can even change your

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<sup>9</sup>See an abbreviated version in Angeline Song, "Heartless Bimbo or Subversive Role Model? A Narrative (Self) Critical Reading of the Character of Esther," *Dialog* 49, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 56–69.

<sup>10</sup>Susanne Reichl, *Cognitive Principles, Critical Practice: Reading Literature at University* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 109.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

personality. The seemingly solitary act of holing up with a book, then, is actually an exercise in human interaction.”<sup>12</sup>

Song’s approach predicated on “realistic empathy,” raised questions for me as a male member of the imperial colonising race, and endowed with the authority of teacher and the title of doctor. With whom could I identify while reading Esther? Readers’ identification with characters, and therefore their possibilities of empathy, or even merely sympathy with them, has been widely discussed, but for the most part the criteria remain frustratingly vague. I have been unable to find a discussion of the textual or poetic features in a narrative that might promote empathy or identification with one character or another. However, it seems *a priori* likely that textual prominence would be important (a less prominent character is presumably, all other things being equal, less likely to provoke such a response of empathy).

In their pioneering (and much discussed) *On Gendering Texts* Brenner and van Dijk Hemmes discuss the concept of “voice” in texts. Their interest is in uncovering echoes of the voices of women in texts written by men. However, their list of features that give a character “voice” is interesting as possible indicators of textual prominence. Among other characteristics they note:

A voice belongs to her/him who holds the primary subject position in a discourse (after that of the narrator but, quite often, as the embodiment of the narrator’s privileged albeit covert “voice”). The voice often belongs to and expresses the focalizer of the text. When all or most of the affirmative answers to the questions, Who speaks? Who focalizes the action? Whose viewpoint is dominant? - converge on one and the same textual figure, then that figure embodies the dominant voice of a passage, be it prose narrative or poetic.<sup>13</sup>

On this basis, I suggest that the characters most spoken about, who speak most, and who are more often the focus of textual interest, are more likely to be empathised (or identified) with. So, turning to the

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<sup>12</sup>Keith Oatley, "In the Minds of Others," *Scientific American Mind* 22, no. 5 (November 2011): 62.

<sup>13</sup>Athalyā Brenner and Fokkeliën van Dijk Hemmes. *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 7.

biblical<sup>14</sup> text of Esther, which candidates propose themselves for a male reader with which to empathise or identify?

Ahasuerus is the first person to be mentioned. He speaks first, and speaks more words than anyone except Esther. He is introduced first, and presented as ruler of all he surveys and indeed of 127 provinces from India to Cush. Yet, Ahasuerus is a bumbling nonentity, although those 127 provinces must obey his every command (1:1). His counsellors and Esther successively, and easily, bend him to their opinions (1:21 cf. 2:1, 2:4; 3:10; 5:3). Actions that are (presumably) his are often described by the narrator using passive verbs, thus obscuring or diminishing his agency.<sup>15</sup> He may speak more than the other characters; however, as Fountain has noted, almost all of his speech contains questions.<sup>16</sup>

Haman can be resisted as object of empathy, for despite being a melodramatic villain, he is also an evident fool. As villain, he is a desirable character for Jewish children to play, in Purim re-enactments of the story, but such a caricature of the blind idiocy of evil is hardly an appropriate role model for a reader's life.

Mordecai is a more promising candidate. He is a Jew, and thus ideologically and ethnically aligned with the narrator. He appears in the narration before Esther (Mordecai is introduced at 2:5 and Esther herself only at 2:7, as his dependent orphan cousin and ward). He is named 58 times (far more than the king, who is named only 30 times), indeed more than Esther, his ward (55 times), and at the end of the book he is elevated to second position in the empire, after king Ahasuerus (10:3), while Esther is not mentioned at all in the final chapter of the book that bears her name. At the start of the story, as we might expect of a dutiful ward, Esther follows Mordecai's advice (2:10), and he protects her (2:11). However, as the tension mounts his role becomes less significant. At the start, he uncovers a conspiracy and uses Esther as a channel to communicate this information to the king (2:21-23). In chapter three he bravely refuses to offer quasi-divine homage to Haman. But in chapter four, when the genocidal decree is promulgated, he is reduced to merely mourning in sackcloth. Only when Esther sends the king's eunuch Hathach to prod him is he moved to constructive action, and at the close of the chapter the roles of the two Jewish characters are reversed, and he goes and does "everything as Esther had ordered him" (4:17). It is true that in chapter six he is again extravagantly honoured, but this

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<sup>14</sup>At this point I am only considering the Hebrew text on which most English translations are based considering this to be the "biblical" text of Esther (while realising that many Christians across time and space, notably members of Eastern Orthodox churches, will disagree), I will add some comments on the Greek versions of the story below.

<sup>15</sup>Fountain, *Literary and Empirical Readings of the Books of Esther*, 160.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 136.

pantomime serves more to humiliate the villain, Haman, than to present Mordecai himself as a role-model, and following Haman's hanging, Mordecai is honoured because of his family relation to Queen Esther, again a reversal of roles as she has become his protector and sponsor.

Recognising this relative dearth of male role models reminded me of my experience as a teenager on first reading Jane Austen's classic novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Like most readers I found myself experiencing events through the eyes of Elizabeth Bennet. Although she is not the narrator of the story, the narration usually follows her. The reader, in identifying with her, comes to share, and perhaps to understand, Elizabeth's frustration and sense of being stifled by the social roles expected of unmarried young women at that time and place. Seeing sympathetically (that is by experiencing them "with" her) the constraints on Elizabeth, a male reader is invited to consider how his own society's social expectations restrict and limit women.

Indeed, if Fountain and Song have correctly identified the features of the book of Esther, then the eponymous heroine both sometimes transgresses expected gender roles, and sometimes complies with the expectations placed upon her in order to achieve her goal (saving the Jewish nation from intended genocide). In this she always operates within a cultural setting that severely limited the behaviour expected of a "proper" woman. A reader who approaches the book identifying with Esther can hardly escape some sense of the confining and restrictive effects of these cultural expectations.

However, such a reading of Esther depends on an understanding that the Hebrew text itself offers such resistance to socially expected roles. As I noted in passing above, some feminist scholars believe that this book functions rather in support of such expectations. To my mind, one of the strongest evidences against their claims was presented in Fountain's thesis. The two Greek texts mentioned earlier,<sup>17</sup> when compared with the Masoretic Text, offer consistently greater conventional religiosity (most notably by mentioning God, but also through characters praying to God), and they also present Esther as acting more in accordance with conventionally expected feminine roles (for example by showing less initiative). Even the differences in the order of presentation of information serve to highlight males in the Greek texts by comparison with the Hebrew.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>For more information see e.g. Kristin De Troyer, "Esther in Text- and Literary-Critical Paradise," in *The Book of Esther in Modern Research*, ed. Leonard Greenspoon and Sidnie White Crawford (London: A&C Black, 2003), 31. Both Greek texts present a number of additional sections, and well as other smaller adaptations of the traditional Hebrew text.

<sup>18</sup>Fountain, *Literary and Empirical Readings of the Books of Esther*, e.g., 31-34.

If we add to this the evidence of religious resistance to the inclusion of this book in the canons of Scripture, we can conclude that since early times the book has been perceived as too little religious. It is therefore no surprise that the Greek texts, if they are seen as secondary adaptations, as most scholars do see them, should take steps to “rectify” this omission. That these texts also take steps to rectify the narrative in the direction of having Esther behave in more conventionally acceptable ways, and by giving the men more prominent and dominant roles, therefore strongly suggests that the Hebrew Text was perceived, consciously or unconsciously, to go too far in presenting Esther as the focus character, and too much initiative.

Such a tendency to adapt the telling to conform the book to conventional gender roles is also evident in modern retellings aimed at children. *Veggie Tales* are a series of animated videos retelling Bible stories for children. Although owned by DreamWorks Animation (a secular company) the fact that the videos are marketed at Christian parents (particularly Evangelicals and Pentecostals) suggests that as well as entertainment value (note the references to pop culture for example) “faithfulness” to the Biblical text is likely to have been a consideration in the production, so any deviations from that text are of interest.<sup>19</sup>

The 14th *Veggie Tales* episode, “Esther . . . The Girl Who Became Queen,” adapts the story of the book of Esther.<sup>20</sup> The adaptations in the Greek versions make the religious elements more explicit. The adaptations in *Veggie Tales* do this even more strongly. These changes may not at first seem to function as a means of increasing Mordecai's role at the expense of Esther's, as the Greek changes did. However, looking more closely at the changes suggests a cumulative effect. The Hebrew text may suggest that Mordecai had a hand in instructing Esther, as his ward, about life and morals, but there his role as mentor is not made explicit. By contrast from the start of the video version we watch as Mordecai instructs Esther, thus his authority as guardian is highlighted, preparing for the later changes.

The biblical book (in the Hebrew text on which most English translations are based) highlights issues of gender relationships near the start of the book. Vashti's refusal to obey her husband and the men's fear of such “rebellion” (1:18) is the heart of the opening chapter. Indeed the extravagant response of the men to her disobedience is often noted and

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<sup>19</sup>I assume the scriptwriters were working from memory of or access to common English Bibles, which render the Hebrew text, and not to either Greek text!

<sup>20</sup>Already the title suggests the direction of the adaptations, for Esther becomes queen in the middle of the second chapter, while much of the remainder of the book presents her as saviour of her people. *Esther: the Girl Who Became the Saviour of Her People* might be thought a less gender biased title!

commented upon. In the *Veggie Tales* video version, the reason that Ahasuerus needs a new queen is left obscure, thus the issue of women refusing to obey men is removed from prominence in the story.

When Esther is in the palace, the telling in the Hebrew highlights her common sense and her initiative. These things show her wisdom as well as gaining her favour.<sup>21</sup> In the video, her rise to favour seems to be attributed solely to her ability to sing well.<sup>22</sup> During her early days in the royal harem, Mordecai's role as her mentor and advisor is much increased in the *Veggie Tales* version, by comparison with the biblical telling. Here the "boys" side with each other, as Mordecai tells her that Ahasuerus is "sharp, real sharp." They do this although, as in the Bible, in this telling he manifestly is not at all "sharp!" In the video, Esther speaks no more than Haman and Mordecai do.<sup>23</sup> In this version, the male villain Haman is given a solo like the heroine Esther. The Hebrew Bible telling of the story where Esther speaks more than any male character stands in stark contrast to this. There the most loquacious male is Ahasuerus with 148 words, Haman the villain speaks 121, and Mordecai a mere 25 words, while Esther speaks 182 words!

In *Veggie Tales*, once Haman's plot is revealed, Mordecai takes the initiative by informing Esther of what is going on, by contrast in the Bible at the start of chapter four he sits in mourning, and tells Esther nothing. There she must take the initiative by sending messengers to inquire about the meaning of his behaviour when it is reported to her. Mordecai again speaks more than Esther in the video version, and offers to call for prayer on her behalf. In the Bible version, it is Esther who uses her own authority to command prayer and fasting from the Jewish community. This religious intercession is not mentioned as being for her own needs, indeed it is implied that the people request divine aid for the community. In many ways the video retelling of this scene makes Esther an obedient ward to Mordecai, as traditional roles might suggest, instead of the reverse, as the Bible recounts, and also presents her as concerned primarily for her own needs.

In sometimes small, but in often obvious ways, this modern adaptation of the story of Esther presents its central character as more submissive than the Bible does. It also seems to avoid picturing the occasions where she takes the initiative, or frankly ascribes such initiating to a more suitable, namely a male, character—usually

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<sup>21</sup> Song, "Heartless Bimbo or Subversive Role Model? A Narrative (Self) Critical Reading of the Character of Esther," 60-1.

<sup>22</sup>Perhaps a de-sexualised version of the Esther of many feminist readers, who rises merely because of her appearance.

<sup>23</sup>I did not attempt to count the words, but the effect seems obvious.

Mordecai. These changes are not as strong and clear as the adaptations that were made because the telling is aimed at young children. Examples of these include replacing execution by banishment to the “Isle of Perpetual Tickling,” and removing all sexual tension from the story. Yet despite not being the biggest adaptations, by removing Esther's initiative and by minimising her breaches of conventional roles, a pronounced cumulative effect results in domesticating this biblical heroine. The book is made safe for male readers expected to live out conventionally gendered roles.

The book of Esther has often been the subject of controversy. Rabbis who mistrusted its failure to speak of God questioned its holiness. Luther by contrast distrusted its partisan Jewish character. Once one recognises the ways in which this book gently highlights Esther's initiative and her authority, especially since this follows after Vashti's more overt challenge to male dominance, one may discover another reason to suspect this “dubious” biblical book. Most retellings of the book, by both ancient and modern storytellers, tend to reduce the power of elements of the book's message that seem “difficult” to make it more palatable.

Some diminish Esther to a conventional girl called by her beauty and grace to assist Mordecai in saving the Jewish nation. They may make the book easier for male readers, but they diminish its power as they diminish its challenge. As well as providing a good tale for Purim pantomimes, this book also questions the assumptions made by patriarchal cultures about the respective roles of women and men.

A true though masculine reading of Esther then, will empathise with the young queen's struggles, wisdom, and courage. It will recognise how she operates within constraints set by convention even as she stretches the boundaries those constraints impose. It will be aware that her need to be effective forces her to comply with some demands of convention. Above all, such a reading will need be more supple in its own gender stereotypes and expectations than either *Veggie Tales* or the Greek translators were. Indeed, it will need to allow these stereotypes to be bent. In this process we male readers of Esther can learn to see the world as others see it, and recognising the limits on her actions we will see queen Esther, as the girl who became the saviour of her people.

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## **Navigating the Empire: Esther as a Model of Marginalisation<sup>1</sup>**

by Jacqueline Grey

### **Introducing Esther**

The geographic displacement of segments of the Judean community as part of the Babylonian invasion is a disturbing yet pivotal episode in the Old Testament writings. The experience of the Judeans is captured in various expressions from narrative to poetry, including lament, historical testimony, autobiography, prophetic oracle, and prayers. These diverse writings each contribute to create a picture of exile and to frame what it might have looked like as part of the Judean experience. “Exile,” is a loaded term. It can refer to geographic displacement, psychological dislocation, religious separation, and/or political or social isolation. However, I would suggest that it is the character portrayal of Esther that captures most vividly the reality of exile with all of its diverse meaning. Esther is introduced in the narrative as an example of ultimate marginalisation. She is an orphan girl exiled from her homeland and into the harem of a Gentile king—thereby doubly exiled.<sup>2</sup> Yet despite her disadvantage, she utilises all her resources to reverse her situation. The narrative describes the movement of Esther from social marginalisation to being at the centre of the Empire.

This paper will explore how the character of Esther is a model for Jews living in the Diaspora as they attempted to navigate the Persian Empire. She is confronted with the challenge of either adopting or rejecting the Empire’s culture. Unlike other characters such as Daniel, she demonstrates a willingness to compromise (or adapt) to avoid persecution. This figure of Esther will be contrasted with the marginalisation of the Pentecostal community. Like Esther, the origins of Pentecostalism are a narrative of marginalisation. The minority communities, particularly the Assemblies of God in Australia and the United States, developed outside the boundaries of the broader and “respectable” religious and secular communities. Marginalisation or social exile was part of their identity as the faithful sought to separate from “the world” and from those opposed to the Gospel. However, like

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<sup>2</sup>Carol Bechtel, *Esther*, Interpretation, (Louisville, KY: Westminster, John Knox Press, 2002), 30.

that noted in the narrative of Esther, there has been a shift in the narrative of Pentecostalism. In recent decades, it has been moving away from its psychological and cultural marginalisation and proactively seeking to be at the centre of the social and political community. In the light of this shift, what can the narrative of Esther offer the current Pentecostal community as it seeks to navigate the Empire?

### Setting the Narrative

The narrative of Esther is set in the Diaspora, with all of its exotic descriptions of harem life and Persian bureaucracy. It presents a reflection on life for exiled Jews. Some of the peculiarities of life in this context include particular Jewish practices, such as fasting, as well as the conspicuous absence of God and the land of Israel in the narrative of the Masoretic text. While debate continues as to whether the Book of Esther was actually written in the location and period of the Diaspora (Stern, for example, presents a compelling argument for the Judean provenance of the Hebrew text), the actual setting of the narrative is clearly the Persian court.<sup>3</sup> The narrative is part of the broader testimony of the people of Israel—a testimony that began in Babylon<sup>4</sup> when Abraham was called to leave his homeland to become an exclusive worshipper of Yahweh. However, by the time of Esther, the journey had led the Israelites from living in the land of promise to being exiled back to Babylon.

The narrative of Esther is located in Susa, one of the capitals of the Empire. Yet while many characters of the Old Testament chose to return to the land of promise and help re-establish the Judean community, Mordecai and Esther chose not to return but to stay in the Persian capital. They remained in exile not only geographically, but also socially. Mordecai was of the house of Kish—a veiled reference to the strongly shamed and discredited house of Saul. One of the most disreputable acts of Saul was sparing Agag, king of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15) in disobedience to the prophetic word. This reference is important in order to understand the enmity between Mordecai the Jew and Haman the Agagite because it reflects the ancient rivalry. According to Berger, the selection and function of Esther is to restore the reputation and honour of the line of Kish.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Elsie Stern, “Esther and the Politics of Diaspora.” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100, No. 1, (Winter 2010), 23-53.

<sup>4</sup>Specifically, Genesis 11:31 refers to Abram being originally located in “Ur of the Chaldeans.” This is generally identified as being located in the southern portion of Babylon or Mesopotamia. However, to emphasise the geographic connections in the narrative, he is referred to as being from more generally the region of Babylon.

<sup>5</sup>Yitzhak Berger, “Esther and Benjamite Royalty: A Study in Inner-Biblical Allusion.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129 (2010), 625-44.

### Hidden Identities

The character of Esther is first introduced as the orphan cousin of Mordecai, who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It seems that Esther (or Hadassah) has lost her parents and her name. Hadassah means ‘myrtle’—a tree of restoration used in Isaiah 55 to picture the transformation of the desert from thorns to flourishing. Esther most probably means “star,” pointing to the Babylonian goddess Ishtar. As Betschel notes, it is almost as if a double identity is set up from the beginning, she being both grand Gentile goddess and humble Hebrew flower.<sup>6</sup> This dualistic identity perhaps emphasises the Diaspora dream—to embody both the Gentile power and Jewish holiness. Throughout the narrative, the exiled girl is known as Esther. In fact, she not only is exiled from the land but also taken into the harem of the King. She is vulnerable to the circumstances around her.

Esther is the very picture of powerlessness—an orphaned female Jew living in Persia who is taken into the King’s possession. She accepts life in the harem, which the previous “star” Queen Vashti, had rejected with spirit. Yet it is this very lack of power that makes her a paradigm of the diaspora Jew. While Mordecai is identified as a Jew, for some reason knowledge of this ethnicity is dangerous, so Esther is advised by her guardian to keep this information quiet. She then exists in the harem as any other hostage. Nothing distinguishes her Jewishness except this secret known only to a few.

The Jewishness of Esther does not seem to have an effect upon her actions, behaviour, or worldview. Unlike Daniel, she does not follow the food laws, pray (in the Masoretic Text), or express interest in Jerusalem. She accepts her position in the king’s harem and docilely submits to sexual relations with a Gentile to whom she is not married. She is not distinguished from the other women in the harem, other than a sense of graciousness that endears her to others (2:15). Esther functions as a model citizen, demonstrating complete obedience to Persian law and customs. This is important in the narrative because later, Haman accuses the Jews of not keeping the King’s laws (3:8). Similarly, Mordecai, a royal courtier, progressively rises through the ranks of Persian court life despite his known identity as “Mordecai the Jew.” Being a Jew does not appear to be an obstacle to a successful life and position of influence. In fact, when Haman’s edict is announced in Susa, the city is described as being bewildered (3:15)—not hostile, simply confused.

However, is this lack of Jewishness presented in the Esther narrative a positive portrayal of Diaspora living or, as Stern suggests, a comic farce

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<sup>6</sup>Bechtel, 30.

to ridicule this false utopian dream of dualistic living? Does Esther compromise too much? The context that prompts the revealing of Esther's ethnicity is the threat of extermination. Once faced with annihilation, she must choose either to identify with "her people" (8:6) or to reject her ethnicity. Calculated by the enemy of the Jews, Haman, the threat of annihilation develops as the key conflict in the story. As noted above, his hatred is not solely founded on the contemporary behaviour of a single Jew (Mordecai) but is based on an ancient tribal enmity. While Esther may think she can hide in the palace, as Mordecai boldly warns her, she will be found out eventually.

When Mordecai challenges Esther that perhaps she has "come to royal position for such a time as this," he presents her appointment as Queen positively. He challenges her that she, a Jew, will not be exempt from this extermination, even in the palace. Mordecai requests her help in this message passed on by her servants: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (4:13-14, NIV). As Saul shamefully lost his opportunity to reign, so Esther may lose the opportunity to redeem her family name. Perhaps another from the house of David might rise to take her place.<sup>7</sup> To claim her opportunity, she must act boldly and decisively.

One of the great ironies in this section is that Haman's proposal to the king stated that the Jewish people were law-breakers, yet Esther is reluctant to help because it will mean breaking the law. However, to save her and her people from an edict based on them being alleged law-breakers, she must violate it. She rises to the challenge by ordering a three-day fast, after which she will go to the king unsummoned. By this action, she will potentially suffer the same fate as her predecessor, Vashti. Yet she determines to go to the king, even though it is against the law—"and if I perish, I perish" (4:15-16). By her actions, Esther associates with the Jewish people. In deciding to appeal to the king, she makes her and her people as one.

Like the Book of Esther, the Book of Daniel also contains a narrative of court conflict. They both navigate successfully the traps of their enemies to become powerful and feared figures by the resolution of the narrative. The key problem by which both Esther and Daniel are exposed is their "Jewishness." While Esther remains initially hidden, it is only time, as Mordecai threatens, before her secret is revealed. It is this exposure that proves critical to her actions. The enemies within both

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<sup>7</sup>Berger, 635.

narratives display a hostility to the national identity of the heroes. However, unlike Esther, it is Daniel's piety that his enemies use to propel the conflict, which is subsequently resolved by God's active intervention.<sup>8</sup> Yet, through their clever navigation of the conflict, the situation is reversed so that both Esther and Daniel emerge with position and influence that is desired by Jew and non-Jew alike. They emerge to find their place in a Gentile world. This place is both part of the Gentile culture and yet not incompatible or untrue to their own national and cultural identity. Even when Esther reveals her Jewish identity to the King, he does not balk at promoting her political power.<sup>9</sup> Instead, he continues to gift her political demands (8:3-4; 9:12-13).

Yet despite the persecution, both Daniel and Esther do not present a critical perspective of the foreign court. They continue to exhibit a level of fidelity to their Gentile kings. The loyalty of Esther and Daniel is dualistic—i.e., they support both the Jewish people and the Persian king. This paints a portrait that Diaspora life outside the land of Israel was both successful and meaningful.<sup>10</sup> It is successful in that they rise to positions of influence; it is meaningful in that they, particularly Esther, use their influence for the benefit of the Jews living in the land. As Kay Fountain notes, "When a person comes into a leadership position, it is not merely for their own benefit, but for the fulfilment of God's purposes and the protection of God's people."<sup>11</sup>

### Esther's Transformation

The exchange between Esther and Mordecai in Chapter 4 marks a shift both in the story and in the character of Esther. The narrative at this point is now told from the perspective of Esther. She is sending clothes to him and sending messengers to him and having messages reported back. She is authoritatively making commands. In calling for the fast, she assumes the role of a national and religious leader. Through this exchange with Mordecai, we see Esther emerge as a leader and hero for the Diaspora community. Mordecai begins to treat her not as his adopted daughter who should be obeying him, but as a partner and equal. Rather than being passive, she acts as an initiator and planner. That once-passive, marginalised girl becomes transformed into an active and powerful

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<sup>8</sup>W. Lee Humphries, "A Life-Style for Diaspora: A Study of the Tales of Esther and Daniel." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973), 219-220.

<sup>9</sup>Stern, 42.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 29. According to Stern, the message of Esther is not a defense of Diaspora living, but "a comic critique of it" (p. 31). Yet, this anti-reading still places the narrative in the setting of Diaspora.

<sup>11</sup>A. Kay Fountain, "Canonical Messages in the Book of Esther," *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research*, Vol. 2 (2010), 3-17.

woman who saves her people. Now a model of courage and self-sacrifice, she ruthlessly sacrifices her enemies.

The conclusion of the Book of Esther presents a complete reversal—i.e., those without power (Esther) emerge powerful. She emerges as the awesome Gentile goddess who annihilates her enemies in turn and completes the destruction that Saul refused. By the end of the story, we see her take her full role as “Esther the Queen.” She stands as a peer with Mordecai as they direct the wealth of Haman and execute unrelenting vengeance. Yet she maintains, in fact re-discovers or re-invents, her Jewish past, in Chapter 9 being referred to as “Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail . . .” At the conclusion of the story, after she has both acted and spoken for herself, we discover that her father's name is Abihail, “my father is Strong”<sup>12</sup> She retrieves her heritage, adding legitimacy to her royal lineage through the redeemed name of the house of Saul, and reverses her previous familial exile and orphan state. She is now daughter and queen, no longer marginal but standing at the centre of the community. Through the seeming coincidences of the narrative coincidences that many scholars emphasise as the providence of God, Esther is now a key influencer in the land. She is the Jewish Diaspora dream incarnate.

### **Pentecostals and Esther**

Like Esther, the Pentecostal community has been in social exile. When Pentecostalism first emerged within, among others, the North American and Australian landscape in the early 20th century, it was marked by marginalisation and rejection from the “respectable” society, including most other established denominations. A movement led mainly by the poor, socially marginal, academically uneducated, and some women,<sup>13</sup> it was not acceptable to the conservative Western society, both religious and general.<sup>14</sup> It was exiled as “strange,” “emotional,” and

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<sup>12</sup>My thanks to Dr. Lee Roy Martin for this insight.

<sup>13</sup>By 1925, 11 of the 18 Pentecostal churches planted in Australia were founded by women. Even by 1930, 20 of the 37 churches (for which information is available) were initiated by women. Barry Chant, ‘The Spirit of Pentecost: Origins and Development of the Pentecostal Movement in Australia, 1870-1939.’ Thesis for Ph D, Macquarie University, 1999, 428.

<sup>14</sup>Unlike the Assemblies of God in America, which began among the urban and the working classes, the movement in Australia originated among middle-class and rural groups, who were not academically educated. According to Chant, “. . . in Australia, its origins were among people of relatively comfortable socio-economic status” (p.38). Chant demonstrates the middle-class beginnings of Pentecostalism by a comparative study of occupations, which “. . . shows that the percentage of Pentecostals involved in professional occupations in the 1930s was roughly double that of the community while the percentage of labourers was approximately half.”<sup>14</sup> See Chant, 38.

lacking the correct objectivity expected by the religious community. This marginalisation was considered by the fledgling movement as a reflection of the depravity of the “world” and seen by the movement as a sign of the imminent return of Christ.

According to Grant Wacker, Pentecostals were certain they were riding the crest of the wave of history that would involve them directly in the intervention of God and be marked by an intensification of the divine presence and experience of the Holy Spirit for healing, global evangelism, and spiritual warfare.<sup>15</sup> In this apocalyptic-type worldview, the faithful must endure “this present evil age” in expectation of future glory. Their worldview and sense of persecution was reflected in the eschatological and apocalyptic emphasis of their writings and limited literature. As Hanson notes, the experience of alienation or times of crisis is the sociological context from which many feel gives rise to apocalypticism.<sup>16</sup> This worldview is not unlike that observed in the visions of Daniel. Like the Diaspora community, they were marginalised and expected to navigate that marginalisation.

These origins have profoundly affected the worldview and theology of contemporary Pentecostalism globally. Because of its orientation toward the supernatural, Pentecostalism has flourished predominantly in the non-Western context, such as South America and parts of Africa. However, as Pentecostalism has increased numerically over the last few decades,<sup>17</sup> so also has its aspiration for increased social stature and political influence. This is observed particularly in the Australian context. The process of institutionalisation and adoption of wider cultural norms by a previously marginalised group in order to achieve social respectability has been the focus of various studies in Pentecostalism globally—a process from which the Pentecostal movement in Australia has not been immune.<sup>18</sup>

### From the Margins to the Centre

The substantial numerical growth and subsequent process of institutionalisation in the Australian Pentecostal movement has been a

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<sup>15</sup>Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 251-65.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Hanson, *Old Testament Apocalyptic* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 75.

<sup>17</sup>According to Assemblies of God statistics (the largest Pentecostal movement in Australia), they currently consist of more than 1,000 churches with over 160,000 constituents.

<sup>18</sup>In particular, the study of Margaret Poloma on the A/G in the USA represents this attempt to capture the sociological changes within the global movement. M. Poloma, *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

double-edged sword. While it has meant the introduction of stabilising factors, such as training institutions and the formulation of doctrine, there has also been a loss of the earlier revival spirit linked to the immediacy of the *parousia*. As Hutchinson notes, “Bigger congregations meant bigger churches meant, quite often, that we stopped looking for the millennium and started building for it.”<sup>19</sup> This growth and shift in ecclesiology has also impacted the wider mission of the Australian Pentecostal movement. Instead of identifying themselves as ‘Hadassah’ (the humble Hebrew flower), Pentecostals in Australia began to see themselves as agents of change and transformation within the structures of society and government—i.e., as “Esther” (the grand Gentile goddess). No longer waiting for the *parousia*, the victorious life could be experienced here and now. The Diaspora dream of Esther is active today, with Pentecostals too becoming a key influencer in the land as we navigate our way from the margins of society to the centre. The promise is that Pentecostals today can fulfil the Diaspora dream of functioning in positions of influence, which is to be desired by both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal alike.

While this aspiration to move from exile to being strategically located in the centre has led to some positive outcomes, such as the planning and development of institutional structures, it has come packaged in the wrapping of “triumphalism.” This feeling is reflected in an official statement, published in 2009, outlining the values of the Assemblies of God in Australia (AGA); it includes this assertion:

Life is meant to be lived as an increasing adventure in prosperity. God’s intention is to prosper the righteous so that they can demonstrate the power of His Kingdom on earth. Prosperity is not an option but a mandate and responsibility given to all who believe in the authority of the name of Jesus. We are called to show forth the wonders of His increasing Kingdom, and this clearly requires an increasing measure of affluence so that we can have an increasing measure of influence.<sup>20</sup>

The sense of expectation, triumph, and focus on economic prosperity expressed in this statement captures the feeling of contemporary Pentecostalism in Australia as it drives to make God’s

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<sup>19</sup>Hutchinson, Mark, ‘The New Thing God Is Doing: The Charismatic Renewal and Classical Pentecostalism,’ *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*, Vol. 1, March 1998, 5-21.

<sup>20</sup><http://www.aog.org.au/AboutUs/KeyValues/LovePeople/tabid/142/Default.aspx> (accessed March 11, 2011).

kingdom established here on earth—not just in heaven! This paints a portrait of Diaspora life for the contemporary Pentecostal community—i.e., that living inside the margins is both successful and meaningful.<sup>21</sup> Part of this shift towards respectability, like Esther, has been the re-discovering or retrieval of our Wesleyan and Anabaptist heritage.<sup>22</sup> The surge of interest in the antecedents of Pentecostalism highlights that Pentecostals are no longer orphans. By retrieving our heritage, it adds legitimacy to our aspiration of influence and social inclusion. Like Esther, we are no longer marginal but stand at the centre of the community. Yet the question must be asked—What is the “cost” of this shift of Pentecostalism from the margins to the centre?

### The Transformation of Pentecostalism

Like Esther, Pentecostals in Australia see themselves as agents of change and transformation by functioning within the centre of the “world” or earthly kingdom in which we exist. We see opportunities to shine as “stars” like Queen Esther (and perhaps even like Ishtar) as being a God-given opportunity. In this approach, we consider every type of work, whether secular or religious, to be both successful and meaningful. Like Queen Esther and Mordecai, each has a calling and vocation, even if that vocation is in the court of the Gentile king. But what if that calling is to be placed in the philosophical harem of our contemporary academy? Or what if that vocation is to write edicts that promote the welfare of one group over another? The lines between the secular and the sacred have blurred. This is not necessarily negative, as Pentecostals begin to engage with the broader issues of the culture and politics of our societies and leave behind the siege mentality. However, as we navigate the “Empire,” this blurring has the potential for us to lose our way and forget our mission. As Volf notes, “If one can describe with Luther the ‘lifting of a single straw’ as a ‘completely divine’ work, there is no reason why one should not be able to ascribe the same attribute to the most degrading types of work in industrial societies in which the human person is reduced to ‘a mere automaton, a wooden man.’”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Stern, 29. According to Stern, the message of Esther is not a defense of Diaspora living but rather “a comic critique of it” (p.31). Yet, this anti-reading still places the narrative in the setting of Diaspora.

<sup>22</sup>See for example, Matthew Clark, “An Investigation into the Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic,” Thesis for D Th, Pretoria: Unisa; (1997) and Walter J. Hollenweger, “The Critical Tradition of Pentecostalism,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, vol. 1, (1992), 7-17.

<sup>23</sup>Miroslav Volf, “Human Work, Divine Spirit, and New Creation: Towards a Pneumatological Understanding of Work,” *Pneuma*, Fall 1987, 173-193.

Using the position of influence to further our own group, ideologies, or even theologies at the expense of others is contrary to the wisdom of the Gospel. It can lead us to endorse callings and vocations that undermine the dignity of humanity created in the image of God for the goal of influence. In this sense, there is potential for the vehicle to become the goal—i.e., that Pentecostals become so mesmerised with our power and leadership that influence becomes the end goal. Thereby we forget this influence should have been merely a vehicle for justice and truth. For the contemporary Pentecostal community navigating life in the Empire of secular humanism (and thus embracing the “star” of Esther), we should not forget that we are also the “myrtle” of Hadassah—a branch of the tree of Christ that should bring restoration and transformation of the desert (or place of exile) from thorns to flourishing.

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## **The Liminal Space of Kerala Pentecostals in the United States of America and the Role of the Inter-Collegiate Prayer Fellowship**

by Allan Varghese Meloottu

### **Introduction**

During March 17-20, 2016, I attended the American Inter-Collegiate Prayer Fellowship camp in Davis, Oklahoma. At first, there seemed to be nothing distinctive about it as a Christian camp—e.g., everyone speaking English, singing popular evangelical songs, and listening to dynamic preaching, as would be the case at any charismatic gathering<sup>1</sup>—except for one striking exception. Almost all the participants were of Indian descent, and more specifically of Malayalee Indian descent.

It was indeed surprising to see some 500 ethnically Indian young people assembled in a majority-white Oklahoma town; however, such a sight represents the racially diverse nature of American Christianity. Simultaneously, this gathering, being under the banner of Inter-Collegiate Prayer Fellowship (a Kerala-based Pentecostal para-church organization), points to the importance of mapping the cultural and religious nature of Kerala Pentecostalism in America.

This paper aims to identify the liminal nature of Kerala Pentecostalism via focusing on the Christian formation of second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals in America. It then attempts to demonstrate the role of the Inter-Collegiate Prayer Fellowship (ICPF) in shaping those second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals in their Christian identity. To fulfill this two-fold objective, I will do the following:

1. Describe the Malayalee Pentecostals in India and chronicle their immigration to America, which led to the establishment of Malayalee Pentecostal churches there.
2. Discuss the liminal identity (ethnic and religious) of the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals.

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<sup>1</sup>Occasionally one would see, as Raymond Williams puts it, “a form of ‘holy aerobics’ break out as people clap their hands, sway, and dance around in place to the rhythm of the music” similar to the feature he observed during his ethnographic study among Asian Indian Pentecostals in 1996 (Williams 1996, 165). However, that feature is not an exclusively Indian or Malayali one. Instead, it is common among Pentecostals worldwide. While the ‘holy aerobics’ can be considered an American rendition of Pentecostalism, other Pentecostals around the world may demonstrate more expressive forms of worship.

3. Introduce the ICPF and critically examine its impact on the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans.

The paper concludes with the argument that, despite its limitations, the ICPF provides a unique space for the second-generation to have a more profound Christian Pentecostal experience, to be affirmed in their leadership calling, and to have a sense of belonging in their liminal cultural identity.<sup>2</sup>

### **Malayalee Pentecostals in India: Their Immigration to America and the Church They Established**

Malayalee Pentecostals are from the South Indian coastal state of Kerala.<sup>3</sup> In Kerala, Pentecostalism traces its roots back to the late 19th century where Pentecostal expressions were prevalent among various revivals led by local Christian reformist groups. A. C. George notes three revivals—one in 1860, another in 1873, and the third in 1895 (George 2001, 221)—where people experienced Pentecostal-like expressions, notably speaking in unknown tongues. These revivals provided a renewal of faith that led to "conversion of non-believers, a jump in the sale of Bibles, increased concern to preach the gospel, sorrow for sin, restitution of property taken illegally, and significantly the disregard of caste in church meetings" (McGee 2010, 37).

In the early 20th century, with the arrival of western Pentecostal missionaries, notably George E. Berg, Robert F. Cook, and Mary Chapman, plus the leadership of local preachers like K. E. Abraham, Pentecostalism grew and became established as a new Christian group in Kerala. Against a backdrop of the reformatory teachings in the already-existing Protestant Reform churches, Pentecostalism embodied renewal teaching and expressions (mainly in the embracing of Spirit baptism), which attracted believers who were reformists in Mar Thoma and Brethren churches (Varghese 2019). As Stanley John notes, "The doctrine of cessation (of miraculous gifts) embraced by the Brethren

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<sup>2</sup>The methodology of this research is integrative; interacting with existing literature, with the author's personal experiences (autoethnographic analysis), and with the thematic analyses of the ten interviews he conducted over a three-month span (October-December 2019) with second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans (five from Oklahoma, two from Texas, and one each from Washington D. C, New York City, and Houston. All of the interviewees consented to have their responses used in this paper; however, the names that appear are pseudonyms.

<sup>3</sup>The term *Malayalee* is commonly used to refer to someone who speaks Malayalam (the language spoken in the State of Kerala). Often in the diaspora, terms such as Malayalee or Keralite are used to refer to people from Kerala. I use the phrase Malayalee in this paper because I believe 'Malayalee' conveys a more ethnic tone from an insider's perspective than does the word 'Keralite'.

Church and the reluctance to embrace the spiritual phenomena in the Mar Thoma Church led many who experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit to leave these churches and join the Pentecostal churches” (John 2018, 106).

With Pentecostalism standing as a Christian reformative movement, Malayalee Pentecostals also adopted certain social customs, such as no jewelry for women<sup>4</sup> and white-colored attire (often understood as a symbolic denunciation of ‘worldliness’); these customs set them apart from the wider Kerala Christian community. Subsequently, when Malayalee Pentecostals immigrated to America, they brought with them a socio-religious distinctiveness along with their ethnic attributes (e.g., Kerala food, clothing, Malayalam language), which defined their ethno-religious sub-culture.

However, before discussing the Malayalee Pentecostal’s immigration to America, it is important to look at the broader Asian Indian immigration within which the Malayalee Pentecostals are located.

### **Malayalee Pentecostals Within the Asian Indian Americans**

Asian Indians have been part of American society for more than a century.<sup>5</sup> However, from the 1960s to the 1990s, the country saw a rapid increase in the Indian immigrant population, due mainly to the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. According to recent data from the Pew Research Center, as of 2019, there are about 4,606,000 Indian residents in the America. Among them, “While the majority are immigrants, a rising share is born and raised in the United States” (Badrinathan et al 2021, 1).<sup>6</sup>

It is also important to note that these Indian Americans are not an ethnically homogenous group; rather, they reflect the diverse nature of India, where diversity can be broadly yet strongly categorized in terms

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<sup>4</sup>For a discussion of the role of jewelry and South Indian Pentecostals, see Jorgensen 2012. Although the study is from the nearby state of Tamil Nadu, it provides some valuable insights about the South Indian Pentecostal lifestyles that are common among Kerala Pentecostals as well.

<sup>5</sup>The earliest immigration records indicate that the first immigrant arrived in Massachusetts from Madras in 1790 (Williams 2019, 2; Thomas 2013, 116). The following 100 years saw little growth in the population and hence remained below 1,000 by 1900. In the next 60 years, there was a slow growth, which resulted in 13,000 Asian Indians living in America (Williams 2019). The low immigration numbers were due to various laws being implemented to restrict the entry of Asians in general, starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. For a brief analysis of different immigration laws that impacted Asian Indians, see Bhatia 2007, 89.

<sup>6</sup>The Pew Research Center records that among the 4,606,000 Indian residents in 2019, 32% are U.S. born and 68% are foreign (Indian) born. For a detail statistical breakdown, see Budiman 2021.

of geographic, linguistic, and religious differences.<sup>7</sup> While one may attempt to make sense of this population collectively in their pan-ethnicity in order to understand their “shared culture . . . shared categorization by others . . . shared institutions . . . and shared interests” (Dhingra and Rodriguez 2014, 10),<sup>8</sup> this paper begins the enquiry from a particular Indian ethno-religious group—the Malayalee Pentecostals who immigrated to America from the southwestern India state of Kerala.

### Malayalee Pentecostals in America

The immigration of Malayalee Pentecostals to America in the 1950s and 1960s can be attributed primarily to what appeared to be two unique opportunities—education for men and nursing for women. As to the first, earlier in the 20th century, some of the men who were part of the Kerala Pentecostal movement came to America for theological training (George 2009, 29); however, most went back to Kerala because long-term settlement proved not a prevalent option. Regarding the second (and more important factor) was a shortage of nurses in America combined with the 1965 Immigration Act (Kurien 2017, 77; Mathew 2016, 47; George 2009, 29; Gabriel 2013, 138). As was often the case, the women arrived alone but then returned to India, got married, and brought their husbands with them back to America.<sup>9</sup>

Upon arriving in America, many found themselves in unexpected situations primarily relative to finances, accommodations, and ‘community’. Acquiring a Registered Nurse (RN) license also made it hard for some in the early days (Gabriel 2013, 139). During this phase of their immigration experience, most of them turned to other Malayalee Pentecostals for emotional support. Even though there are commonalities

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<sup>7</sup>Geographically, India constitutes 28 states and eight union territories, each one with its own distinctive culture, clothing, languages, religious beliefs, etc. Religiously, while “Hinduism has been the dominant religion for several thousand years,” as O. P. Sharma puts it, “Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, and Sikhism have also flourished” (Sharma 2009). Linguistically, according to the 2011 census of India, there were 270 identifiable mother tongues with 10,000 or more speakers (Census of India 2011, vii). For more on the linguistic differences from the 2011 Government of India survey, see Census of India 2011.

<sup>8</sup>Pan-ethnicity refers to the increasing collaboration and identification along ethnic and racial lines where new group formations start to emerge (among Asian Americans in our analysis). “Pan-ethnicity can result from a shared racial formation among ethnic groups but also from a sense of cultural connections, and so is not reducible to racial formation. Asian Americans identify pan-ethnically due to a shared culture . . . , shared categorization by others . . . , shared institutions . . . , and shared interests” (Dhingra and Rodriguez 2014, 10).

<sup>9</sup>This gender role reversal also trickled down to domestic responsibilities, which was unique in traditional Kerala or Indian households. For a more in-depth analysis, see George 2005, 77-117.

among Malayalee Christian communities due to the ethno-linguistic component, they often chose to congregate based on their denominational preferences, which signify the close-knitted nature of ethnicity and religion among the immigrant communities (Kim 2011; Beyers 2017; Joshi 2006; Smith, 1978; Williams 2007). As a result, various Malayalee Christian congregations started springing up in various parts of America. They included Syrian Orthodox, Kananaya Orthodox, Malankara Orthodox, Mar Thoma, Syro-Malabar Catholic, Latin Catholic, Church of South India, Kerala Brethren, and Pentecostal.<sup>10</sup> These churches provided an essential support system for the early Malayalee Christian immigrants. In other words, these ethnic churches became “ethno-religious communit[ies]” (Joshi 2006, 54) to which they turned in times of hardship and for cultural cohesion.<sup>11</sup>

### *Malayalee Pentecostal Churches as Ethno-Religious Communities in America*

For Malayalee Pentecostals, it was their ethnic churches that provided "a sense of home's remembered comforts amid the tribulations of the new home" (Joshi 2006, 54). Although most of these Pentecostals were optimistic in being allowed to come to America, an assumed Christian country, they soon developed a love-hate, ambivalent relationship with its predominant culture. The reasons for such an attitude are numerous; however, among the common ones were: racial discrimination, stark differences in cultural and moral values, emotionally over-taxed lives due to the continuous-job culture, separation from extended family, and a sense of failure regarding responsibilities to their parents back home (Thomas 2010, 143-156). Subsequently, for many Malayalee Pentecostals, their churches became a 'comfort zone' where they found social support and spiritual encouragement, reminding them that they had the Holy Spirit to guide them in this new land.

The first Malayalee Pentecostal gathering, which was led by Pastor C. M. Varghese, took place in 1967, in Newark, New Jersey (George 2019, 182); and the first church—the Indian Pentecostal Assembly—was formed on February 18, 1968, in the New York/New Jersey area, among the nurses (Mathew 2016, 47). The years following saw many Malayalee Pentecostal churches established across America, most being associated

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<sup>10</sup>For a insightful discussion on the emergence of all these Malayalee Christian denominations in America, see Williams 1996, 111-180.

<sup>11</sup>American Education professor Khyati Y. Joshi defines the term 'ethno-religious community' to indicate the "role and social impact of religion as the community's organizing force and the vehicle through which many 'do ethnicity'" (Joshi 2006, 53).

with different Pentecostal denominations from Kerala. The Indian Pentecostal Church of God, Church of God-Cleveland, TN, Assemblies of God, Sharon Fellowship, New Indian Church of God, and Pentecostal Maranatha Gospel Church (Matthew 2014, 272) are the major ones, along with numerous independent churches.<sup>12</sup>

The Malayalee Pentecostal churches in America also enabled their adherents to continue nurturing their religious identity from Kerala by separating themselves from other Malayalee Protestant Christians. In Kerala, Pentecostal churches were formed out of revivals in Mar Thoma and Brethren churches, which caused strong doctrinal disputes and denominational rivalries that even led to persecution of many pioneering Pentecostals. Such denominational separations continued in America. Although the Malayalam language and Kerala food are common factors among all Malayalees, the social and moral decision-makings, emphasis on not wearing jewelry, and deep commitment towards a pneumatic<sup>13</sup> approach to prayer/worship/preaching, set strong dissociation between Malayalee Pentecostals and other Malayalee congregations. Day-to-day decision-making in a Malayalee Pentecostal household was one of pneumatic-centric ethics that is grounded in ‘biblical realism’ and believes in the active working of the Holy Spirit in today’s world (George 2009, 32). For example, having long prayers before every road trip, picnic, basketball tournament, housewarming occasion, etc. is a recurrent scene.

### **Liminal Identity of the Second-Generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans**

It is within this ethno-religious framework of the Malayalee Pentecostal churches that the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans were born and raised. Their cultural and religious formation could be understood as a three-part process—(a) becoming second-generation *Malayalee Pentecostals*, (b) becoming Malayalee *Americans*,

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<sup>12</sup>To the author’s knowledge, there has not been an effort to count the exact number of Malayali Pentecostal churches in America so far. However, Mathew (2014) has noted that a 2007 PCNAK (Pentecostal Conference of North American Keralites) report stated that "there are about fifty Keralite Pentecostal churches in New York State alone" (Matthew 2014, 271).

<sup>13</sup>By pneumatic approach, I am referring to emphasis on the Holy Spirit and his presence in every engagement. In most cases, this pneumatic nature of devotion expects the manifestation of the Spirit’s in-filling through speaking in tongues, expectations of miracles, etc. I am adopting this term from Geomon K. George, who used the phrase ‘pneumatic-centric ethics’ while writing of a model for the Pentecostal Indian American approach to moral decision- making (George 2009, 27).

and (c) becoming Malayalee American *Christians*—not necessarily in this order.

### Becoming Second-Generation *Malayalee Pentecostals*

As already noted, most immigrant parents viewed their Malayalee Pentecostal church as an ‘ethno-religious community’, which provided emotional refuge in their time of struggle. Therefore, they assumed it would do the same for their children. Hence, the parents encouraged their American-born children to attend the Malayalee Pentecostal church, where it was seen as a safe space for the children to have “peer interaction that guarded against the evils outside of that space . . . perceived to be (the) corrupting aspects of American culture: crime, violence, drug use, divorce, and sexual promiscuity” (Joshi 2006, 54). Therefore, for most of the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals, their church was a second home with an extended family.<sup>14</sup> One of my respondents, Arjun, who grew up in such an environment, said:

My mom went to church a lot . . . and so I also ended up in the church at least four or five times a week. Church was primarily in Malayalam; songs were in Malayalam. . . . Life was centered around going to church from age 4-16 years old. At home, we even had morning prayers and evening prayers. So altogether my Malayalee ethnicity was solidified through the church (Arjun 2019).

Arjun’s story is similar to most of the Malayalee Pentecostal Americans; and for many, strong friendships and relationships are made among their second-generation peers. The churches provided a sense of Malayalee ethnic identity and (more importantly) belonging, especially in light of the bullying and racism they encountered outside (at their schools and workplaces).

While the church aids in constructing the Malayalee ethnic identity for the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals, it also builds their Christian identity, beginning with Sunday school. The Sunday Schools of North American Keralites (SSNAK) has been producing customized curricula to serve the Malayalee Pentecostal children in diaspora

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<sup>14</sup>Indian Pentecostal congregations in America meet frequently for various church-related activities throughout the week in addition to the main Sunday worship service (often between 9:30-12:30 p.m.). A rough weekly schedule would list: Mondays for fasting prayers, Wednesday night for house prayer meetings, Friday morning for fasting prayer, Friday evenings for community outreach activities or women ministries, and Saturday evenings for youth prayer meetings. These regular activities enable the Malayalee Pentecostals to see the church as a second home.

(Mathews 2014, 272). In addition, the Malayalee Pentecostal teachings and practices, such as emphasis on charismatic expressions of prayer, worship, speaking in tongues, and wearing no jewelry, have become the paramount expression of their Christianity. In doing so, most of the time, the churches emphasize their Pentecostal Christian identity over their Malayali identity.

Amos Yong notes a similar trend among other Asian American evangelicals where "ethnic identities are minimized, . . . and that historical and cultural aspects of Asian identity are accepted only as accidental to identity in Christ. Asian American Evangelicals are first and foremost Christians, and only secondarily, if at all, Asians" (Yong 2015, 210). Similarly, Malayalee Pentecostals claim that their Pentecostal Christian faith trumps their Malayalee-ness.

On one side, through their church activities, the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals attempt to negotiate their identity; on the other side, they also attempt to make sense of their American-ness as they encounter the majority-white America outside of their ethnic churches and homes.

### Becoming Malayalee *Americans*

Two broad themes can be highlighted when speaking of second-generation Malayalee Americans making sense of their American-ness—reconciling the racial difference and navigating the model-minority myth.

#### *Reconciling the Racial Difference*

It is far too common for the second-generation Asian Indians who live in the diaspora to experience questions like "Where are you *really* from?," which carry a heavy connotation that they do not belong to their own country of birth (George 2009, 103- 106). More specifically, many Malayalee Pentecostal Americans have memories of moments that made them realize they are different from their white peers. One respondent said, "Growing up, I was confused. I am American and I spoke good English, but kids asked me, 'Why do you talk like that.' I have memories of kids saying to me, 'Your skin looks like p\*\*p'."<sup>15</sup>

Growing up in predominately white neighborhoods and schools, the Malayalee Americans are shaped by such experiences. They perceived themselves to be racially different from others due to their brown-ness. Another example demonstrates the further depth of cultural

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<sup>15</sup>Arjun. 2019. Interview by author.

misunderstanding that second-generation Indians went through. Linson Daniel writes:

Saturday and Sunday were super brown; however, Monday through Friday I was in an all-whole private school. My brother and I were the only Asians at the school, and there was one Black family in the entire school, kindergarten through twelfth grade! In this pace, I was constantly helping my white friends understand that my parents were not Cherokee, Apache, or any other Native American tribe—we were from India, the country! (Daniel 2022, 156).

As scholars have noted, this perception of being different racially and ethnically lies in the predominant American notion that "Whiteness is . . . American; Asian-ness is not" (quoted in Lee, Won, and Alvarez 2009, 76). Therefore, for the sake of survival, second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans attempt to resolve the tension of their in-between-ness by either 'repositioning differences' (Bhatia 2007, 155) and assimilating as much as possible<sup>16</sup> or by internalizing the 'forever foreigner' perspective while building their Malayalee Pentecostal identity. Yet another option for some was to intentionally reject the perpetual foreign-ness often attributed to them in the public sphere and to fight for a multicultural American society.<sup>17</sup>

### *Navigating the Model-Minority Myth*

Khyati Y. Joshi writes, "According to the model-minority myth, Asians and Asian Americans are innately high performing, intelligent, and driven to succeed. The myth is perpetuated by teachers, by the media, by the parental generation of Indian Americans, and by second-generation Indian Americans themselves" (Joshi 2006, 105-106).

Even though now considered a myth,<sup>18</sup> it was a fact that has broadly influenced the social psyche of both the American and the Asian

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<sup>16</sup>For example: as one of my respondents said, "Talk like White people; . . . like the White people sports, and . . . eat White people food." Neil. 2019. Interview by author.

<sup>17</sup>The perpetual foreign-ness theme emerges in Joshi's research with the American Indians. (Joshi 2006, 112).

<sup>18</sup>Research by Lee and Zhou indicates that the model-minority stereotype is not because Asian Americans are culturally prone to educational achievement but rather because of the role U.S. immigration law had in selecting Asians to enter America as immigrants in 1960s. The researchers referred to such a phenomenon as 'hyper-selectivity.' As a result, they note, "The racialization of Asian in the United States stereotypes of Asian-American students are positive, leading to 'stereotype promise,' which also boosts academic outcomes" (Lee and Zhou 2017, 2327)

American cultures. Consequently, from a young age until adulthood, second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans go through the biases and expectations of the model-minority that are imposed on them by mere ethnic stereotyping. For some, the ethnic stereotype of the model-minority is a source of pride; for others, however, it is a source of anguish (Joshi 2006, 106).

Malayalee families and churches constantly encourage the second-generation children to "undertake higher education and professional training, particularly in medicine and engineering" (Leonard 1997, 152). These encouragements are often presented via stories of how their immigrant parents were given the opportunities to come to America and succeeded by taking advantage of those opportunities. Subsequently, the second-generation children are compelled to ignore the hardships and "be grateful to this great nation which gave [their parents] opportunities to blossom, fulfill their dreams, and take pride in their achievements" (Thomas 2013, 123).

However, for the second generation-ers who embody the in-between cultural space, such remarks turn out to be sources of frustration and hurt as their own family and community normalize the model-minority assumption and remain in the perpetual foreigner status.<sup>19</sup> For the second-generation, America is their only nation, and they are not outsiders looking into its society. Therefore, sadly, the normalization of being perpetual foreigner and model-minority by their own families only amplifies the dissonance and, in some instances, contributes to long-lasting emotional distress as they continue to identify their in-between cultural identity.<sup>20</sup>

### Becoming Malayalee American *Christian*

In reality, the cultural identity of the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans resides between their Malayalee Pentecostal-ness and in their American-ness as they live with elements of both Indian and American culture. Notes Sam George, "The Indian-ness and American-ness are mixed up into one concoction. Without either, it will lack the effect. It is so perfectly mixed up that they cannot be separated" (George

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<sup>19</sup>Scholars have noted the correlation between characterization of America as benevolent with the minority status to remain as forever foreigner. As Bhatia notes, "The need to characterize America as a benevolent and magnanimous nation stems from the perception that minorities are located socially as foreigners and outsiders in their society" (Bhatia 2007, 195).

<sup>20</sup>Daga and Raval (2018) have done a preliminary study that verified the internalization of the model minority and psychological effects among South Asian-American emerging adults. See Dag and Raval 2018 for more details.

2006, 73). It is in this in-between-ness that the Christian Pentecostal formation occurs.

However, those Malayalee Pentecostal churches that are predominantly led by the immigrant generation seem to struggle in catering to the cultural liminality of the second generation. Such is especially the case when second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals reach a stage of independence (i.e., later teens and early young adult) and begin to challenge some of the previous generation's ethno-centric assumptions regarding other communities and the church's ethnically grounded practices. Often these challenges serve as indicators of their deep desire to decouple their religious belief from ethnicity (Kurien 2018, 134).<sup>21</sup> In other words, this desire stems from their attempt to identify Christianity as their personal faith without having the ethnic garb of Malayalee Pentecostalism. There are at least three key areas of decoupling that can be readily identified among the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans.

**First area.** The ethnic pride felt within Malayalee Pentecostal churches becomes a factor for second-generation believers struggling to discern how to draft their own Christianity. Often, the sense of ethnic pride goes beyond a healthy identity factor to fostering an us-versus-them attitude towards other communities, including the White majority (Daniel 2022, 153). Furthermore, some of them (the first generation led Malayalee Pentecostal churches) also fail to make sense of "struggles/issues faced by other ethnic communities, especially our Black and Latino sisters and brothers" (Daniel 2022, 153). These ethnocentric attitudes often leave the second-generation believers conflicted, such as having to think twice before inviting their non-Indian friends to a church service without fearing that those friends will feel ostracized or overlooked by the congregation (Daniel 2022, 152). Such tension often leads to them not only feeling misunderstood, but also sets them on a path towards decoupling their personal faith from the ethnocentric attitudes of their parents' generation or community.

**Second area.** The issue of wearing jewelry becomes an area of the decoupling of ethnicity and religion. Among Malayalee Pentecostals, it was a commonly held practice not to wear any jewelry, with ear and nose piercings also avoided. However, the second generation started to question such a stand, since avoidance was historically instituted due to the socio-cultural understanding of jewelry's association with status in Kerala. In their early days, the Pentecostals in Kerala "felt that it [was] essential to let go of the use of jewelry as it held a strong connection to 'worldliness' and status" (Varghese 2019, 15). For some second-

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<sup>21</sup>Sociologist Prema Kurien observed this trend in her study among the second-generation Malayalee Mar Thoma Americans.

generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans, this is a matter of contextualization, not a doctrinal issue; therefore, they chose to remain indifferent or to wear jewelry within the Malayalee Pentecostal church. However, among many in the immigrant generation, such a turn against this historical practice has even led to church splits and leadership changes among the Kerala Pentecostals in America (Mathew 2016, 53).

**Third area.** Closely associated with the second, the reluctance of the immigrant generation to seriously engage with the second generation's theological questions is another pivotal point of decoupling. One such example is regarding the practice of speaking in tongues. Many second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals “grew up hearing that speaking in tongues should be a normal experience for Christians” (Andrews 2019).<sup>22</sup> However, when some young Pentecostals did not receive the gift, they experienced dismay and discontent with the lack of theologically satisfying answers from their pastors, which caused them to look for answers from the widely prevalent American reformed tradition. A transition from Pentecostalism to the reformed tradition can be akin to the ‘silent exodus’ among other Asian immigrant churches (Lee 1996, 50). Both Prema Kurien’s (2017) and Robbie B. H. Goh’s (2018) studies on the Indian Christian diaspora identifies similar trends. For the second-generation Pentecostals, such a departure is part of the formational journey of decoupling their religion from their immigrant parent’s ethnicity. The second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans, like other younger Indian Christians in the diaspora, are looking for “an opportunity to be ‘Christian’ without at the same time consciously or overtly being ‘Indian’” (Goh 2018, 87,88).

For some, the decision to pierce their ears, wear jewelry, and move to reformed American churches are signs of being a Christian in America without overtly being Indian or a Malayalee Pentecostal. Often these changes occur silently, as they do not wish to disrespect their immigrant parents or their Malayalee communities. However, for others (mainly those in their teen or young adult stages), such changes are not an option. Consequently, they remain in their Malayalee Pentecostal enclaves, imbibing all that their churches can offer.<sup>23</sup>

It is to this latter demographic population that the outreach ministries of Malayalee Pentecostal para-church organizations, notably

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<sup>22</sup>Alen Andrew’s blog article is a personal reflection of growing up in the Malayalee Pentecostal community in the USA. His account demonstrates a model of theological and cultural wrestling common to the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals. For details, see Andrews 2019.

<sup>23</sup>Some Malayalee Pentecostal churches, like the Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) in Houston and the Sharon Fellowship Church in Oklahoma have intentionally begun English (youth) worship services with new associate pastors who specifically minister to second-generation Pentecostals that embody the liminal identity.

the Inter-Collegiate Prayer Fellowship (ICPF) and the Pentecostal Youth Fellowship of America (PYFA) become pivotal. For those second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals who are in between the Malayalee Pentecostal and American culture but not independent enough to move away from their Malayalee parents and churches that these organizations' ministries (e.g., summer camps, mentoring, short-term overseas mission opportunities) become a unique space where they are accepted in their liminality, supported to have a deeper Christian Pentecostal experience, and empowered to take up leadership positions in the upcoming diaspora church.

While PYFA and ICPF are Pentecostal in theology and spirituality, their origins and geographical reaches differ. PYFA was an American initiative, birthed in New York City in 1981 by "a handful of youth leaders who had a vision to create an organization to bring the youth of our Indian community together."<sup>24</sup> ICPF was founded in Dallas, Texas, as a transnational Indian youth ministry by the immigrants once impacted by ICPF in Kerala and now desiring to impact their American-born children.

While a deeper comparative analysis of these two organizations would provide further insight into their roles in shaping second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals in America, for this paper we will limit our analysis just to the ICPF. Even though PYFA is the older, its reach is limited to working among the Indian youths in the greater New York City region, whereas the ICPF has expanded its impact nationally and thus warrants the analysis that follows.

### **ICPF and its Impact on Second-Generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans**

ICPF was started in Kerala, India, in the 1980s by Mathew P. Thomas, a professor at the Mar Thoma College, Thiruvalla. Between 1958 and the 1970s, Thomas was actively engaged in college ministry through the Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI), also known as the Evangelical Union. However, in May 1973, with some of his friends, Thomas formed an independent ministry—Youth Christian Camp (YCC) at the Charalkunnu campsite in Kerala—to specifically address the spiritual and emotional needs of young people through the Pentecostal message. In 1980, YCC led to the formation of ICPF as the leaders envisioned impacting the young people spiritually in their college settings, going beyond a once-a-year camp experience. Today, ICPF-India claims to minister to over 15,000 students per week through its 750

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<sup>24</sup>For the history and vision statement of PYFA, see "about," *Pentecostal Youth Fellowship of America* at <https://www.pyfa.org/about> (accessed August 20, 2022).

units, leading the *Christian Post* magazine to state that "Inter-Collegiate Prayer Fellowship is India's second-largest indigenous mission agency."<sup>25</sup>

In 1997, ICPF-USA was formed in Dallas, Texas, by Malayalee Pentecostal immigrants as a prayer fellowship to meet monthly to pray for second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals. The Kerala version of ICPF had impacted most of the Malayalee Pentecostal leaders who took the initiative to begin the American chapter. Therefore, when in 2001 ICPF launched its summer camps (named Awake) at the Waxahachie Camp Center in Texas, most of the immigrant Malayalee Pentecostal generation were amenable to sending their American-born children to the camps. Soon, these camps had grown in size and took various forms, providing a unique space where the second-generation felt comfortable in their liminality or in-between-ness as Malayalee Americans. Further, ICPF provided space for them to experience the Christian faith so authentically that their locus of identity was not in ethnicity or race but in Christianity.

The main objective of ICPF is to "reach students with the full Gospel of Jesus Christ, mentor them to be Disciples of Christ and spiritually equip them to be obedient to the Great Commission of the Lord."<sup>26</sup> To help realize that objective, ICPF-USA has such programs as the Ignite initiative for middle schoolers,<sup>27</sup> a college campus ministry, and Equip & Empower leadership trainings. However, its highlight ministry among the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals remains the annual three-day Awake camps, which serve as a yearly launching pad for all the other ICPF programs.

Every year, the camps center on a particular theme which is unpacked across various sections. For example, the 2022 Awake camps' theme was 'Limitless' (based on Ephesians 3:20), with various speakers ministering to the campers who are divided into four groups—middle school, high school and college, young married couples, and adults. This was sometimes called 'freedom hour. Although each camper may highlight various transformative experiences, through my thematic analysis of the interviews and my personal observation, I present here

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<sup>25</sup>An anonymous reporter made this claim in 2003. (*Christian Post*. 2003, "Inter-Collegiate Prayer Fellowship India" at <https://www.christianpost.com/news/inter-collegiate-prayer-fellowship-india.html> (accessed November 25, 2019).

<sup>26</sup>"The Mission" at <https://icpf.org/pages/17> (accessed October 29, 2020).

<sup>27</sup>With an emphasis on helping the middle schoolers, Ignite is organized to meet regularly for bible study groups, sports events, prayer meetings, and specifically catered annual camps only for those middle schoolers. For more information, see <https://www.icpfglobal.com/Home/EventPages/Ministries.aspx> (accessed December 2, 2022). For a summary of Ignite ministry, see <https://www.icpfglobal.com/Home/EventPages/Ignite.aspx> (accessed December 2, 2022).

the following three primary areas of impact—a deeper personal spiritual experience, a sense of belonging, and being empowered and equipped to lead.

### Personal Spiritual Experience of Christian Faith

ICPF Awake camps in their various forms<sup>28</sup> would state that they provide a space to experience Jesus Christ in a real manner. Jacob, who is in his 20s and very active in ICPF, says of his first ICPF camp experience:

It felt different. People looked like they were here for Jesus Christ. I remember going to "freedom hour," and I felt almost like a "touch of heaven." On a normal basis, I didn't know what it meant to have a personal relationship with God. I knew how to play the church—because I grew up in one. But I don't think I was applying Christianity to my life. But when I came to camp, I felt like these people genuinely want to experience God and touch heaven (Jacob 2019).<sup>29</sup>

It is not uncommon among ICPF youth to recount stories similar to Jacob's. In some instances, the camps' late-night worship encounters often go beyond the assigned time. As Arpitha noted, there were instances where "the organizers had to ask us to stop worshiping because it was too late at night. Even after night worship, we continued to pray in our cabins, and people started to speak in tongues" (Arpitha 2019).

ICPF's emphasis on personal experience signifies its evangelical Pentecostal influence. Even though having severed connection with the Evangelical Union in Kerala on account of Pentecostal doctrines, it maintained an evangelical stand contrary to other mainline denominations. This is reflected in ICPF's adaptation of one of the basic tenants of evangelicalism—i.e., experiencing Jesus Christ in a personal manner.

Russell Jeung, who studied the evangelical and mainline Asian American churches in the San Francisco Bay area, also notes the emphasis

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<sup>28</sup>As of 2019, there are five Awake camps open each year that are based at locations in the South (Dallas, Houston, or Oklahoma City), in the Northeast (Philadelphia, New Jersey, or New York), in the Southwest (Arizona or California), in the Southeast (Georgia, Carolinas, or Tennessee) and in the Great Lakes area (Michigan, Illinois or Wisconsin). Along with these, ICPF also has some year-round university-based ministries and conducts leadership camps to equip young people for missions (Equip for teenage boys, Empower for teenage girls, and Ignite for middle schoolers) as part of its International Ministries Mission Outreach.

<sup>29</sup>Jacob. 2019. Interview by author.

of a personal experience with Jesus Christ among the evangelical Asian Americans as being contrary to the mainline teachings, which often rather emphasize the influence of biblical teachings in embracing ethnic and racial identities. He further notes that the evangelical emphasis on belief in Jesus as one's personal savior has led to the focus on "individual's concerns for self-fulfillment and therapeutic health" (Jeung 2002, 224).

Similarly, the three-/four-day ICPF camps are often filled with sessions related to living in Christ to deal with destructive personal issues, such as abuse, bullying, cyber-bullying, and pornography, and on matters that could lead to a sense of therapeutic fulfillment. For most second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans, the camps also become a place to be 'real' about the struggles that come with being in the liminal space and being part of the model-minority, which often serves as a source of anguish. Consequently, ICPF also collaborates with mental health counselors and medical doctors to provide mental health consultations for young people who often struggle emotionally but do not open up about their struggles at home due to the stigma attached to mental distress in Malayalee communities.

At the same time, those involved in ICPF testify to personal spiritual experiences, such as speaking tongues, prophesying to one another, and experiencing physical healing.<sup>30</sup> Through all these personal encounters, as one respondent said, "our Christian faith became more real" (Yesena 2019).

### Sense of Belonging

Second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans, who often find themselves in an in-between space (i.e., between their Malayalee and American identities and living "neither here nor there" [Turner 1967, 95]), can experience identity struggles. Thus, from the outset, ICPF has always (perhaps even unintentionally) provided space for them to feel 'belonged' in their bicultural liminality. At ICPF camps especially, they can be at home in their liminal culture. Linett, who attended ICPF during its early years, says:

At ICPF, you naturally feel at home. We all had this high educational, relational, and spiritual expectations labeled on us. But we were able to be who we were with all the baggage in the same place. It didn't feel like this when I was in school with the White people because they didn't understand all these

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<sup>30</sup>One of the respondents said; "I had a knee pain for the last 10 years and after one of those meeting, I was healed" (Jacob 2019).

expectations. In ICPF, I felt more confident culturally (Linett 2019).

For most of the ICPF attendees, having space where they are acknowledged for their liminality was as important as their personal spiritual encounters during camp week. For others, to realize that more of their peers were living in this liminal space was an encouragement. As Jessna puts it, "When we joined ICPF, the family of 'hybridity' grew. The majority of the people I know now are from ICPF. I met my husband there! I knew of him, but it was at ICPF that I first met him" (Jessna 2019). The liminal commonality at ICPF also contributes to lasting friendships and, in Jessna's case, finding her spouse.

However, the sense of belonging for second-generation Malayalee Pentecostal Americans achieved through ICPF gatherings is an accidental factor, as the main objective has always been to create space for them to experience Jesus Christ in a Pentecostal manner. In other words, ICPF's premise seems to encourage these young people to "establish the very core of [their] identity and . . . allegiance [in Jesus Christ], beyond the place of birth or current habitation, ethnicity or citizenship, and vocations"(George 2020, 142). In doing so, there is an assumption that such identity formation will "not only liberate [them] from common trappings of psycho, social, cultural, and ideological notions of identification, but [also] endow [them] with faith filled fidelity to a vision for life that is deeply meaningful and enduring" (George 2020, 142). However, as a result, ICPF had forgotten to pay due attention to their ethnic and racial identity struggles.

Although ICPF provides space for the second generation to experience Jesus Christ in a Pentecostal manner in their liminality (i.e., not having to engage overtly with ethnically Indian practices or to be in a White space), it thus far provides no sessions at camp to respond to these racial and socio-ethnic struggles. In not doing so, ICPF has ignored the racist realities that second-generation ethnic minorities experience in America. In other words, like the other Asian American evangelical churches, it is unable to see racism as a spiritual problem that needs to be addressed (Alumkal 2003, 83).

### Equipped and Empowered to Lead

Along with providing a space to belong and experience Jesus Christ in a personal experiential manner, ICPF also creates avenues to equip leaders for church-based ministries. Often, the students who have been involved in ICPF for more than a few years participate in its small-group leader's cohort. For some, these leadership roles become pivotal for their

Christian ministry and recognition of their leadership skills. Jessna's story is an apt example:

I was a very quiet kid until I went to ICPF in 2006. I was always shy. But somehow, through ICPF, I made a bunch of friends, and in 2008 some people called me and asked if I wanted to be a leader. I served in leadership for two years—was leading a high school small group. Initially, it was a nerve-wracking experience. But this leadership role demonstrated that my voice does matter, and I can lead. My leadership formation wouldn't have happened if I had not gone to ICPF (Jessna 2019).

In Malayali Pentecostal churches where older men assume leadership, women and young people struggle to find space to recognize and develop leadership skills.<sup>31</sup> However, ICPF camps provide an apt space for them (especially for women) to exercise their leadership skills in a communal setting, from leading small group discussions to being part of entire camp planning.

Furthermore, in identifying such a leadership training gap among ICPF participants, ICPF International proposed additional training under its Equip and Empower (E2) Project. The vision of E2 is to “train and encourage students to take spiritual leadership roles in local churches such as youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, and small group leaders.” ICPF sees such leadership training as a way to bring about a paradigm shift in young leaders from today's “world of instant gratification” towards “servant leadership.”<sup>32</sup> After the E2 training, these young leaders will receive practical exposure in a wide range of missional settings, from international mission trips to being part of ICPF's ministry in colleges and universities.

Although ICPF camp and other programs have become arenas for equipping and empowering future leaders, two critical aspects cannot be overlooked. First, it is unavoidable to note that ICPF's senior leadership is still exclusively in the hands of the immigrant generation, especially with men taking the leading roles. Second, while numerous young people receive their initial leadership empowerment through the Awake camps or E2 training project, there are instances where the second-generation leaders feel stifled by the elders' paternalistic approach. Such

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<sup>31</sup>Although outside the churches, women find highly qualified jobs (in many cases, it was the women who first immigrated to America due to their medical expertise), inside the churches, men took the leadership in religious spheres, sidelining women. For an analysis of such gender role reversal, see George 2005, 77-117.

<sup>32</sup>Inter-Collegiate Prayer Fellowship International. “Empower and Equip.” at <https://www.icpfglobal.com/Home/EventPages/Goals.aspx> (accessed September 1, 2022).

experiences are more profound for women leaders like Yesena, who felt limited to act independently throughout the camp proceedings. Yesena recounts her experience thusly:

I became the small group leader and then part of the executive committee. The executives were very traditional Malayalee Pentecostal patriarchal, and I felt like my voice was not heard well. In some instances, they dismissed my comments. However, later next year a couple of them recommended me for leadership again. On this occasion, I said, “if you want me on the committee, I have to be taken seriously and need to be heard.” That year it was better. I felt like comfortable in my shoes and I was bit older in my late early 30s. However, even in this year, the immigrant Malayalee Pentecostals outnumbered the American-born leaders, and they were still having some difficulty listening to women in leadership (Yesena 2019).

Yesena’s experience is likely but one among numerous stories of women who grew up in the Malayalee Pentecostal American context. In the Indian Pentecostal landscape, such a story is, sadly, not unusual as various women Pentecostal pioneers in Kerala went through such ‘sidelining’ tendencies. Even though early Kerala Pentecostalism had pioneering women leaders who (like Annamma Mammen) were pivotal in shaping the movement, as it became institutionalized, their roles got sidelined. Kerala Pentecostal scholar M. Stephen writes this:

It is quite right to say that the Pentecostal churches ensure the involvement of the women in the evangelizing activities of the church, but they have failed to offer them important positions in the church. . . . They may be even appointed as the secretary of the women’s fellowship. But . . . their voices are always controlled by the church leaders. The structure of patriarchy plays a dominant role (Stephen 1999, 50, 51).

Further, as Edith Blumhofer puts it, “Pentecostalism values women’s speech within boundaries” of patriarchal institutional control (Blumhofer 2003, 120).

Such a trend seems to follow Malayalee Pentecostals in the American diaspora. Yesena’s account above testifies to the contemporary existence of patriarchal sidelining of women, even in youth movements like ICPF. Although changes are occurring in some

diaspora churches with a third generation taking the lead,<sup>33</sup> nevertheless, as George Oommen writes, “Patriarchy within the church seems to have survived unscathed, especially as the church reinforces gendered value systems with theology, ecclesial structures, and liturgy” (Oommen 2019, 22).

However, despite that, the positive outlook of ICPF’s leadership initiative cannot be overlooked. ICPF not only provides space to experience God, but also nurtures future leaders to fulfill their call to serve the diaspora community and next generation of American churches. In doing so, it encourages young leaders to rise above the social pressures of white spaces or the fears often associated with being seen a ‘perpetual foreigner’. At the same time, as ICPF continues to impact second-generation Indian Americans (and the rising third-generation Indian Americans), the hope and challenge are to ensure a more egalitarian approach towards leadership where both men and women participate.

Furthermore, the scope of ICPF leadership training could also be expanded beyond church circles. Currently, the Awake camps and the E2 leadership training project have exclusively focused on fostering leaders for Christian discipleship and evangelistic mission activities, both of which are traditionally associated with the church. While such efforts are essential, ICPF, as a para-church organization, could also empower the next generation of Indian Americans to be Christ-formed to impact the marketplace (outside the church).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This paper’s two-fold objective has been to provide a preliminary account of (1) the liminal (in-between) space taken by the Kerala Pentecostals in their identity formation in America and (2) the role of the Inter-Collegiate Prayer Fellowship (ICPF) in serving the immigrant or second-generation individuals who embody such a space. In the first two sections of the paper, I briefly mapped the cultural reality of the Malayalee Pentecostals who live in the American diaspora and focused on the complexities pertaining to the identity formation of the second-generation that lives in this culturally liminal space. In the third section, I demonstrated how ICPF impacts that second-generation formatively in

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<sup>33</sup>Even though there are third generation Malayalee Americans starting to take up ministry responsibilities, for George Oommen, there is a third generation of immigrants arriving in America with an essential transnational skillset that is beginning to assume leadership in numerous traditional Malayalee American Pentecostal churches. Oommen writes, “The third generation (more recent arrivals of younger generation immigrants) is more open to American versions of non-denominational evangelical Christianity to which they are already exposed in their urban Indian settings such as Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai, etc.,” (Oommen 2019, 19).

their liminality, enabling them to experience the Christian faith (Pentecostal) without negating their culturally in-between identity.

Although the paper does not intend to be an exhaustive account on the Malayalee Pentecostals in USA or about the role of ICPF, it does indicate important exploratory questions for future enquiries. One such area is to understand the missiology of ICPF. As indicated, ICPF's primacy of catering to the Christian spiritual identity without addressing the second generation's racial and ethnic liminal struggles demonstrates a lag in its holistic missional imagination. Although ICPF engages a person's individuality as regarding moral issues (e.g., addictions, sexual purity, relationships, etc.), the social issues that arise on a systemic level are seldom addressed. Additionally, ICPF's unwillingness to engage with other South Asian ministries on American university campuses and its limited vision to equip leaders exclusively for the church ministries also indicate such a lag in holistic missiology.

Even though ICPF in its beginning years in India was built on the principle of uniting churches, in its implementation in America, it has only been successful in uniting Malayalee Pentecostal churches, leaving out other Indian or Asian American Pentecostal and evangelical churches and organizations. However, as ICPF International plans to train future leaders to reach the upcoming generations in the South Asian diaspora community in America and elsewhere,<sup>34</sup> it will become imperative to build bridges with other ethnic churches and like-minded para-church organizations in order to impact the generation with a more 'wholistic' Pentecostal Gospel.

Despite its current limitations, ICPF continues to meaningfully affect the second-generation Malayalee Pentecostals. This paper testifies to the existence of ICPF as a much-needed space for that second-generation in diaspora to feel 'belonged,' to discern its leadership calling, and to experience God in a meaningful manner, standing as a model of diaspora mission.

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<sup>34</sup>ICPF Global has launched 'Empower' (for girls) and 'Equip' (for boys) camps where it focuses on "various topics essential to leadership, such as doctrinal foundations, spiritual warfare, and servant leadership." Inter-collegiate Prayer Fellowship. "Empower and Equip." <https://www.icpfglobal.com/Home/ICPFMission.aspx?&Mission=2> (accessed December 12, 2019).

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**A Legacy of Faithfulness:  
US Assemblies of God Pioneer Missionary Work in China Part 2<sup>1</sup>**  
by Michael Berley

**Introduction**

Missions served as a primary reason for the founding of the American Assemblies of God (AG). When the first General Council gathered for business on Monday, April 6, 1914, all delegates knew the primary discussion points. The primary reasons for meeting had been listed in the December 1913 issue of *Word and Witness*: (1) establishing unity in the faith, (2) discussing the work, both at home and abroad, (3) gaining a better understanding of and methods for doing foreign mission work, (4) legalizing the work, and (5) providing for training of future leaders.<sup>2</sup>

A subsequent council meeting later that same year at the Stone Church in Chicago, Illinois, reaffirmed the AG priority for world evangelization. The commitment to the “greatest evangelism the world has ever seen” was exemplified by statements from early leaders of the movement. J. Roswell Flower in his missionary treasurer report in 1920 said, “We have a distinctive mission in the world. . . . An apostolic ministry in apostolic power and fullness is the aim of our Pentecostal missionaries.”<sup>3</sup> In 1923, John Welch stated: “The General Council of the Assemblies of God was never meant to be an institution; it is just a missionary agency.”<sup>4</sup>

Scriptures such as Matthew 24:14, Mark 16:15, 17, and Acts 1:8 supported the belief in the imminent return of Christ, the conviction that world evangelization would hasten that return and the belief that the recent Holy Spirit outpouring empowered the Church for witness with accompanying signs and wonders. Motivated by these scriptural

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<sup>1</sup>Part one of this article was published in *AJPS* 25.2 August 2022 and is available at [www.aptspress.org](http://www.aptspress.org). This is drawn from my PhD dissertation that will be published by APTS Press in 2023.

<sup>2</sup>E. N. Bell, “General Convention of Pentecostal Saints and Churches of God in Christ, Hot Springs, Arkansas, April 2-12, 1914.” *Word and Witness* (December 1, 1913), 1.

<sup>3</sup>J. Roswell Flower, “Report of Missionary Treasurer for Year Ending September 1, 1920.” *Pentecostal Evangel* (October 16, 1920), 8.

<sup>4</sup>Gary B. McGee, *This Gospel Shall Be Preached: A History and Theology of Assemblies of God Foreign Missions to 1959* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1986), 81.

convictions, between 1914 and 1952, a total of 214 USAG missionaries went to China.

The purpose of this article is to introduce the reader to three of the pioneer USAG missionaries to China. These three missionaries Victor Plymire, Anna Ziese, and Leonard Bolton, exemplify the foundational commitment of the US Assemblies of God to “the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen” to be accomplished by “apostolic ministry in apostolic power.” In addition, The USAG committed to follow the indigenous church principles. The following stories serve to review whether they adhered to those foundational principles, and to provide a discussion starter concerning their applicability to current Christian work in China.

### **Victor Guy Plymire (1881-1956)**

Victor Plymire was born in Loganville, Pennsylvania, on January 10, 1881. At the age of two, he became deathly ill and doctors held out no hope for him to live. His mother, refusing to accept the doctor’s diagnosis, carried him into another room where she dedicated her son to God and prayed for his healing. God answered her prayer.<sup>5</sup>

At the age of sixteen, Victor committed his life to Christ during a street meeting. He joined the Mennonite Brethren. Less than two years later, he volunteered for missionary appointment. Since no one responded favorably, Victor assumed that missionary work was not for him and stopped praying about it. However, he later received an invitation to meet with the foreign mission board of the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA). Following that meeting, he received missionary appointment, with most of his support coming from the Mennonite churches. He remained affiliated with the CMA until 1919, when he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit while on furlough. Since the CMA did not recognize Spirit baptism this led him to join the young Assemblies of God fellowship.<sup>6</sup>

Plymire felt called to work among the Tibetans. Plymire described the challenge of work among the Tibetans in a 1931 report to Noel Perkin, the executive director of the American Assemblies of God foreign mission program. These challenges included difficult geographical access, a shamanistic state religion, and the nomadic nature of Tibetan culture.<sup>7</sup> Tibet was surrounded on three sides by either high mountain

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<sup>5</sup>Victor Plymire, “Crossing Tibet with the Gospel Message.” *Pentecostal Evangel* (November 7, 1931), 1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. These events occurred between 1897 and 1908.

<sup>7</sup>Plymire, Victor, “Synopsis of Missionary Efforts in Tibet by V. G. Plymire Covering Years 1908-1931. Springfield, MO: AGWM Archives, 1931, 1-17.

ranges or deserts and swamps. The only easy means of access was from Tibet's eastern border with China.<sup>8</sup>

Buddhism has been the primary religion of Tibet since the eighth century.<sup>9</sup> The traditional shamanistic Bon religion has greatly influenced Tibetan Buddhism. The Bon religion ascribes sickness and natural disasters, including storms, blizzards, and avalanches, as well as sacrifices to appease demons and spirits, in order to bring relief to the sufferers. People frequently consulted practiced at night.<sup>10</sup> These believes were incorporated into the Tibetan version of Buddhism.

Plymire viewed the monasteries as the strongholds of Lamaism. He discovered three primary lamaseries near Lhasa: (1) Drepung, the largest in the world with approximately 8,000 resident lamas; (2) Sera, the second largest in Tibet; and (3) Ganden. These three monasteries combined contained almost 20,000 lamas. Farther north and east, in what many considered during Plymire's time as Tibet proper, were two other prominent lamaseries: Kumbum and Labrang. Kumbum was located in China's Qinghai province not far from Tangar (Huangyuan) where Plymire lived. Labrang was located in Gansu province where W. W. Simpson and his son, Willie, based their ministries.<sup>11</sup>

Another challenge with Tibetan ministry was the nomadic nature of Tibetan culture. Plymire's youth in challenging economic times in the US had prepared him for his lengthy evangelistic trips, some lasting for several months. His trips required preparing cooking utensils, bedding, food supplies, tents, and miscellaneous items to be used in bartering for needed supplies along the way. He carried equipment to repair shoes as well as tools for horseshoeing and mending clothes. In addition, each trip included large quantities of New Testaments, Bible portions, and tracts to leave with those he visited. The length of each stop on the evangelistic trips was determined by the number of tents in the individual nomadic encampments. On several occasions, he would find special religious gatherings around sites of special religious significance. Plymire knew that the nomadic nature of the culture meant that he would not be able to determine when, if ever, his next visit to that group of people would

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>9</sup>The Buddhism practiced in Tibet differs from that practiced in both SE Asia and China. Theravada and Mahayana strains of Buddhism are dominant in those regions. Tibet, however, is known for Vajrayana which also goes by the name of Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>11</sup>The figures contained in Plymire's report to Perkin reflected the statistics as Plymire knew them in 1931. Also, during that time period, Tibet encompassed a greater area than it does today and extended into parts of neighboring Chinese provinces. Tangar (today known as Huangyuan), where Plymire based for much of his China/Tibetan ministry, is a part of Qinghai province today.

occur. Therefore, whether many or few, he would always make sure that he visited every tent and presented each person with the story of Jesus. He would leave gospel literature in every place where he found someone who could read.<sup>12</sup>

Plymire labored for sixteen years before he baptized his first convert.<sup>13</sup> Local superstitions, as well as the enmity of local priests, contributed to the difficulty in developing relationships. However, the warnings of the local priests sometimes served to arouse the curiosity of several local Tibetans. On one occasion, Plymire enticed a visiting Tibetan priest into his home. Those in authority over this individual priest warned him that he would die if he entered the Plymire home. Plymire stood at the entrance of his home talking with the priest and gradually, step by step, moved backwards into the reception room. The priest, without realizing what was happening, slowly followed him inside to continue the conversation. Once inside, Victor took a picture of the priest and later presented it to him as a gift. This broke the ice, and he, as well as others, became more willing to sit in the Plymire home for conversations.<sup>14</sup>

Plymire committed himself to the necessity of making sure as many as possible would have the chance to hear the message of Jesus. But despite the imperative of sharing that message with everyone he met on his evangelistic trips, he remained deeply committed to the importance of relationships. An approach that placed emphasis on developing personal relationships rather than holding formal meetings led to his adoption of playing an organ, singing songs in the Tibetan language, and playing records on a phonograph. A combination of these methods attracted people to the Plymire home.<sup>15</sup>

During the latter part of his second term of service, Plymire had begun to sense the need for greater power in ministry among the Tibetans. This hunger for greater spiritual power to combat the satanic spiritual forces arrayed against him drove him to search for a closer walk with God. While his and his wife traveled across the United States during their deputation cycle, some Pentecostal believers encouraged them to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This encouragement led to Holy Spirit baptism and joining the American Assemblies of God.<sup>16</sup>

Following their baptism in the Spirit, they joined the young Assemblies of God organization, receiving ordination in 1920. In

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>13</sup>Edith Blumhofer, *"Pentecost in My Soul"* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 248.

<sup>14</sup>Victor Plymire, "Crossing Tibet with the Gospel Message," 1-2.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>16</sup>David Plymire, *High Adventure in Tibet*, rev. ed. (Ellendale, ND: Trinity Print'n Press, 1983), 53, 59.

February 1922, they set out once again to work among the Tibetans.<sup>17</sup> This time they settled in Tangar, a city which served as an important trade center on the caravan route from China to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. Located about twenty-seven miles west of Kumbun, the most famous lamasery in northeastern Tibet, it placed the Plymires in both a propitious religious and economic center. A representative from the Dalai Lama himself lived only two doors down from where Victor and Grace settled.<sup>18</sup>

The two major lamaseries of Kumbum and Labrang with a combined 6,600 lamas in residence were within five days journey of Tangar, which is located in modern Qinghai Province in China. In addition to these two primary lamaseries, twenty-two other lamaseries operated in the province with 200 to 1000 lamas each.<sup>19</sup> The strategic choice of establishing a base in Tangar provided access to thousands of lamas in addition to the large caravans of traders forced to base in the city over the harsh winter months.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the period from late spring to early autumn provided opportunities for evangelistic trips among the nomadic Tibetans in the area.

Two events in 1925 on the opposite side of China led to a wave of nationalistic fervor among the Chinese. First, British police killed thirteen Shanghai demonstrators on May 30. Second, Anglo-French marines killed fifty-two demonstrators at Guangzhou on June 23. Anti-imperialist fever swept through China in 1925-26.<sup>21</sup>

Many foreign governments began advising their citizens to leave the country as tensions mounted. The Plymires received the news and prayed about what to do. They strongly felt that the time was ripe for Tibet to hear the gospel, yet, for safety's sake, they decided that Victor's wife and son, Grace and John David, would prepare to return to America.<sup>22</sup> Victor, not knowing if there would be future opportunities for work in Tibet, would attempt to exit by crossing Tibet and sharing the gospel with as many Tibetans as possible.<sup>23</sup> An outbreak of smallpox in the Tangar area during the first week of January 1927 changed their plans. Within a few short days, several residents of the city died. Both John

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Victor Plymire, "Sowing and Reaping" (Springfield, MO: AGWM Archives, n.d.), 17.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Victor Plymire, "Crossing Tibet with the Gospel Message," 1.

<sup>21</sup>John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985* (New York, NY: Harper, 1986), 212.

<sup>22</sup>John David Plymire had been born while the Plymires had been pastoring a church in Lancaster, PA, prior to their return to China/Tibet in 1922.

<sup>23</sup>David Plymire, "High Adventure in Tibet," 69-70.

David and Grace contracted the disease during the second week of January. Despite Victor's care and prayers, both died later that month.<sup>24</sup>

When the local cemetery refused permission to bury the two Americans, a Chinese friend came to Victor's assistance agreeing to sell him a piece of land on the side of a mountain outside of town. Because it was the middle of winter, Victor was only able to dig one grave in the frozen ground before placing both coffins in the one grave.<sup>25</sup>

George Wood<sup>26</sup> later penned an interesting epilogue to this story. When Victor purchased the gravesite for Grace and John, he purchased it in the name of the church. Many years later, that deed in the name of the church enabled the Christians in Huangyuan (formerly known as Tangar) to reclaim property lost to the Communist Party following 1949. The property and buildings are now used by the church in that city.<sup>27</sup>

Victor continued with his plans to cross Tibet on an evangelistic expedition. Due to the uncertain political situation in 1927 China, many foreigners had already evacuated. Plymire planned to cross the length of Tibet and exit into northern India. He began his journey on May 18, 1927, with two Tibetans and three Chinese. That morning he wrote this prayer in his diary: "Through this trip, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for Thee; and every life I touch do Thou by Thy Spirit quicken—whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live."<sup>28</sup>

Plymire's 1927-28 evangelistic expedition across Tibet took almost an entire year. For almost eight months no word of his whereabouts reached the outside world. One of three dead bodies found in the country was assumed to be Victor's.<sup>29</sup> Plymire's diary of this trip reveal some of the challenges and difficulties: "Grass almost nonexistent for the animals," a "burning, sun-baked desert," and "finding water in stagnant, scum-covered pools. . . ." Plymire wrote, "I thought of turning back," and wrote of suffering, "I have never felt so cold in my life," and hunger.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>John David died January 20 and Grace passed away a week later on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>25</sup>George O. Wood, "Reward—To Eclipse All Sorrow." *Pentecostal Evangel* (January 24, 1993), 4.

<sup>26</sup>George Wood, whose father also served as a missionary in this part of China. George O. Wood, later served as General Superintendent of the American Assemblies of God.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>28</sup>David Plymire, "High Adventure in Tibet," 78.

<sup>29</sup>W. W. Greist. Letter to Secretary of State in Response to Letter of Inquiry from Victor Plymire's Brother (Springfield, MO: AGWM Archives, 1927).

<sup>30</sup>A copy of Victor Plymire's personal journal detailing the events of this expedition can be found in both the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center and AGWM Archives in Springfield, Missouri.

Plymire's letters and journals also reveal his motivation and his heart for the Tibetans. "So that all may hear it [the gospel] at least once. . . ." "Until the farthest nook and corner of Tibet has heard. . . ." "Until the last man has heard the gospel witness, my work is not done."<sup>31</sup> All of these statements find expression in the current American Assemblies of God World Missions' purpose statement: "So *all* can hear."<sup>32</sup>

At the end of this evangelistic expedition, Plymire had distributed 73,396 Gospels and Bible portions as well as 46,542 tracts in the Tibetan language.<sup>33</sup> Although Victor had not gone on furlough for eight years and despite the long and difficult expedition across Tibet, he immediately returned to China arriving in Shanghai on May 11, just a few days shy of one year of his departure.<sup>34</sup>

Since Victor's first wife had died, he remarried and Victor held his final service in China, together with his new wife, on Sunday, June 19, 1949, with twenty-five new converts receiving water baptism. They returned to the United States where Victor died on December 8, 1956. At the beginning of his missionary career, he had claimed Isaiah 41:10 KJV as God's special promise for his life. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee by the right hand of my righteousness." Four decades later, he could look back over a missionary career where he had repeatedly seen God's faithfulness to that promise as he carried the gospel to those who had never heard.

### **Anna Ziese (1895-196?)<sup>35</sup>**

Anna Ziese, born in East Germany in 1895, went to China in 1920 and, with the exception of one furlough from 1928 to 1930, served there

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Greg Mundis, "Vision and Purpose of Assemblies of God World Missions." In *Mission, Vision, and Core Values*, edited by John L. Easter, Paul W. Lewis, Alan Johnson, Anita Koeshall, and Bob Friesen (Springfield, MO: AGWM, 2016), 21-28.

<sup>33</sup>Victor Plymire, "Letter to Miss A. C. Reiff of Chicago, IL written April 1, 1933" (Springfield, MO: AGWM Archives, 1933), 4.

<sup>34</sup>David Plymire, "High Adventure in Tibet," 133-134. Note that Tangar (Huangyuan) is in Qinghai Province which is China. Originally Tibet covered not only the land area of the current country of Tibet but also included major portions of Qinghai Province as well as parts of Sichuan province. Victor Plymire when arriving in 1908 settled first in Gansu Province which was China but next to the old borders of Tibet currently in Qinghai Province.

<sup>35</sup>There is no accurate date for Anna's death. She continued to serve in China until sometime in the late 1960s. Her death has been approximated as occurring sometime between 1965 and 1969. Her death occurred in China.

until her death. Although commissioned as a USAG missionary, she never became an American citizen. Her birth in East Germany allowed her to remain in China post-1949.<sup>36</sup>

Anna worked primarily with women and prisoners. Many of her letters which were published in *The Pentecostal Evangel* reported news of her prison ministry.

In July 1933, she wrote “Please pray for the prisoners. We have three jail meetings a week and they are so open to listen but we long to see them get really saved.”<sup>37</sup> In February 1934, she added “The work in the prison is very encouraging. We go to the big prison every week where there are 800 men and also many women.”<sup>38</sup> “We had another baptismal service in the prison,” she wrote in January 1935, “when five women and eighty-one men followed the Lord in water baptism.”<sup>39</sup> Then in August 1935 she said, “While Brother Hansen was with us, we had another baptismal service in the prison. Thirty-eight men and nine women were baptized.”<sup>40</sup>

Japanese aggression combined with the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists, made the 1930s a decade of political turmoil in China. The Communists had ended their Long March in Yan’an, located in neighboring Shaanxi province. The Communists sought to expand their influence eastward from their base camp. At the same time, the Japanese continued their move both westward and southward. Both Anna Ziese and Marie Stephany’s team were caught in the middle. One of Ziese’s letters, written in 1936, revealed the conditions under which these women missionaries worked:

Conditions are very bad now, and the war clouds are hanging low, so we never know what another day may bring forth. People’s hearts are failing them for fear and they don’t know which way to turn. They are afraid of the enemy’s airplanes, and, of course, one cannot blame them. . . . I am glad that we, as children of God, know and feel that He is our refuge and strength.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>David Bundy, “Anna Ziese: For God and China.” *AG Heritage* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2000), 12-19.

<sup>37</sup>Anna Ziese, “Tai Yuan.” *Pentecostal Evangel* (July 1, 1933), 9.

<sup>38</sup>Anna Ziese, “8 Baptized in North China.” *Pentecostal Evangel* (February 24, 1934), 9.

<sup>39</sup>Anna Ziese, “Eighty-six Prisoners Baptized.” *Pentecostal Evangel* (January 12, 1935), 10.

<sup>40</sup>Anna Ziese, “North China.” *Pentecostal Evangel* (August 24, 1935), 8.

<sup>41</sup>David Bundy, “Anna Ziese: For God and China.” *AG Heritage* 20, no. 3 (Fall, 2000), 16.

Despite the difficult conditions, Ziese apparently never considered evacuating to the United States or to a safer location in the country. Ruth Melching, who also served in northern China during this time period, remembered that B. T. Bard intended to send Ziese to the United States on furlough. He managed to get her as far as Beijing in 1940. She evidently became suspicious of his intentions and excused herself to return to Taiyuan under the pretext of picking up some forgotten items. She refused to return to Beijing.<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, in 1949, when told by the Communist Party that she must leave China, Ziese traveled as far as Shanghai and had her trunks put on a ship. However, at the last moment, she felt she could not leave and, getting off the ship, returned to Taiyuan. Her trunks arrived in the U. S. without her.<sup>43</sup>

Melching, in an oral interview with Adele Flower Dalton, remembered that Ziese enjoyed good relationships with other missionaries. However, she chose to work independently in Taiyuan. In addition to her expanding prison ministry, she took responsibility for a large church in Taiyuan as well as a smaller church and several outstations. Several Chinese co-workers assisted her with these ministries.<sup>44</sup>

Ziese's unique situation as a missionary with a German passport stood her in good stead. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, most American missionaries still in China were either repatriated to the United States or confined to concentration camps. Germany and Japan, however, were allies in the war. Anna, despite the challenges of living in both a foreign and civil war zone, did have limited freedom for ministry.<sup>45</sup>

The February 11, 1950 *Pentecostal Evangel* printed one of Anna's letters in which she wrote:

When I was young and in Bible School we used to sing, "If Jesus goes with me, I'll go anywhere," but now after these many years I gladly say, "If Jesus stays with me, I'll stay anywhere," for when we are in His will we find His grace ever sufficient. Thus far I am very glad that I remained in China. The Lord gave me the portion of Scripture, "Be thou faithful unto death." By His grace I want to be faithful at any cost. Please pray for me; also, pray for the dear Chinese.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>43</sup>Adele Flower Dalton, "The Woman Who Stayed." *Memos* (Fall 1993), 5.

<sup>44</sup>David Bundy, 19.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>46</sup>Anna Ziese, "Letter." *Pentecostal Evangel* (February 11, 1950), 11.

Harlan Park, missionary in Hong Kong, received one of Ziese's final letters, dated March 22, 1966. Some of her comments indicate an inability to write extensively due to censorship and security concerns. It does, however, convey that she had no regrets in continuing her commitment to her missionary call:

We used to sing a song at home, "The Lord has done so much for me throughout the passing years, *I cannot tell it all, I cannot tell it all*" [emphasis mine] and that is the song in my heart today. But you know there are times in life when to speak is silver and to keep silent is gold. I know you are praying for me, and please continue to do so.<sup>47</sup>

Few details exist regarding Anna's last years. Limited available information indicates that she lived in a one room house and raised goats for a living and for food. In addition, she received a monthly stipend from the Chinese government of \$3.00, the average monthly wage for that time period. Although not confirmed, it is believed she died during the summer of 1969, an example of a woman who gave her all for the people she loved.<sup>48</sup>

### **Leonard Bolton (1900-1961)**

Leonard Bolton was born in January 1900, the third child and first son of William and Ada Bolton in Bournemouth, England. The turn of the century brought waves of Pentecostal revival throughout the world. In 1906, William Bolton received healing for a serious lung condition in one such revival sweeping across England. Upon relocating the family business to Bournemouth, Leonard's parents set up one room in their new home for people to seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>49</sup>

Many of William Bolton's neighbors misunderstood and ridiculed the family's Pentecostal experience. When William and Ada went to church with their ten children, some neighbors mocked and jeered. "There goes William Bolton and his congregation."<sup>50</sup> Leonard recalled that his father often prayed, "Lord, keep us where the fiery fire burns, and in the place where Thou art glorified."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Anna Ziese, "Letter to Harlan Park." (Springfield, MO: Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center), 1966.

<sup>48</sup>David Bundy, 18.

<sup>49</sup>Elsie Bolton Ezzo, *Watchman, What of the Night?* (Springfield, MO: Book Manuscript in AGWM Archives, n. d.), 12-15.

<sup>50</sup>Leonard Bolton, *China Call* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1984), 16.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

Leonard accepted Christ in 1912 when his older sister decided to lead the Bolton children in their own church service while the parents attended a prayer meeting. This impromptu service resulted in Leonard's salvation.<sup>52</sup>

Pentecostal experiences and the miraculous marked Leonard's teenage years. At the age of thirteen, a visiting missionary from Egypt prayed over Leonard and he began to speak in tongues. At the same time, he received healing from a serious eye condition. Smith Wigglesworth, a renowned English evangelist, frequently visited the Bolton home and young Leonard frequently accompanied him as he visited and prayed for the sick in the Bournemouth area.<sup>53</sup>

The infilling of the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in tongues, gave Leonard a passion for evangelism. Immediately upon receiving Spirit baptism, he went next door to tell two of his friends of his experience. Leonard hungered to read and understand God's Word and also assisted in a mission outreach in Bournemouth by teaching a Sunday school class and reaching out to gypsies in the area. During the gypsy outreaches, he met and fell in love with another worker, Olive. However, when he proposed marriage to her, she refused, indicating that she could not consider marriage to anyone who did not share her missionary call to China.<sup>54</sup>

Vicky Bolton, Leonard's older sister, had already committed to go to China after Mary Lewer's challenge of the tribal people's needs in southwest China. During Mary's 1922 visit to England, she prayed for three new workers to join her and her husband Alfred in their mission work. When Leonard surrendered to God's call to China, Olive accepted his proposal for marriage and three new workers had joined the team for southwest China.<sup>55</sup>

Olive and Leonard sailed for Rangoon, Burma in 1924. Alfred Lewer planned to meet them and guide them through Burma to southwest China. However, when the Boltons arrived in Rangoon, no one came to meet them. After three days with no sign of Alfred, Leonard decided to check for any news at the local cablegram office. A message from his father in England delivered the fateful news that Lewer had drowned on his way to meet them.<sup>56</sup>

As newcomers with no language skills or cultural understanding, they faced the daunting challenge of navigating jungles, rivers, and mountains between Rangoon and southwest China. Realizing that the

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<sup>52</sup>Ezzo, *Watchman, What of the Night?*, 16.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 16-21.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 28-31.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

personnel challenge in southwest China would now be even more critical with Lewer's death, they committed themselves to move forward. An American Baptist missionary lady suggested that they travel with her group up the Irrawaddy River as far as Bhamo, which would put them closer to their destination. Arriving in Bhamo, they noticed a man looking intently at all of the arriving foreigners. He identified himself as David Ho, one of the national workers who had accompanied Alfred Lewer when he drowned. He had been sent as far as Bhamo to see if he could meet the Boltons.<sup>57</sup>

Leonard and Olive joined the Assemblies of God team in Wei-his, who had begun work among the Lisu, an ethnic minority group in southwest China. Wei-his is located in southwest China in Yunnan Province. Ancestor worship played a prominent role in the Lisu animistic worldview. They worshiped spirits thought to reside in nature. Keeping guardian spirits happy, they believed, would prevent calamities from malevolent spirits who could bring sickness, natural disasters, and other troubles. Rectifying the trouble required sorcerers who could identify the source of the problem as well as determine how to exorcize or propitiate the appropriate demons. To placate the spirits, the Lisu lined the paths leading into the villages with small altars containing food offerings.<sup>58</sup>

Tragedy struck soon after the Bolton's arrival. Olive died in childbirth along with the baby. Leonard walked through a dark valley of discouragement as the cost of his missionary commitment came crashing down on him. Alfred Lewer had died coming to meet them. Olive died in childbirth. The baby died a day later. The depth of Leonard's despair and grief can best be summed up in his own words:

Wave after wave of agony poured over me. . . . Was there to be no end to the sacrifice? All that day I lay on my bed unable to move with the suffering of my heart. Why had God done this? Why had he called me to China only to lose my wife? One day, I rose from the bed and decided to take a walk for diversion. . . . I walked to the city wall and climbed up the steps to the top. . . . As the evening shadows fell, gloom once again encompassed me. I stopped and looked over the other part of the wall that dropped about thirty feet. Suddenly the enemy seemed to whisper to me, "Why don't you just end it all? You could throw yourself down over the wall and that would be the end of your misery." Then I heard another voice, "I'll never leave thee nor

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 27-34.

<sup>58</sup>Leonard Bolton, 108.

forsake thee. Have I not promised? Be strong and of a good courage. I'll possess the land before thee."<sup>59</sup>

Later, Leonard received a letter from a Christian woman in England who stated she had spent a sleepless night praying for the Boltons. The time of her prayers coincided with the time of his walk through the valley of despair.<sup>60</sup>

In 1926, the Wei-hsi team consisted of Mary Lewer, Ada Buchwalter, and Leonard Bolton. Political uncertainty, banditry, and the early stages of civil war that affected other sections of China also touched the southwest corner of the country. During this season of almost continuous crises, romance blossomed between Leonard and Ada, and they began to make plans for a wedding in Hong Kong following her upcoming deputation in the United States. However, events in 1927 changed those plans. Domestic turmoil caused several foreign consuls to order the evacuation of their citizens. Over 2,000 missionaries left China during this time.<sup>61</sup>

Leonard and Ada decided that Ada would evacuate first. Leonard would join her later in the United States for their wedding scheduled for April 7, 1928. Following the wedding, Leonard met with the Foreign Missions Committee and received missionary appointment with the American Assemblies of God.<sup>62</sup>

The American AG missionary team working with the Lisu expanded with the birth of the Boltons' first son, Robert, who was born in Kunming in February 1929. Clifford and Lavada Morrison, who also joined the Lisu work, significantly impacted the Lisu ministry on both the Chinese and Burmese sides of the border.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, the missionaries experienced an evolution in their missionary strategy. Leonard and Ada traveled with national workers. During the early morning hours the team taught the youth the choruses and songs from the Lisu hymnals, which they distributed in every location. They planned to stay in each place several days, which provided ample time for holding evangelistic meetings and teaching basic Christian doctrine to the local community. Older men would be appointed as elders with responsibility for teaching and oversight of the new converts. They would then leave for another village, promising to

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<sup>59</sup>Elsie Ezzo, 63-65.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Danie Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 112.

<sup>62</sup>Leonard Bolton, 96-97.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 98-101.

return the following year for further teaching and to conduct baptismal services.<sup>64</sup>

This practical methodology developed into a Lisu people movement where whole families came into the churches and some villages were almost entirely Christian. As entire communities received teaching from the Word of God, church leaders examined local customs in the light of biblical truth. If practices did not conflict with scriptural teaching, they continued unchanged. Within fifteen years, over 1,000 Lisu had received water baptism.<sup>65</sup>

The strategy of training Lisu for leadership in indigenous churches was bearing fruit. Lisu Christians began traveling to surrounding villages to preach, teach, and pray for the sick. The Boltons prepared a simple catechism for teaching new converts. The main points of the catechism covered the subjects of true repentance, tithing, baptism of the Holy Spirit, and healing. Teaching of believers expanded beyond the catechism to include short-term Bible training seminars where students set aside several weeks for concentrated teaching and study. These short-term training seminars led to the formation of the Ling Kuang (Holy Light) Bible Institute in October 1948, under the oversight of James Baker, son of H. A. and Josephine Baker. Twenty-two students enrolled for the first year of study. The imminent threat of a Communist victory in China fueled the urgency for training of young Christians.<sup>66</sup>

In November 1949, one month following the declaration of Communist victory in China, Leonard and Ada Bolton left China. The Boltons had served for over 25 years among the Lisu. Departure from China, however, did not mean the end of their missionary ministry. Their foreign service record includes terms of service in Jamaica, Bangladesh, and Taiwan, where they served alongside their son and daughter-in-law, Robert and Evelyn Bolton.<sup>67</sup>

Five words summarize the Bolton's missionary methodology: prayer, sacrifice, identification, mobility, and training.

*Prayer.* It is impossible to separate intercessory prayer from the Lisu revival. Its beginning can be traced back to the China Inland Mission (CIM) missionary James Fraser who, when told he must relocate to another part of China to work in a more receptive area, requested a few more months to see what God would do. Fraser was able to persuade CIM leadership to allow him to stay at his station a little longer. He adopted a prayer strategy with the help of his mother in England. She

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 155-156.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 130, 185.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 196-206.

invited a few key people to pray specifically for Lisu needs. Fraser would provide them with detailed prayer requests, including the names of specific places and people. As they prayed, the Spirit began to move among the Lisu.<sup>68</sup>

From the beginning of the Pentecostal movement, prayer occupied a priority position in methodology. Native Lisu Christians joined their prayers. The intercessory cries of God's people watered the gospel seed that missionaries and indigenous Christians planted.

*Sacrifice.* Workers among the Lisu paid a heavy cost. They faced the constant companions of inconvenience in travel, long family separations, sickness, and death. Among the Bolton's relatives, nine graves in China and one in Taiwan bear testimony to the price they paid.<sup>69</sup>

*Identification.* Jesus provided the model with his incarnation and coming to live among people as Immanuel, "God with us." In the same way, successful work among the Lisu required messengers willing to learn the language, translate the Bible, and culturally acclimate themselves to Lisu life. Walking with them, eating their food, sharing their problems, and doing life together earned the messengers the right to be heard.

*Mobility.* Short-term seminars and a Bible school could be set up in a centralized location, but reaching the Lisu required a willingness to travel to their remote villages. Frequently, when the Christian witnesses ministered in a village, requests would come from villages farther into the mountains or beyond the next mountain range to come and share the message.

*Training.* The missionaries may have provided the initial spark that sparked revival, but that revival could not continue without the training of local believers who would take the baton and continue carrying the message to others, especially in light of the remoteness of many of the villages. Visiting the churches once a year would not succeed in establishing strong churches. Commitment to the principle of teaching and training provided the means for the Lisu movement to continue in both China and Burma following the initial work of foreign missionaries.<sup>70</sup> In 2016, Joshua Project listed almost 916,000 Lisu living in China. It also claimed that 80 percent profess to be Christians.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Eileen Crossman, *Mountain Rain: A Biography of James O. Fraser* (Singapore: OMF Books, 1982), 75-76.

<sup>69</sup>Bolton, 220.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup>Joshua Project. "Language Lisu." <https://joshuaproject.net/language/lisu> (accessed October 19, 2016).

## Conclusion

The young USAG organization prioritized missions. Its goal was the “greatest evangelism the world has ever seen.” In the opening decades of existence, the writings of Roland Allen, Alice Luce, and J. Roswell Flower influenced the developing mission philosophy of the organization. The AG committed itself to the indigenous church philosophy following the Pauline model. Flower described it as “apostolic ministry in apostolic power.”<sup>72</sup>

This foundation has resulted in the current vision and purpose statement of the U. S. AGWM: “Christ will be proclaimed and His Church will be established in all nations through the power of the Spirit. . . . So *all* can hear.”<sup>73</sup> The lives of W. W. Simpson, H. A. Baker, Les and Ava Anglin, Marie Stephany, Victor Plymire, Anna Ziese, and Leonard and Ada Bolton exemplify that vision and purpose. Their lives challenge us to take up the baton and extend their legacy.

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<sup>72</sup>J. Roswell Flower, “Report of Missionary Treasurer for Year Ending September 1, 1920.” *Pentecostal Evangel* (October 16, 1920), 8.

<sup>73</sup>Greg Mundis, “Vision and Purpose of Assemblies of God World Missions.” In *Mission, Vision, and Core Values*, edited by John L. Easter, Paul W. Lewis, Alan Johnson, Anita Koeshall, and Bob Friesen (Springfield, MO: AGWM, 2016), 23.

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**Interpretive Communities of the Spirit in a Multicultural Context:  
Reflections on Pentecostal Hermeneutics**

by Roji Thomas George

**Introduction**

Since the inception of Pentecostalism in the early 1900s, it has witnessed phenomenal growth across the globe and has spread in all directions like wildfire. The precise pattern of its global spread might be difficult to trace (though not impossible!), but we can enumerate several vital factors responsible for its growth. Besides their missionary zeal, the operation of charismatic gifts among Pentecostals, and their eschatological orientation and quest to experience God through the Holy Spirit, the revelation of the Scripture they gained has played a very significant role in their story. In the movement's history, Pentecostal interpreters embraced a spectrum of interpretive approaches, spanning from the literal reading of the text to the current postmodern tools of hermeneutical engagement. Pentecostal hermeneutics has much to contribute to the broader academic fraternity in its ongoing discussion, but it is not free from its textual interpretation and self-articulation struggles. While Pentecostal interpretive praxis is potent to award a free hand to an interpreter to read into the text with one's unique spiritual experiences, scholars in practice have cautiously defined the scope and limits of its interpretive practice. For this reason, the interpretive community seems to play a crucial role in producing the meaning of a text based on its experience; the community operates under the authority of the Pneumatic illumination of the text. However, the identity of the Pentecostal interpretive community is often defined in theological terms. Such definitions tend to homogenize the broad spectrum of ethnic, racial, and cultural differences represented in the heterogeneous nature of the community.

So, we ask, should Pentecostal hermeneutics be informed by the multicultural context of its members in different parts of the world? If yes, how does a local interpretive community operate within and outside the established Pentecostal interpretive tradition? Is there sufficient Scriptural warrant to maintain the Spirit's use of non-Christian cultural, literal, and religious traditions in illumining human minds concerning the divine will? The discussion intends to reflect on the key issues without an in-depth analysis. At first, a broad overview of the Pentecostal interpretation as practiced in general is discussed. The second section

deals with the heterogeneous cultural composition of the worldwide Pentecostal communities that articulate their biblical understanding and faith in the native traditional and linguistic categories. Finally, the biblical and contextual validity of undertaking a pneumatic interpretation in multicultural categories is discussed.

### **The Trajectory of Pentecostal Hermeneutics**

Pentecostal hermeneutics evolved from a populist hermeneutical approach to a postmodernism lenient hermeneutical praxis. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's short historical survey of the Pentecostal interpretation identifies four characteristic movements of the ongoing Pentecostal hermeneutical evolution: "1) Oral pre-reflective stage of early Pentecostal bible reading. 2) Trend towards Fundamentalist dispensational interpretation with alliance with Evangelicalism. 3) The quest for a distinctive pneumatic exegesis. 4) Emerging postmodern development."<sup>1</sup> We must remember that these interpretive movements continue among different pockets of Pentecostals even today. The first movement characterized the hermeneutical praxis of the earliest Pentecostals, who were populist in their approach to the text.<sup>2</sup> As Graham observes, "[t]his approach to Scripture challenged common people to open the Bible and interpret it for themselves."<sup>3</sup> The supernatural Spirit experiences within the community preceded such interpretive engagements based on faith that the Bible is wholly trustworthy and can be authentically understood in the literal sense, here and now.<sup>4</sup>

The second movement was Pentecostal academia flirting with Fundamentalist and Evangelical hermeneutical presuppositions. This phase led to resentment among some Pentecostal theologians because it seemingly allowed the assimilation of Pentecostal hermeneutics into Evangelical interpretive practice. Many feared that it might lead to the demise of the Pentecostal distinctive.<sup>5</sup> Kärkkäinen summarizes the fear of several Pentecostal hermeneuts, saying, "What they are not concerned about is the narrowing down of Pentecostal hermeneutics to the point

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<sup>1</sup>Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Making: On the Way from Fundamentalism to Postmodernism," *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*, 18 (1998): 77.

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), 63-66; Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 265-276. Keener also discusses the contemporary forms of such populist Pentecostal-Charismatic hermeneutical engagements.

<sup>3</sup>Stephen R. Graham, "'Thus Saith the LORD': Biblical Hermeneutics in the Early Pentecostal Movement," *Ex Auditu*, 12 (1996): 123, 125-126.

<sup>4</sup>Kärkkäinen, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Making," 77-79.

<sup>5</sup>Graham, "'Thus Saith the LORD': Biblical Hermeneutics," 124-125.

where its distinctives might be lost altogether.”<sup>6</sup> So, the third movement proposed a distinct Pentecostal hermeneutics laying its epistemological basis in the work of the Spirit. Ervin, Fee, W. W. Menzies, Roger Stornstad, and Robert Menzies are some leading voices in the ongoing dialogue among Pentecostals.<sup>7</sup> More recently, Pentecostal theologians have found Gadamer and Ricoeur more instrumental in critically articulating a postmodernism lenient Pentecostal hermeneutics.<sup>8</sup> The nature of Pentecostal hermeneutics has been discussed and debated among Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal scholars. Israel, Albrecht, and McNally critique the Pentecostal search for unique Pentecostal hermeneutics. They argue,

[c]all for a unique Pentecostal hermeneutic seems to me misguided. Such calls seem to be motivated either by an ideology or by an epistemology of the Spirit.

*A Pentecostal ideology is no hermeneutic at all, it is the obliteration of the horizon of the text by the interpreter. What is most disconcerting is that distortions of language through ideology are typically unrecognizable by members of the community because they are related to power rather than to language itself. . . . Another motivation for a call for a Pentecostal hermeneutic is an epistemology of the Spirit. This view assumes that the Pentecostal experience of the Spirit enables understanding of Scripture by special revelation of the Spirit in a quasi-gnostic manner. If one is calling for a Pentecostal hermeneutics on this basis, one would also have to assume that only the Pentecostals have the Spirit. This belief borders on Pentecostal ideology.*<sup>9</sup>

William W. Menzies, a Pentecostal theologian, observes that in one sense, there is *no* Pentecostal Theology because Pentecostals have sought to lie in close “identification with the mainstream theology” to

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<sup>6</sup>Kärkkäinen, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Making,” 82.

<sup>7</sup>Howard M. Ervin, “Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 3/2 (1981): 11-25.

<sup>8</sup>Paul W. Lewis, “Postmodernity and Pentecostalism: A Survey and Assessment,” *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 1/1 (2002): 34-66; Richard D. Israel, Daniel E. Albrecht, and Randal G. McNally, “Pentecostals and Hermeneutics: Texts, Rituals and Community,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 15/2 (1993): 137-161.

<sup>9</sup>Israel, Albrecht, and McNally, “Pentecostals and Hermeneutics,” 144 (Emphasis added by author).

“gain the respect and attention of the larger church world.”<sup>10</sup> However, he qualifies it by saying, “[y]et in another sense there is a uniqueness to Pentecostal theology” that is “a doctrine to be proclaimed and an experience to be experienced.”<sup>11</sup> This experiential dimension of Pentecostal theology plays an integral role in Pentecostal hermeneutical engagement with the biblical text. As a result, despite aligning with the Fundamentalist/Evangelical approach in interpretation, Pentecostals from their early stages have espoused a different understanding of various biblical texts due to their hermeneutical priorities. Of these unique Pentecostal hermeneutical distinctions, the key to interpreting the Bible is the centrality of the Spirit-experience of an individual and the community. Menzies, in his three-level framework for Pentecostal interpretive engagement, justifies verifying Pentecostal experience with biblical pieces of evidence after it happens.<sup>12</sup>

Assigning a significant role to experience in Pentecostal hermeneutics does not suggest a total disinterest in author-intention oriented historical-critical method of interpretation. Responding to the misunderstood critique of Pentecostals’ engagement with the Bible, Walter Hollenweger says, “[t]he critics of the Pentecostal movement who accuse it of neglecting the written word in favour of individual illumination by the Spirit are ignorant of the role which the Bible plays in the Pentecostal movement.”<sup>13</sup> Howard M. Ervin, a Pentecostal biblical scholar, acknowledges the significance of intentionality in interpretation. He says, “[a] sound grammaticohistorical exegetical tradition has therefore been indispensable to hermeneutical methodology.”<sup>14</sup> They have willingly subscribed to the view that exegesis is the first step toward correctly interpreting the Scripture.<sup>15</sup> Thus, allowing the authorial intention to be recognized remains a critical task for any good exegete. Fee states, “good exegesis is so only as it seeks to discover and hear what the text is intending to say.”<sup>16</sup> It has a twofold aim: to be a “*corrective*” and “construct our theologies in a truly biblical fashion.”<sup>17</sup>

According to Fee, an interpreter must recognize that God gave the Scripture to us with its bipolar nature, i.e., “its eternity and historical

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<sup>10</sup>William W. Menzies, “Synoptic Theology: An Essay on Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” *Paraclete* 13/1 (1979): 14.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 16-20.

<sup>13</sup>Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 321.

<sup>14</sup>Ervin, “Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option,” 14.

<sup>15</sup>Menzies, “Synoptic Theology,” 17; Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 42.

<sup>16</sup>Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, 42.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

particularity.” Thus, a Pentecostal exegete must intentionally adopt a “radical middle” to draw the correct meaning of a text.<sup>18</sup> Fee's significant contribution to Pentecostal hermeneutics is not merely setting authorial intentionality at the center. Instead, he suggests the road map of getting at it quite a lot built on the evangelical hermeneutical foundation. Fee counts it erroneous to formulate a doctrine of subsequence and initiation out of the New Testament's descriptive/narrative section (Acts 2) without ensuring authorial intention. Precedents alone do not suffice to interpret a text to verify the validity of the experience as normative. Establishing the normative value of the narrative is possible only by connecting it with the principle of action taught in other parts of the Bible.<sup>19</sup> However, other Pentecostal scholars like William Menzies and Roger Stronstad have rejected Fee's proposal for interpreting the Acts of the Apostles. Stronstad argues that Fee's observation on the Pentecostal interpretation of the book of Acts is “misunderstood, and even misrepresented.”<sup>20</sup> For William Menzies, “Fee has unnecessarily restricted the theological opportunity by his agenda,” resulting in “severe reductionism.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, it “leaves one at best with an impoverished Pentecostal theology.”<sup>22</sup>

Pentecostals critique traditional hermeneutics for placing the Scripture “at the service of rationalistic and propositional theology. From an existential perspective, an equally notable weakness of traditional hermeneutics is its relative insensitivity to the numinous in the ethos mediated by the biblical text.”<sup>23</sup> Further, for Ervin, traditional hermeneutics suffers “dis-ease with the biblical world view,” while it also “robs exegesis of its critical-contextual historicity and facticity.”<sup>24</sup> Thereby, he observes that such hermeneutical exercise subjects the Scripture to human categories, denying the role of the Spirit in its composition and interpretation. As a result, the Scripture gets stripped of its status as the divinely inspired text.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the subjective experience of the community influencing the construction of a passage's meaning is lost. The traditional hermeneutics oriented Pentecostal Scripture reading excludes the variegated experiences of Pentecostal individuals and communities living in multicultural, multi-religious contexts.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 83-99.

<sup>20</sup>Roger Stronstad, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 15/2 (1993): 216.

<sup>21</sup>Menzies, “Synoptic Theology,” 18.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>23</sup>Ervin, “Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option,” 14-15.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 15, 18, 23.

Thus, a clear understanding of the nature and character of the pneumatic community of interpretation is necessary. Is the interpretive community assumed in Pentecostal interpretation merely a theological entity? Does it sufficiently recognize the potential contributions of the community's cultural and social character in interpreting the Bible correctly? Why is it important to consider the distinct cultural location of each local interpretive community of the Spirit?

### **Location of the Interpretive Community**

Kenneth J. Archer and other Pentecostal biblical scholars and theologians attempt to explain the role of the community in its understanding of the Scripture. The enlightening discussions among the Pentecostal theologians identify the Holy Spirit, Scripture, and Community as the three essential components of a distinct Pentecostal interpretation. Archer contends that the Pentecostal hermeneutical “strategy will be a narrative approach that embraces a triadic negotiation for meaning between the biblical text, the Holy Spirit, and the Pentecostal community.”<sup>26</sup> He maintains that a dialectical process between the biblical text, the Holy Spirit and the Pentecostal community produces meaning which a Pentecostal community or member of that community can read, understand, and complete the process of communication. In the process of meaning production, the interpretive community *discovers* meaning and *creates* meaning by employing “a text centered and reader oriented interpretive method.”<sup>27</sup> In the words of Ervin, “[t]he Scriptures are now read within the pneumatic continuity of the faith community.”<sup>28</sup> The story of the community in a context will be the hermeneutical filter to draw the understanding of a passage. Such community centered interpretive enterprises grant value to subjective meanings in the process of interpretation. However, Archer argues that the freedom to draw different meanings does not give the community uncontrolled liberty to make the text speak what it “desires it to mean.”<sup>29</sup> The meaning constructed by negotiation of the triadic components of Pentecostal hermeneutics will require validation by the text. The validation of meaning includes clarity of the method employed in interpretation. The insight gained is subject to critical analysis, the corporate faith, tradition and narrative, cross-cultural application of the meaning, and openness to the possibility of scrutiny by all in academic communities, including those who are outside of the particular faith

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<sup>26</sup>Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 213.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 213-215, cited from 214.

<sup>28</sup>Ervin, “Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option,” 23.

<sup>29</sup>Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 214.

tradition.<sup>30</sup> In short, the activity of the Holy Spirit in and through the narrative of the community makes the Scripture heard aloud with clarity.

Among the current Spirit hermeneutics practitioners, Keener appears less enthusiastic and reluctant to the proposal like that of Archer. He cautiously words his reluctance to invoke the Pentecostal hermeneutical community to hear the authentic words of the Spirit, saying, “[w]hile there is *some value* in this approach, I believe that *it is limited*.”<sup>31</sup> For him, the search for contextual fruit of the exegetical exercise is natural and legitimate. However, an appeal to an interpretive community inherently suffers “the danger of circularity.”<sup>32</sup> Keener's reluctance is historically based on the interpretive positions that proved fallacious retrospectively.<sup>33</sup> Of course, he is right in highlighting the fluidity of defining the global Spirit community and the associated complexity in framing a definition of identity.<sup>34</sup> But the concern may be duly addressed beyond the complex nitty-gritty of doctrinal statements (like initial evidence of the Spirit baptism) in the space of broad Spirit experiences in the biblical fashion. In this sense, the Pentecostal hermeneutical community's definition is loosely based on one's self-identification and personal experience. It is not merely on someone's doctrinal confessions or an open attitude towards Charismatic pneumatology.

If so, Archer's proposal helps Pentecostals articulate a valid and distinct understanding of a passage while walking a tightrope between hearing the original author's voice discovered from the text in his context (objective meaning discovered) and the contextual meaning of the text created by a hermeneut (subjective meaning). It allows the text to have wider application to the community's life, including the “multicultural and multiracial” concerns.<sup>35</sup> Rodolfo Golvan Estrada III rightly contends that the identity of the community articulating meaning must not be limited to its theological identity. Still, every aspect of its contextual identity must be part of the authentic Pentecostal interpretation.<sup>36</sup> Its strength is that a loose definition of the Pentecostal community identity in the hermeneutical exercise enables articulating a relevant Pentecostal theological response to numerous other concerns connected to its identity.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 252-260.

<sup>31</sup>Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 277, (Emphasis added).

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 279.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. Keener mentions the Moravians as an example.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 279, 281-284.

<sup>35</sup>Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 212.

<sup>36</sup>Rodolfo Galvan Estrada III, “Is a Contextualized Hermeneutic the Future of Pentecostal Readings?: The Implications of a Pentecostal Hermeneutic for a Chicano/Latino Community,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 37/3 (2015): 341-355.

For example, race, class, caste, and gender concerns tied to identity in a religious and cultural pluralistic context will set new agendas for responsible Pentecostal biblical reflections. It will be vibrant hermeneutical praxis articulating not just the theological identity but the social, cultural, religious, and political dimensions of a community's experience. It will help construct the contextual Pentecostal interpretation.

The clarion call of Estrada III inviting the Pentecostal academic fraternity to acknowledge the impossibility of articulating a culture-free Pentecostal hermeneutics is bold and poignant. He says that “no cultural group has a complete view of God and all cultural groups must come together and enter into conversation with one another as equals.”<sup>37</sup> Keener also recognizes the importance of input from all cultures in forming the Spirit-illuminated meaning of the text for us today,<sup>38</sup> a sort of celebrating the cacophony of the Spirit hermeneutical voices. He observes, “[b]elievers from all cultures must do our best to gather around the text and bring our varied readings to the table to learn from one another” without prioritizing any culture over others.<sup>39</sup>

Estrada III's proposal and Keener's openness to gather all insights from other cultures on the round-table of Pentecostal theological/hermeneutical discussion is insufficient. They fail to construct a valid contextual Pentecostal theology without constructing the meaning of a passage in native vocabulary, worldview, and literary and cultural traditions.<sup>40</sup> Despite the best intention of such interpretive exercises, they only recognize voices emerging from many corners without acknowledging the visible marks of their unique accents, styles, and valid cultural expressions of the Spirit illuminated biblical insights. Merely lived experience of fissured migrant identity, socio-cultural vulnerability, oppression, etc., as spaces of constructing contextual Pentecostal hermeneutics will be shallow and not beneficial to the native Pentecostals' theological reflection. Such a weakness is enormously experienced in a pluralistic context like India, where cultural discourses are soaked in religious and secular literary traditions. Without such an incarnation of Pentecostal hermeneutical practice in the native tongue and color, it will be estranged from developing a robust local shape and appearance.

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<sup>37</sup>Estrada III, “Is a Contextualized Hermeneutic the Future?” 354.

<sup>38</sup>Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 77-87.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>40</sup>Interestingly, Keener's acclaimed monograph, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, does not engage with this aspect of Pentecostal hermeneutical-theological reconstructions from the Global Pentecostal communities.

So, in the ongoing Pentecostal hermeneutical discussion, the repeated emphasis on the role of the community suffers a lack. The significant gap in Pentecostal interpretation is the lack of debate defining the interpretive community's actual social and cultural face and identity. One must not forget that all meaning drawing exercises are "determined by the cultural construction of the interpretive community to which the reader belongs."<sup>41</sup> It is true in the case of even every text, which is a cultural product using cultural categories of thought and communication. Keener says, "Western churches and denominations often even divide today over which issues are cultural and which are transcultural, although all texts, whatever transcultural points they communicate, are communicated in culturally and linguistically specific ways."<sup>42</sup>

While reasons beyond their choice do not typically predetermine individuals, the fact is not so with the interpretive community. According to Draper, "[a] reader may choose to belong to a particular community of readers with a particular set of ideological choices. Belonging to such a community is not predetermined by factors beyond one's knowledge or choice, it can be consciously done."<sup>43</sup> However, as a part of the larger social-cultural context, the interpretive community inherits a cultural face and social identity automatically. Its inherited cultural worldviews, categories of thinking, language, etc., influence its perception of the realities experienced within the new community of interpretation. Such "interpretive communities are important not only because they represent an *option* for the reader which she or he may consciously make, but also because they represent an accountability of the reader to that community."<sup>44</sup> The community functions as an authoritative agent assessing, appropriating, and authorizing the meaning of the commonly shared experience in the light of the Scripture and *vice versa*. In such a dialectical process of text-reader engagement, the biblical revelation drawn is mediated by the Spirit shaping and directing the interpretive community. In contrast, the interpretive community's story is foundational to interpreting the text. In other words, the community not only creates a faith tradition against which every form of interpretation of a text is tested, but it also causes the community to undergo a transformative experience.

The Global South, especially the South Asian region, is home to numerous cultures, languages, worldviews, and religious traditions.

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<sup>41</sup>Jonathan A. Draper, "African Contextual Hermeneutics: Readers, Reading Communities, and Their Options between Text and Context," *Religion & Theology*, 22 (2015): 16.

<sup>42</sup>Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 77.

<sup>43</sup>Draper, "African Contextual Hermeneutics," 17.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

They all possess unique worldviews that provide frameworks and categories to understand physical and abstract realities. Similar to the Jewish worldview during the New Testament time, South Asians recognize the intrinsic connection between the good and bad events in the historical world as the effect of the events taking place in the invisible/cosmic world. The popular religious-cultural myths and stories preserve their perception of realities. They produce knowledge that creates, sustains, and explains cause-and-effect relationships in matters that elude so-called modern scientific analysis. For example, in modern western rationalism, miracles are ancient myths not to be taken seriously. Western Rationalism and Existentialism drove critical biblical scholarship to reject the biblical miracle narratives as ancient myths.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the biblical miracle narratives were dubbed as mere vehicles for communicating universal philosophical truths. Bultmann denied the historical validity of gospel stories, including the salvific efficacy of Jesus' death and resurrection event. He proposed the program of Demythologization as a viable scientific option to draw the biblical truths embedded in the gospel events.<sup>46</sup> However, in non-western cultures, the encountered reality is rationalized and expressed enmeshed in the myths and stories.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, the grammaticohistorical approach of interpretation mistakenly limits the meaning of a sentence to the structure of a sentence. It fails to go beyond the lexical meaning of a word to the sense of the sentence. In this context, Hollenweger underlined the importance of a Pentecostal theologian/hermeneut engaging the biblical text mediated by the Spirit in an interculturally located Pentecostal community.<sup>48</sup> Many others have followed the trajectory by emphasizing the necessity of

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<sup>45</sup>See for a short introduction on the problem of miracles in modern approaches, Alan Richardson, *The Miracle Stories of the Gospel* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1941), 20-37.

<sup>46</sup>See Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1952); Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCL, 1953); Reginald H. Fuller, *The New Testament in Current Study* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 1-24.

<sup>47</sup>The South Asian scriptures like *Mahabharatha* and *Ramayana* were relegated to mere ahistorical mythical literature in the past western academic discourses. In recent decades, the native intelligentsia reject such western academic evaluation of their native literature and in public discourse argue for the historical validity of the events narrated in mythical language.

<sup>48</sup>Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1997), 308.

contextualizing Pentecostal hermeneutics.<sup>49</sup> Undoubtedly, it is an urgent need to capture the academic vision of all Pentecostal hermeneutists. The interpretation of the biblical text aided by the Spirit to address contextual experiences like migration or marginalization is essential.

However, one needs to go beyond such attempts of contextualization. Pentecostal interpreters must explore native cultural and literary traditions, languages, and interpretive principles to inform the Spirit-illuminated local interpretations. It merits intense research and exploration because the Spirit-empowered communities worldwide would express the same experience in various local traditions. Although such theological expressions will have only local appeal, their essential unity with the Pentecostal theology as inspired and taught by the Holy Spirit would unify them with the worldwide Pentecostal interpretive community. In other words, the locally based interpretive community of the Spirit is always globally connected. So, Pentecostals living in the religious-cultural pluralistic contexts in Asia and Africa must explore new tools to express their understanding of the biblical text in native terms while bearing Keener's warning against exchanging "contextualization for syncretism."<sup>50</sup> Their unique context enriches them with vital categories of thinking through the native worldviews, cultures, and literary interpretive traditions. The necessity to interpret the biblical text in a local social and cultural milieu is born out of two realities: (i) the shift of Christian demography to the Global South, of which Pentecostals form a considerably large group. (ii) The biblical text includes real historical characters and surrounding non-Christian cultural realities of its origin.

The interpretive community engaged in articulating its experiences within the native traditions recognizes its limitations as a contextually conditioned theology. The Spirit illuminated reading of the Scripture within a specific cultural context expresses the essential biblical truths in available limited categories of the culture like images, stories, literary interpretive tools, cultural perceptions, etc. Hence, every reading is carried out cautiously and coherently, according to the theological nature

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<sup>49</sup>Duane T. Loynes, Sr., "Pentecostal Hermeneutics and Race in the Early Twentieth Century: Towards a Pentecostal Hermeneutics of Culture," *Constructive Pneumatological Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Christianity*, K.J. Archer and L.W. Oliverio, Jr., (eds.), (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2016), 229-248; Amos Yong, "The Science, Sighs, and Signs, of Interpretation: An Asian American Post-Pentecostal Hermeneutics in a Multi-, Inter-, and Trans-Cultural World," *Constructive Pneumatological Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Christianity*, K.J. Archer and L.W. Oliverio, Jr., (eds.), (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2016), 177-195; Allan Heaton Anderson, "Contextualization in Pentecostalism: A Multicultural Perspective," *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, 41/1 (2017): 29-40.

<sup>50</sup>Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 78.

of the community defined by the Spirit experience, without absolutizing one's culture. It gives birth to variegated forms of the reading experience of the text, which enrich the native mooring of the Spirit-filled community's theological roots and faith narratives. The production of the locally colored interpretation of the text happens in the participation of all the members, the academic and the non-academic. The theology of the people embedded in narratives provides necessary resources to the academic fraternity to formulate a narrative theology. Ultimately, to witness the Spirit illuminated biblical understanding of the text in the light of the deep Pentecostal experience is the core responsibility of the interpretive community of the Spirit.

This discussion requires us to turn our attention to the role of the Spirit in the illumination of the text here and now for the present readers in their native language and traditions. How should the community of the Spirit view the Bible? Are native traditions used by the Holy Spirit interpretively in the Bible to communicate the divine message?

### **Indigenous Traditions and the Spirit-Illumination**

Pentecostal theology is a narrative theology that requires a conscious shift from the evangelical hermeneutical engagement with the text.<sup>51</sup> For the former, the Bible is a story of God's work through the Holy Spirit in the life of the community. It is to be read and obeyed in the power of the Spirit. The Bible is a testimony of the faithful ones about the divine self-disclosure in the past. The Scriptural testimony of God's miraculous works of empowerment, repentance, and transformation can still be repeated in the mighty work of the Holy Spirit at present. Hence, the testimony of the Scripture verifies the community's present experiences. The mediation of the Spirit in the entire process yields a life-transforming engagement.

If so, how should one then understand the illumining/inspiring work of the Holy Spirit in a multicultural context? The answer lies in re-examining the Holy Spirit's illuminating function in constructing the correct meaning of the text for modern readers within their native cultural context. Pentecostals, as discussed earlier, firmly believed that the Holy Spirit played an essential role in the composition of the New Testament. Even today, the Spirit is involved in illumining readers to understand its meaning. Clark H. Pinnock argues that "the Spirit gave the Scriptures and then repeatedly gives them again and again to readers. God's breathing ought to be recognized both in the formation and in the

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<sup>51</sup>See Timothy B. Cargal, "Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and Hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 15/2 (1993): 182-184.

appropriation of the text.”<sup>52</sup> The latter role of the Spirit in inspiring the readers to appropriate the text in a living and experiential way in the present includes an appropriation of the divine message in suitable native categories of thought. The Spirit who inspired the original authors remains active even in the present illuminating the correct meaning for his people's proper spiritual understanding of the divine words. The Spirit practiced such liberty by engaging extra-canonical material to warn and encourage the community of believers in Jude 9. So also, even in the present context, the Spirit-experiencing Pentecostal reading community, carefully attuned to the Spirit, must prayerfully indulge in appropriating the message of the Bible within the broader cultural and religious categories of thought. Such a Pentecostal hermeneutical praxis would make its theology give birth, not merely in western vocabulary, reason, and intellectual-cultural milieu but in a Spirit-breathed understanding *in* the local community, *by* the local community, and *for* the local community. It would foster the proliferation of multiple indigenous expressions of the Spirit-empowering Pentecostal experiences that inform one's hermeneutical engagement with the biblical texts. Moreover, such a hermeneutical praxis would overcome the gap between the text's horizon and the reader, aided by the Spirit, who knows the mind of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10-12).

Since its inception in the Jesus movement, Christianity as a religion has been mingled with other cultural realities. Pieces of evidence within the New Testament, inspired by the Spirit, use philosophical, social, or religious ideas and traditions as suitable means to communicate God's mind. For example, John, the author of the Fourth Gospel, introduces Jesus to his community located in a Gentile context as “logos.” The logos idea in philosophical and religious traditions was familiar to Greeks and Jews. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, John used it to explain the identity of Jesus beyond his human existence contextually. The necessity of formulating such an intercultural Christology for John was his readers' pluralistic cultural and religious location in Ephesus. Chacko contends that John's Gospel was written in a cultural, political, and religious hybridized Ephesian context where literary voices in forked-tongues, mimicking-mocking, crisscrossed each other discursively.<sup>53</sup> The Spirit was sensitive to the context of John and his readers to inspire the author to interpret the Christological identity of Jesus in the native categories.

Similarly, Ephesians and Colossians explain the nature of the Christian household ethics in the three sets (husband-wife, parent-child,

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<sup>52</sup>Clark H. Pinnock, “The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2 (1993): 4.

<sup>53</sup>Biju Chacko, *Intercultural Christology in John's Gospel: A Subaltern Reading from India* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022), 3, see also 55.

and master-slave). In Ephesians 5:22-6:9 and Colossians 3:18-4:1, the mutual obligations, the scope of one's authority, and duties within the hierarchy of relationships existing in Christ are colored by the Greek household system.<sup>54</sup> Even the list of virtues and vices defining ethical behavior, mentioned in Ephesians 4:25-32, resembles “lists found in contemporary Jewish and Greco-Roman literature.”<sup>55</sup> Ukwuegbu argues that the deeds listed under “the works of the flesh” (Gal 5:19-21) are sourced from the Hellenistic and Jewish philosophical and religious traditions. Moreover, except for “love,” the list of “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-23) is found in Hellenistic philosophical and ethical discussions in the First century AD.<sup>56</sup> Hollenweger calls such interpretive use of native language, traditions, and cultures in Christian theological discourses “a theologically responsible syncretism”<sup>57</sup> within the Bible. He says that it is seemingly irrefutable that “Christianity (both today and in the New Testament) is a syncretism *par excellence*.”<sup>58</sup> Even today, a theologically responsible syncretism welcomes articulating Christian theology in native terms and traditions of the local interpretive community. So, the Pentecostal biblical interpreters in multicultural and pluralistic contexts must operate under the aegis of the Spirit's illumination within a context while interpreting the Bible.

What is the significance of a theologically responsible syncretistic interpretation of the Bible? What does it say about the Spirit's relationship with cultures? It signifies God's freedom to employ categories of thought, languages, stories, and cultural narratives from different cultures to reveal his mind as relevant to the community. Extracanonical religious traditions within the New Testament underline the Spirit's activities beyond every cultural boundary. It dismantles boundaries and resists hierarchies created by humans limiting the expanse of the Spirit's works. All cultures are equally open to the Spirit's activity depending upon the Divine will and the message to communicate. God of the Bible is the Lord of all cultures. He reigns above all cultures, traditions, and systems.

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<sup>54</sup>Bruce J. Nicholls and Brian Wintle, *Colossians & Philemon*, Asia Bible Commentary Series (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2007), 169. Similarly, on household ethics in 1 Peter, see David J. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, SBLMS 26 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1981), 63-121.

<sup>55</sup>Brian Wintle, *Ephesians*, Asia Bible Commentary: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Global Library, 2020), 102.

<sup>56</sup>Bernard O. Ukwuegbu, “Paraenesis, Identity-defining Norms, or Both? Galatians 5:13-6:10 in the Light of Social Identity Theory,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70/3 (2008): 548, 551.

<sup>57</sup>Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*, 308.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*

Does the openness towards non-biblical cultural traditions to understand the biblical message threaten the spread of irresponsible interpretive processes in the name of the Spirit's illumination? Undoubtedly, the threat is real. A callous proliferation of native Pentecostal hermeneutical praxis can lead to the spread of a false and perverted gospel in the Church. Pinnock proposes "a controlled liberty" as an antidote to curb such a potential threat to the Church while continuing to appreciate the present inspirational role of the Spirit. He says:

I would say that the Holy Spirit, who inspired the apostolic testimony and binds himself to it, opens up the significance of the Scriptures for believers of all ages. Anchored in the Bible as canon, the Spirit opens up what is written there under the conditions of a controlled liberty. By controlled liberty I mean a freedom within parameters, a liberty which honours both the original what was meant by the biblical authors with a view to our understanding what God wants to say to us today.<sup>59</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Pentecostal hermeneutics has emerged as a respected interpretative system within academia. In the process of its evolution, the Pentecostal interpreters have struggled to learn and articulate ways in which their individual and community experiences could be imported to understand the text. Unlike evangelical interpreters, Pentecostals have recognized the inevitability of a certain degree of subjectivity while interpreting a biblical passage. Pentecostal interpreters have carefully balanced the interest to hear the text while doing so in the light of their community experience of the Spirit. However, the distinct social and cultural faces of the communities of interpreters among Pentecostals must be appreciated within the larger community, to hear. Their unique contributions, shared among others, would help to shape their theology in multiple categories of thought. Merely a theological definition of the community as an essential component in the triadic interpretive process is insufficient. As no interpretation is possible without the contribution of a reader's social and cultural influence, we must consciously seek to engage the native religious, cultural, social, literary, and non-literary traditions in interpretation. It would foster the celebration of theological unity in diversity within the worldwide Pentecostal community. The creative explanations of their experiences of the Spirit's empowerment

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<sup>59</sup>Pinnock, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," 9.

articulated in the native cultural categories will enrich Pentecostal theology. Consciously practicing a controlled liberty while doing a theological syncretistic interpretation with responsibility will demand mutual accountability between the text and the interpretive community to decide the correct interpretation of a passage.

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## **The Charismatic and Non-Charismatic Roles of the Spirit in Isaiah 11:1-5<sup>1</sup>**

by Lian Sian Mung

### **Introduction**

In the book of Isaiah, the theme of Yahweh's רוח is featured most prominently in chapter 11, where the term רוח appears four times (v. 2). While the charismatic role of Yahweh's spirit in Isaiah 11 has captured much attention, its non-charismatic role deserves further exploration.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, by employing syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic analyses, this essay will investigate how Yahweh's spirit in 11:1-5 not only empowers the recipient for Yahweh's given task (charismatic), but also

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<sup>2</sup>Some monographs and articles on the spirit of God in the OT that deal with the role of the spirit of Yahweh in Isaiah 11 are Hilary Marlow, "The Spirit of Yahweh in Isaiah 11:1-9," in *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (ed. David G. Firth and Paul D. Wegner; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 220-32; Lloyd Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1972), 55-56; George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (New York: Paulist, 1976), 40-42; Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 128-30; and Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 93-100. While aforementioned monographs deal with the spirit of Yahweh in Isaiah 11, they paid their attention to the spirit's role in empowering the new ideal ruler for his judicial task. Whereas Neve appears to be correct in observing the ethical role of Yahweh spirit, he does not fully develop his idea (see Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, 56). Wonsuk Ma's work, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 33-42, has dealt with the role of Yahweh's spirit in Isaiah 11; unfortunately, however, he focuses only on verses 1-2 and concludes that the role of the spirit in this passage is to serve as "a sign for a legitimate leader" and to equip him "for the administration of justice and righteousness (see Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 68). Although he is correct in arguing that the spirit of Yahweh enables the ideal ruler to administer his judicial task (charismatic), he has not fully addressed how the endowment of Yahweh's spirit affects the recipient's relationship with Yahweh (non-charismatic).

makes him to delight in the fear of Yahweh (non-charismatic).<sup>3</sup> That reverential fear is the essential virtue of a just ruler and the foundation of Israelite wisdom, so that the recipient's attitude, thoughts, and behavior may be fully congruent with Yahweh's intention. In the following, we will examine the role of Yahweh's spirit in Isaiah 11:1-5 within its co-texts.

### The Co-Texts of Isaiah 11:1-5

While some commentators have suggested that the immediate context of Isaiah 11:1-5 begins from 10:5,<sup>4</sup> this essay proposes that 11:1-5 belongs to the larger literary context of Isaiah 7-12 because of the thematic and linguistic links that support the coherence of 7-12.<sup>5</sup> First, the theme of trusting in Yahweh rather than in foreign alliances is a prominent one throughout chapters 7-12, which is set in the context of the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis (see 7:1-9; 8:11-14, 17; 10:20-27; 12:2).<sup>6</sup> Second, the theme of Assyria is prominent throughout chapters 7-11 (see 7:17, 18, 20; 8:4-7; 10:5, 12, 24, 27-34; 11:11, 16). Third, chapter 12 is linked to chapters 7-10 in terms of the theme of trust in Yahweh (e.g., 12:2 //10:20-27), the theme of Zion (e.g., 12:6 //10:24 cf. 8:18; 10:12; 10:32), and the concept of fear (e.g., 12:2 // 7:4; 8:12; 10:24; 11:2-3). These above textual links, therefore, suggest that Isaiah 11:1-5 needs to be examined not only in the context of 10:5-12:6, but also in the context of chapters 7-12, which, in turn, belongs to the larger literary block of Isaiah 1-12. Thus, in the final form of the text, chapter 11 is placed in the literary context of the prophetic oracles, which are concerned not only with the king's/ruler's failure to practice justice for the poor and the weak

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<sup>3</sup>In this essay, I adopt Wonsuk Ma's definition of "charismatic" and "non-charismatic" roles/traditions of Yahweh's spirit. Whereas the charismatic role denotes the spirit's role to "equip, enable or empower a selected individual to perform a divinely commissioned task," the non-charismatic role refers to the spirit's function to empower "the immediate recipient without an intended consequence for a secondary group of people." See Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 29, and his essay on "The Charismatic Spirit of God," in *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books Int'l, 2010), 29.

<sup>4</sup>See Paul D. Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 234; and also John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 54-64; 192-95.

<sup>5</sup>Scholarly opinions differ on whether verses 6-9 is a later addition and if verse 10 belongs to verses 1-9 in the final form of the text. However, since my main concern is not the growth and formation of the text but rather the final form of the text, determining whether Isaiah 11:6-9 belongs to an exilic or pre-exilic period is beyond the scope of this essay. Because of the limited space, this essay limits its scope to verses 1-5.

<sup>6</sup>See Richard Schultz, "Isaiah, Book of," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. K. J. Vanhoozer. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 339.

(e.g., 10:1-4), but also with the attitude and character of the kings/rulers of Judah/Israel in 10:1-4 (cf. 1:23), the arrogant Assyrian king in 10:5-19; 27-34, and the people of Judah/Israel (e.g., 9:13[12]; 10:21-22) toward Yahweh and their relationship with Him. In this context, the prophet envisions the coming of the ideal ruler as a new David in Isaiah 11.

In the following section, we will exegetically investigate the role of Yahweh's spirit in 11:1-5 in the light of the above architecture of the text.

### **An Analysis of the Prophetic Discourse in Isaiah 11:1-5**

#### **A Shoot from the Stump of Jesse: A New David (Isa 11:1)**

The prophetic oracle in chapter 11 begins with a *WeQatal* verb וַיִּצְאֵהוּ (“and it will come up”), which announces the emergence of a shoot from the stump of Jesse (v. 1). The use of a *WeQatal* signifies that 11:1a is syntactically dependent on the previous verse (i.e., 10:34). The syntactical relationship between 10:34 and 11:1 indicates that the rise of a shoot from the stump of Jesse in 11:1 should be understood in contrast with the fall of the Assyrian King in 10:34.<sup>7</sup> Whereas 10:34 depicts Yahweh's plan to cut down the lofty trees, which represent the Assyrian king, 11:1 reveals his plan to raise up a new ruler from the stump of Jesse. Although verse 1 does not explicitly state that Yahweh will cause a shoot to come out of the stump of Jesse, the coming of Yahweh's Spirit רִיחַהוּ upon the shoot in verse 2 signifies that Yahweh is the one who will raise up a shoot (חֹטֵר) from the stump (גִּזְעַת).<sup>8</sup>

While the name “David” (דָּוִד) is frequently mentioned in Isaiah 1-39,<sup>9</sup> chapter 11 uses the term “Jesse” (יֵשׁוּעַ) to refer to the origin of the new ideal ruler (“a shoot from the stump of Jesse” v. 1; cf. v. 10). In 1 Samuel and 2 Kings, only David and no other king in the Davidic monarch is identified as the “son of Jesse,”<sup>10</sup> implying that the term יֵשׁוּעַ in Isaiah 11:1 not only signifies the humble beginning of a ruler, but also recalls the authentication of David as Yahweh's chosen king of Israel through the anointing and the coming of Yahweh's spirit upon him (1

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<sup>7</sup>See Willem Beuken, “‘Lebanon with Its Majesty Shall Fall. A Shoot Shall Come Forth from the Stump of Jesse’ (Isa 10:34-11:1): Interfacing the Story of Assyria and the Image of Israel's Future in Isaiah 10:11,” in *The New Things: Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy* (ed. F. Postma, K. Spronk and E. Talstra; Amsterdamse Cahiers voor exegese van de Bijbel en zijn Tradities (Maastricht: Uitgeverij Shaker, 2002), 27.

<sup>8</sup>Beuken, “Lebanon with Its Majesty Shall Fall,” 29-30.

<sup>9</sup>See, for instance, בֵּית דָּוִד “the house of David,” (Isa 7:2; 22:22); כִּסֵּא דָּוִד “the throne of David” (Isa 9:6[7]); בְּאֶהֱל דָּוִד “in the tent of David” (Isa 16:5).

<sup>10</sup>See, for instance, 1 Samuel 16:11, 18; 17:58; 20:31; 2 Samuel 23:1; 1 Kings 12:16.

Sam 16:13).<sup>11</sup> Thus, when 11:1 is read in the light of chapters 7-12, it stands out that a shoot from the stump of Jesse does not refer to Ahaz, who failed to put his trust in Yahweh during the Syro-Ephraimitic invasion (see Isa 7-8) but to a new David, who will serve as Yahweh's faithful agent through the empowerment of Yahweh's רוּחַ (11:2-5). This becomes more evident in verse 2, which depicts the coming of Yahweh's רוּחַ upon a new ideal ruler.

#### The Coming of Yahweh's רוּחַ Upon a New David (Isaiah 11:2)

The pronominal phrase עָלָיו ("upon him") in verse 2a (רוּחַ יְהוָה וְיָהֳרֵה עָלָיו וְיָצָא מִלְּבַב יֵשׁוּעַ) refers back to a new ideal ruler ("a shoot from the stump of Jesse") in the preceding verse. Since the coming of Yahweh's רוּחַ upon a new Davidic figure in verse 2 recalls the coming of the רוּחַ of Yahweh upon David in 1 Samuel 16:13,<sup>12</sup> exploring the relationship between the two references will help us to better understand the role of Yahweh's רוּחַ in relationship to the new Davidic figure in Isaiah 11:1-5.

The simultaneity of David's anointing with oil and his receipt of Yahweh's רוּחַ in 1 Samuel 16:13 signifies that David was Yahweh's chosen king, "the man after God's own heart/mind" (cf. 1 Sam 13:14).<sup>13</sup> In the context of 1 Samuel 16:13-14, the coming of Yahweh's רוּחַ upon David was followed by its departure from Saul, implying that the רוּחַ of Yahweh that "bestows the gifts necessary for leadership cannot be given to two supreme leaders at the same time."<sup>14</sup> According to Block, the coming of Yahweh's רוּחַ upon David in 1 Samuel 16:13 is "a most significant turning point in the history of Israel and her monarchy—the

<sup>11</sup>See Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 37; Wegner, *Kingship and Messianic Expectation*, 233; Howard, "The Transfer of Power from Saul to David in 1Sam 16:13-14," 475.

<sup>12</sup>The connection between these two references has been long observed. See, for instance, Walter Brueggemann, *Westminster Bible Companion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988); John N. Oswalt, *NICOT* (Grand Rapids, MI:Eerdmans, 1986) *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 279; Otto Kaiser, *The Old Testament Library* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1983), *Isaiah 1-12*, 256.

<sup>13</sup>Daniel I. Block, "Empowered by the Spirit of God: The Holy Spirit in the Historiographic Writings of the Old Testament," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 1 (1997): 53. Commentators disagree as to whether the phrase אִישׁ כְּלִבּוֹ in 1 Samuel 13:14 refers to "a man of Yahweh's choice" ("according to one's own choosing") or "a man whose heart is like Yahweh's heart." For further information on this debate, see Benjamin Johnson's discussion in his article "The Heart of YHWH's Chosen One in 1 Samuel," *JBL* 131 (2012): 458.

<sup>14</sup>Neve, *The Spirit of God*, 27. See also Howard, "The Transfer of Power from Saul to David in 1 Sam 16:13-14," 479, 480.

transfer of divine authority and support from Saul to David.”<sup>15</sup> The phrase “from that day forward” (מהיום ההוא ומעלה) in 1 Samuel 16:13c is particularly significant in this context because it signifies that, unlike the judges and Saul on whom Yahweh’s רוּחַ came “several different times, (implying it had left them in some way in the interim periods”),<sup>16</sup> the coming of Yahweh’s רוּחַ upon David was to be permanent.<sup>17</sup>

Concerning the role of the coming of Yahweh’s רוּחַ, Hildebrand suggests that it equipped David with “military skills and charisma for his leadership skills,” which are evident throughout his reign.<sup>18</sup> In 2 Samuel 8:15, David is depicted as Israel’s king who administered justice (בְּצֶדֶק) and righteousness (לְכָל-עַמּוֹ) to all his people (לְכָל-הָרֶבֶךָ). In 1 Samuel 18:14, the narrator clarifies that David’s success in all his undertaking was due to Yahweh’s presence in his life—“And David was prospering [lit. ‘acting wisely’] in all his ways for Yahweh was with him (מִשְׁכִּיל וַיְהִי עִמּוֹ).”<sup>19</sup> In summary, the רוּחַ of Yahweh not only authenticated David as Yahweh’s chosen king over Israel, but also continually empowered him to carry out his tasks as the one who administered justice and righteousness in his kingdom (cf. 2 Sam 8:15).

#### *Yahweh’s Spirit and David (the son of Jesse) in 1 Samuel 16:13*

13a - נוּיָקָה שְׁמוּאֵל אֶת-הַקֶּרֶן הַשֵּׁמֶן - “Then Samuel took the horn of oil,”

13b - וַיִּמָּשַׁח אֹתוֹ בְּקֶרֶב אֶחָיו - “and he anointed him in the midst of his brothers,”

13c - מֵהַיּוֹם הַהוּא, וּמֵעַלְמָה וְתַצְלַח רוּחַ-יְהוָה אֶל-דָּוִד - “from that day forward, the spirit of Yahweh rushed to David.”

13d - וַיָּקָם שְׁמוּאֵל וַיֵּלֶךְ הָרְמָתָה: - “Then Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.”

#### *Yahweh’s Spirit and a New David (a shoot from the stump of Jesse) in Isaiah 11:2*

2a - וְנָחָה עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה - “and the spirit of Yahweh will rest upon him,”

<sup>15</sup>Daniel I. Block, “Empowered by the Spirit of God,” 51. See also David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 424.

<sup>16</sup>Howard, “The Transfer of Power from Saul to David in 1 Sam 16:13-14,” 475.

<sup>17</sup>Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, 23. See also Block, “Empowered by the Spirit of God,” 53.

<sup>18</sup>Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, 126.

<sup>19</sup>Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel* (The New American Commentary; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 181.

2b - רִיחַ חֵכְמָה וּבִינָה (ellipsis): “the spirit of wisdom and understanding,”

2c - רִיחַ עֲזָה וּגְבוּרָה (ellipsis): “the spirit of counsel and might.”

2d - רִיחַ דָּעַת וַיְרָאָה יְהוָה (ellipsis): “the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.”

Just as the narrator in the Book of Samuel views that the רִיחַ of Yahweh played a central role in carrying out Yahweh’s plan to establish a just and righteous kingdom through the Davidic dynasty after the failure of King Saul (see 1 Sam 16:13-14; 18:14; 2 Sam 8:15), the prophet in Isaiah 11:1-5 also portrays that Yahweh’s רִיחַ is fundamental in executing Yahweh’s plan to establish his kingdom of righteousness and peace through a new monarch. When Isaiah 11:1-5 is read in association with 1 Samuel 16:13-14, it stands out that “a shoot from the stump of Jesse” in 11:1 may not refer to a king from the Davidic dynasty, but rather a new David who will be empowered to be Yahweh’s agent of righteousness through the work of the רִיחַ of Yahweh. Just as David, the son of Jesse, experienced the coming of Yahweh’s רִיחַ that authenticated his kingship and empowered him for his task, Yahweh’s רִיחַ will come upon the new David, who is identified as a shoot from the stump of Jesse, to endow him with spiritual gifts (v. 2) so that he will delight in the fear of Yahweh (v. 3a) and be able to administer justice and righteousness (vv. 4-5a).

#### *The Use of Genitive of Effect in Isaiah 11:2b-2d*

In the following, we will further explore how Yahweh’s רִיחַ will equip the new David with three pairs of spiritual gifts that will prepare and empower him to carry out his task as Yahweh’s agent of righteousness (vv. 2b-5b). The fourfold repetition of the noun רִיחַ and the double occurrences of the divine name יְהוָה in verse 2 imply that it is Yahweh who will raise up a new David and equip him through his רִיחַ with the necessary virtues or qualities to carry out his task as Yahweh’s faithful agent of righteousness. In Isaiah 11:2b-d, the poet uses ‘a genitive of effect’ structure, where the three pairs of spiritual gifts are endowed upon a new David. Waltke and O’Conner point out that “in a genitive of effect, the relationship of C and G is a directly causal one, that is, roughly, C causes G.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Waltke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, § 9.5.2c, 146. See also J. C. L. Gibson, *Davidson’s Introductory Hebrew Grammar Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990) (Scotland: T&T Clark, 1994), § 34, 31.

- 2a - וְנָחָה עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה: “and the spirit of Yahweh will rest upon him,”
- 2b - רוּחַ חֵכְמָה וּבִינָה: “the spirit (C) that causes (G) wisdom and understanding,”
- 2c - רוּחַ עֲזָה וְגִבּוֹרָה: “the spirit (C) that causes (G) counsel and might,”
- 2d - רוּחַ דַּעַת וְיִרְאַת יְהוָה: “the spirit (C) that causes (G) knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.”

Use of the genitive of effect structure in verse 2b-d signifies that the רוּחַ is the agent that induces or causes all the skills and gifts mentioned in the verse. When seen in relationship with the clause וְנָחָה עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה in verse 2a, it can be deduced that the רוּחַ of Yahweh is the source of all the three pairs of spiritual attributes given to the new David (vv. 1- 2) for fulfilling his tasks (vv. 3-5).

The first pair—“the spirit (רוּחַ) of wisdom (חֵכְמָה) and understanding (בִּינָה)” —is bestowed on the new David for his judicial office so that he would be able to judge (שָׁפַט) the poor with righteousness (צְדָקָה).<sup>21</sup> In contrast to the Assyrian King who proudly claims that he was able to defeat many nations due to his own wisdom (חֵכְמָה) and understanding (בִּינָה) of the new David are attributed to the רוּחַ of Yahweh, signifying his dependence upon Yahweh.<sup>22</sup>

In 1 Kings 3:12, Yahweh gave a wise (חֲכָמָה) and discerning (בִּינָה) heart to Solomon (the successor of David) so that he would be able to judge (לְשַׁפֵּט) Yahweh’s people and to distinguish between right and wrong (1 Kgs 3:9).<sup>23</sup> Just as Yahweh gave such a heart to Solomon for his judicial office as the king of Israel, the רוּחַ of Yahweh will endow the new David with the רוּחַ of wisdom and understanding to establish a kingdom of justice and righteousness (cf. Isa 11:3-5).

The new David will also be equipped with the second pair of attributes (v. 2c)—“the spirit of counsel and might (רוּחַ עֲזָה וְגִבּוֹרָה).” In Isaiah 36:5, the noun עֲזָה denotes a ‘strategy’ or ‘plan,’ and גִּבּוֹרָה refers to the ‘military strength’ to rebel against the Assyrians; thus the phrase

<sup>21</sup>See Uppsala Tengström, “רוּחַ *rûah*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. 13, ed. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry; trans., David E. Green; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 390-91.

<sup>22</sup>Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, *The Implied Reader in Isaiah 6-12* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 202.

<sup>23</sup>Brevard Childs, *Isaiah* (Old Testament Library; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 103.

“counsel and might (עצה וגבורה)” has a military connotation.<sup>24</sup> In this light, it can be suggested that the second pair of the spiritual attributes will enable the new ideal ruler to “plan and act with confidence and strength, ensuring victory over enemies and adversaries.”<sup>25</sup> The Israelite wisdom tradition acknowledges that counsel and might/strength belong to God: “With God are wisdom (חכמה) and might (גבורה); he has counsel (עצה) and understanding (תבונה)” (Job 12:13).<sup>26</sup> In the same vein, in Proverbs 8:14-16, counsel (עצה), might (גבורה 11:2c), and understanding (בִּינָה 11:2b) are depicted as virtues that Lady Wisdom possesses (Prov 8:14), and they are closely associated with kingship and righteous governance.<sup>27</sup>

8:14a - לִי־עֵצָה וְחָוִישָׁהּ: “Mine are *counsel* (עצה) and sound wisdom (חוישה).”

8:14b - אָנִי בִינָה לִי וְגִבּוּרָה: “I am understanding (בינה). I have *might* (גבורה).”

8:15a - בִּי מַלְכִים יִמְלֹכוּ: “By me kings reign (מלך).”

8:15b - וְרוֹזְנִים יִחְקְרוּ צֶדֶק: “and rulers decree what is just (צדק).”

8:16a - בִּי שָׂרִים יִשְׁרוּ: “By me princes rule (שרר).”

8:16b - וְהַדְּבָרִים כָּל־שֹׁפְטֵי צֶדֶק: “and nobles, all who govern (שפט) rightly (צדק).”

The linguistic and thematic connections between the aforementioned texts indicate that the concept of the second pair of the spiritual attributes (רוח עצה וגבורה) given to the new David in Isaiah 11:2 recalls the characteristics of an ideal king depicted in the Israelite wisdom tradition. Seen in this light, the purpose of Yahweh’s spirit’s endowment of the new Davidic ruler in 11:1-5 is to enable him to establish a kingdom of righteousness as Yahweh’s agent by ruling (שפט) justly (צדק) with wisdom and might (vv. 2-4; cf. Prov 8:14-16).

The third pair—“the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh (רוח היען ויראת יהוה)” —expresses the new ideal ruler’s relationship with

<sup>24</sup>Gary Smith, *Isaiah 1-39* (New American Commentary; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2007) 598.

<sup>25</sup>Marlow, “The Spirit of Yahweh in Isaiah 11:1-9,” 226.

<sup>26</sup>Roland Murphy, *Proverbs* (Word Biblical Commentary; Columbia: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1998), 51.

<sup>27</sup>See Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 95; R. N. Whybray, *Proverbs* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 125.

Yahweh.<sup>28</sup> In Proverbs 1:7, the fear of Yahweh (יְרֵאָה יְהוָה) is described as the beginning of knowledge (דַעַת); and in Proverbs 2:5, the fear of Yahweh (יְרֵאָה יְהוָה) is paired with the knowledge of God (דַעַת אֱלֹהִים).<sup>29</sup> In Isaiah 33:5-6, wisdom (חִכְמָה), knowledge (דַעַת), and the fear of Yahweh (יְרֵאָה יְהוָה) are associated with the establishment of Yahweh's kingdom of righteousness in Zion.<sup>30</sup> In light of our observations above, it may be suggested that the purpose of the endowment of the third pair of spiritual attributes (11:2d) is to make the new David's thoughts and actions "fully congruent and resonant" with Yahweh's will and intention,<sup>31</sup> so that he may serve as Yahweh's faithful agent of righteousness (vv. 3-5). The theme of the fear of Yahweh is further developed in the following verse (v. 3a).

### The Roles of Yahweh's רִיחַ in Isaiah 11:3-5

#### The Non-Charismatic Role of the רִיחַ of Yahweh in Isaiah 11:3a

Commentators are puzzled by the colon in 11:3a וְתִרְיָחוֹ בְּיִרְאָתוֹ יְהוָה ("And his delight shall be in the fear of Yahweh").<sup>32</sup> The editors of the *BHS* and some commentators proposed that the colon וְתִרְיָחוֹ בְּיִרְאָתוֹ יְהוָה in verse 3a should be deleted because it is textual dittography. Wildberger also argues that "There is no doubt that it is actually a dittography from the previous יִרְאָתוֹ יְהוָה (דַעַת) רִיחַ spirit of knowledge and of fear of Yahweh" and that "the repetition of יִרְאָתוֹ יְהוָה ('fear of Yahweh') interrupts the flow."<sup>33</sup> In the same vein, Clements also suggests the clause "should be omitted as a variant reading of the last part of v. 2 which has come into the text."<sup>34</sup> Contrary to the aforementioned views, Motyer sees verse 3a

<sup>28</sup>Tengström, "רִיחַ *rūah*," in *TDOT* 13: 394. See also Edward Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (vol. 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 382.

<sup>29</sup>Kaiser, 256.

<sup>30</sup>In his article, Beuken observes how Isaiah 33:5-6 shares the same vocabulary with Isaiah 11:1-9. See "Jesaja 33 als Spiegeltext im Jesajabuch," *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* 67 (1991): 16.

<sup>31</sup>Brueggemann, 18.

<sup>32</sup>See Arie Shifman, "'A Scent' of the Spirit: Exegesis of an Enigmatic Verse (Isaiah 11:3)," *JBL* 2 (2012): 249.

<sup>33</sup>See Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* (Trans. Thomas H. Trapp: Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 461.

<sup>34</sup>Clements, *Isaiah 1-39* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980)123.

<sup>35</sup>Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 123.

as “a domino link between verses 2 and 3a.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, the different scholarly opinions on the placement and function of verse 3a in its present literary position reveal a need for a more thorough analysis within its larger context in the book of Isaiah and also in its canonical context.

We begin our investigation by exploring the relationship between the concept of the fear of Yahweh and kingship in Israel in Deuteronomy 17:18-20. In this context, the fear of Yahweh (lit. “to fear Yahweh”) (לִירָאָה אֶת־יְהוָה) is described as the essential virtue that an Israelite king is required to possess. In vv. 18-20, the king is required to learn to fear Yahweh through his copying, keeping, writing, and reading of the book of the law (הַתּוֹרָה) and to demonstrate his fear of Yahweh by keeping (שָׁמַר) all the words of the law (הַתּוֹרָה) and the statutes (הַחֻקִּים) and doing (עָשָׂה) them (v. 19). As Craigie observes, since the king’s responsibility is to rule on earth on behalf of Yahweh, he has to “do so in line with the holiness and righteousness of Yahweh” (Deut 17:18-19).<sup>36</sup> Verse 20 further states that possessing the virtue of the fear of Yahweh keeps the king from becoming prideful (v. 20a) and turning aside from Yahweh’s commandments so that he and his descendants may reign for a long period of time.

In line with the teaching of Deuteronomy 17:18-20 on kingship and the fear of Yahweh, the Israelite wisdom tradition also defines the fear of Yahweh as the beginning of wisdom (Prov 1:7; 9:10) and the hatred of evil, pride, arrogance, evil ways, and a perverse mouth (Prov 8:13). In Proverbs 8:13-16, the fear of Yahweh (v. 13; cf. Isa 11:2d-3a) is closely associated with the theme of wisdom, understanding, and might (v. 14; cf. Isa 11:2b-c) and also with the theme of righteous governance (vv. 15-16; cf. Isa 11:3b-5).

#### Thematic Progression in Proverbs 8:13-16 and Isaiah 11:2d-5

*The Fear of Yahweh* as the foundation of Israelite wisdom

(Prov 8:13 // Isa 11:2d-3a)

*Result 1:* counsel and wisdom, understanding and strength

(Prov 8:14 // Isa 11:2a-c)

*Result 2:* righteous governance

(Prov 8:15-16 // Isa 11: 3b-5)

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<sup>36</sup>See Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 266.

In Proverbs 8:13-16, as illustrated above, the fear of Yahweh serves as the foundation of righteous governance (cf. Deut 17:18-20; Isa 11:2-5). Similarly, in David's last words in 2 Samuel 23:2-3, the concept of the fear of God is closely linked with the theme of righteous governance. These words were known as the "oracle of David, the son of Jesse (בן־ישי), and the anointed (משיח) of the God of Jacob, who spoke through the רוח of Yahweh (v. 2)."

- 2a - רוח יהוה דבר־בִּי: "The *Spirit of Yahweh* speaks through me,"  
 2b - וּמִלְחָתוֹ עַל־לְשׁוֹנִי: "and his word is upon my tongue."  
 3a - אָמַר אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִי: "The God of Israel said to me,"  
 3b - לִי דָבַר צוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל: "the Rock of Israel spoke to me,"  
 3c - מוֹשֵׁל בְּאֲדָמָה צְדִיקִים: "the one who *rules* over men *in righteousness*"  
 3d - מוֹשֵׁל יְרֵאת אֱלֹהִים: "the one who *rules in the fear of God*."

Thus, the aforementioned texts reveal that the fear of Yahweh is closely associated with righteous governance and also with keeping Yahweh's commandments (Deut 17:18-20), and the hatred of evil and pride (Prov. 8:13; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; cf. Deut 17:20). Just as Deuteronomy 17 describes the fear of Yahweh as the essential virtue that is required for an Israelite king to possess, the oracle of David (2 Sam 23:1-3) and the Israelite wisdom tradition (Prov 8:13-16) also affirm that the fear of Yahweh is indispensable to righteous governance.

While Deuteronomy 17:18-20 teaches that a king has to read the Torah day and night in order to possess the virtue of the fear of Yahweh, Isaiah 11:1-5 envisions that Yahweh's רוח will bestow that virtue on the new David, causing him to delight in the fear of Yahweh so as not to become proud (cf. Deut 17:18-20); but rather he will be free from all evil (cf. Prov 8) and will be able not only to keep all of Yahweh's commandments (Deut 17:18-19), but also to govern righteously (2 Sam 23:1-3; Prov 8:15-16).

Seen in the context of Isaiah 7-12, the fear of Yahweh will keep the new David from acting like the arrogant Assyrian king who lifts himself up and speaks boastfully (Isa 10:7, 13-14; cf. Deut 17:20; Prov. 8:13), or Ahaz, the unfaithful Davidic King who failed to put his trust in Yahweh (Isa 7-8), or Judah's contemporary leaders who acted unjustly toward the poor, the fatherless, and the widows (10:1-4; cf. 1:23; 3:14; 5:23).

Therefore, the above observations lead us to deduce that the clause וְהָרִיחוּ בְּיְהוָה בְּיְרֵאתוֹ in Isaiah 11:3a is not a scribal error which interrupts the flow (contra Wildberger, Clements). In its present literary position, verse 3a functions to ensure that Yahweh's רוח equips the new David to become

Yahweh’s faithful agent whose thoughts and deeds are fully in harmony with Yahweh’s intention to establish his kingdom of righteousness.

In the following verses (11:3b-5), we will further explore how all the spiritual attributes in Isaiah 11:2 equip the new David to carry out Yahweh’s plan to establish a righteous kingdom.

The Charismatic Role of Yahweh’s רוח: Empowerment for Service  
(Isaiah 11:3b-4b)

In Isaiah 11:3b, there is a thematic shift from how the empowerment of Yahweh’s רוח effects the new David’s relationship with Yahweh by empowering him to delight in the fear of Yahweh (v. 3a) to the manner in which he will carry out his task as Yahweh’s agent of righteousness (vv. 3b-4). The repetition of the two verbs שפט and יכה in verses 3b and 4b signifies that the two cola in 3b-c are closely linked with the ones in 4a-b.

3b - ולא למראה עיניו ושפט: “and he will שפט not (לא) by *what he sees*”

3c - ולא למשמע אזניו ויכה: “and he will יכה not (לא) by *what he hears*,”

4a - וישפט בצדק הלים: “but he will שפט *with righteousness*”

4b - ויכה במישור לענוי-ארץ: “and he will יכה *with equity*”

While use of the same verbs (שפט and יכה) in both 3b-4b and 4a-b reveals that the two verses are connected, the double use of the negative particle (לא) in 3b-c (לא למראה: “not by what he sees” and לא למשמע: “not by what he hears”) further clarifies that the two verses are connected in terms of contrast. Whereas verse 3b-c portrays a manner in which he will not carry out his judicial task, the two prepositional phrases (בצדק: “with righteousness” and במישור: “with equity”) in verse 4 depict the manner in which he will carry out his task.

Having been equipped with the three pairs of spiritual gifts (v. 2), the new David will not carry out his judicial task like any ordinary kings or judges, who depend on what they can see (לא למראה) or what they can hear (לא למשמע). While use of the noun phrases “what he sees” or “what he hears” in Isaiah 11:3b-c may be reminiscent of the theme of a hardening motif in Isaiah 6:10,<sup>37</sup> it is more likely that verse 3b-c recalls

<sup>37</sup>See Williamson, *Variations on a Theme: King, Messiah and Servant in the Book of Isaiah* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 1998), 49.

1 Kings 3:28, where Solomon was depicted as having the wisdom of God (הַחֵמָה אֱלֹהִים) to administer justice (מִשְׁפָּט).

In the context of 1 Kings 3, the bestowal of a wise (חָכָם) and understanding (בִּינָה) heart to Solomon (v. 12) was followed by the narrator's depiction of how Solomon was able to rightly arbitrate a dispute between the two harlots (both of whom claimed to be the mother of the living child) and to bring justice to them. In this case, Solomon's arbitration was not merely based on what the two women said (i.e., what he heard) or the evidence they presented (i.e., what he saw) (cf. 1 Kgs 3:16-28), but he was able to go beyond the evidence presented because Yahweh had given him a heart of wisdom and understanding/discerning (cf. 1 Kgs 3:12). This is affirmed by verse 28, which depicts how the people of Israel were impressed by Solomon's wisdom to judge: "Then all Israel heard the judgment (מִשְׁפָּט) that the king had judged (שָׁפֵט), and they stood in awe (lit. 'fear') before the king because they saw (רָאוּ) that the wisdom of God (הַחֵמָה אֱלֹהִים) is in him to administer (עָשָׂה) justice (מִשְׁפָּט)."

In summary, just as Solomon, who was endowed with a heart of wisdom and discerning, administered justice and righteousness through the wisdom of God that enabled him to go beyond what he could see or hear, the new David's ability to judge and determine the truth will not be limited by what he sees or hears (i.e., the evidence presented to him) because he is equipped with the רוּחַ of wisdom (הַחֵמָה) and understanding (בִּינָה). It is worth noting, however, that the new David will not be like Solomon, whose heart was turned away to other gods by his foreign wives whom he loved (1 Kgs 11:1-4),<sup>38</sup> or the contemporary rulers of Judah and Jerusalem, who loved bribes and failed to bring justice to the fatherless and widows (10:1-4; 1:23). Yahweh's רוּחַ will empower the new David to delight in the fear of Yahweh (Isa 11:3a) so that he will not fail to keep Yahweh's commandments (cf. Deut 17:18-20). In this way, Isaiah 11:2-3 paves the way for verse 4a-d, which portrays the manner in which the new David will bring justice, righteousness, and order in the society.

In verse 4, the speaker employs a series of word plays (שָׁפֵט: he will judge // שָׁפֵט: rod // שִׁפּוֹת: lip), which function as a powerful linking to bond the couplet together.<sup>39</sup> Use of these word plays signifies that the role of the spirit-empowered ruler is both to judge (שָׁפֵט) the poor with righteousness (v. 4a-b) and to punish the wicked with the rod (שָׁפֵט) of his

<sup>38</sup>Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos Old Testament Commentary; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 90-91.

<sup>39</sup>Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Technique* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 245.

mouth and with his lips (שפתו) (v. 4c-d). The clause וְשֹׁפֵט בְּצַדִּיק הַלְלִים (“and he will judge the poor”) in 4a is “an expression of a royal role not only in Israel but across the ancient Near East.”<sup>40</sup> For instance, Hammurabi, in the prologue to his laws, states that the gods Anum and Enlil commissioned him “to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil, that the strong might not oppress the weak.”<sup>41</sup> The same concept concerning the king’s responsibility to protect the poor and to crush the wicked (oppressor) is also found in Psalm 72.

Psalm 72 begins with a prayer for the king to be endowed with God’s justice (lit. “your justice” מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ) and his righteousness (lit. “your righteousness” צְדִיקָתְךָ) so that he may be able to judge God’s people with righteousness (צדק) and the poor with justice (משפט).<sup>42</sup> The Psalmist’s prayer acknowledges that God is the source of justice and righteousness for the king, who will intervene for the needy (דל) and the oppressed (עני) and will deliver them from oppression and violence as Yahweh’s faithful agent of righteousness on earth.

When Isaiah 11:4 is read in relationship with Psalm 72, it stands out that the responsibility of the new ideal ruler is to carry out Yahweh’s plan to establish a community of righteousness by defending the rights of the oppressed (v. 4a-b) and the poor and also by punishing the wicked (v. 4b-c). Just as God will bestow his justice and righteousness on the king to intervene for the poor (Ps 72:1-4, 12-14), Yahweh’s רוח will also endow the three pairs of spiritual attributes to the new David for his task (Isa 11:1-4). While the רוח of wisdom and understanding (v. 2b) will enable him to judge (שפט) the poor with righteousness (צדק) and decide (יכח) with equity for the oppressed of the land (v. 4a-b), the רוח of counsel and might (v. 2c) will also empower him to slay the wicked (v. 4c-d). In Isaiah 25:4, Yahweh is depicted as a refuge (מְעוּז) to the poor (דל) and to the needy (אביון) amidst the threat of the ruthless (עריץ). When 11:1-4 is read in association with 25:4 and Psalm 72, it is evident that the new David, empowered by the רוח of Yahweh, is Yahweh’s agent to intervene for the poor and oppressed by establishing a righteous community.

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<sup>40</sup>Oswalt, *Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 281.

<sup>41</sup>J. B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament NET* (2nd ed., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 164; quoted in Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39, The Anchor Bible: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible Dictionary; New York: Double Day, 2000), 265.

<sup>42</sup>Knut M. Heim, “The Perfect King of Psalm 72: An Intertextual Inquiry,” in *The Lord’s Anointed* (ed. P. E. Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1995), 235.

### Characteristics of a Spirit-Filled Ruler (Isa 11:5)

In Isaiah 11:5, the prophet portrays the character of the new David: “And righteousness (צִדְקָה) will be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה) will be the girdle of his loins.” The song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 depicts Yahweh as אֱלֹהֵי אֱמוּנָה (“a God of faithfulness”) who is without iniquity, righteous (צַדִּיק), and upright (cf. v. 4). Similarly, in the book of Psalms, the two terms צִדְקָה and אֱמוּנָה are frequently used in relationship with Yahweh’s character and action in the context of Yahweh’s judgement of the earth (96:13), of issuing his decrees in righteousness and in faithfulness (119:138), and of the Psalmist’s prayer according to Yahweh’s faithfulness and righteousness (143:1). In the book of Isaiah, the term אֱמוּנָה is also used to portray Yahweh’s faithfulness in accomplishing wonderful deeds in history according to his divine plan (25:1).<sup>43</sup> Isaiah 33:5-6 depicts Yahweh as the stability (אֱמוּנָה) of the citizens of those who dwell in a transformed Zion that Yahweh will fill with justice (מִשְׁפָּט) and righteousness (צִדְקָה).

While the above observations reveal that both of the terms צִדְקָה and אֱמוּנָה are used in relationship with Yahweh’s character and his action, it is also worth noting that Yahweh requires Israel to be a people of אֱמוּנָה (“faithfulness,” Jer 5:1)<sup>44</sup> and expects צִדְקָה (“righteousness”) from them (Isa 5:7). Therefore, seen in light of the above observations, Isaiah 11:5 clarifies that Yahweh’s רוּחַ will enable the new David to reflect God’s righteousness and faithfulness in the way he will carry out his judicial task as Yahweh’s faithful agent. In summation, the divine gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, and might (Isa 11:2b-c) will enable the new ruler to judge the poor and the oppressed with (צִדְקָה) righteousness (11:5; cf. 11:4; Ps 72:1-4, 12-14; Ps 96:13); and the divine gift of the spirit of the fear of Yahweh (11:2d-3c) will also enable him to demonstrate his faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה) toward Yahweh (v. 5b).

### Conclusion and Implications for Pentecostal Pneumatology

In contrast to the unfaithful Davidic king (Isa 7-8), the unjust leaders who failed to practice justice (10:5), and the arrogant Assyrian king whom Yahweh will bring down (10:33; 5-19, 28-33), Isaiah envisions that Yahweh will raise up a new David who will be empowered by Yahweh’s spirit to become Yahweh’s faithful agent of righteousness to

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<sup>43</sup>See Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, 429; Childs, *Isaiah*, 184.

<sup>44</sup>See R. W. L. Moberly, “אֱמוּנָה (‘*mn*),” *NIDOTTE* 1: 430.

establish his kingdom of righteousness and peace (11:1-5; cf. 8:23-9:6[9:1-7]). Yahweh's spirit in 11:1-5 not only equips the new ideal ruler with spiritual gifts for his judicial task to administer righteousness and justice by intervening for the poor and the weak (*charismatic*), but also makes him to delight in the fear of God (*non-charismatic*), which serves as the ground of the just reign and the essential virtue of a just ruler and the foundation of Israelite wisdom. The fear of Yahweh, which will result from the non-charismatic function of Yahweh's spirit, will keep the new David from failing to keep Yahweh's commandments (cf. Deut 17:18-20).

While the non-charismatic role of Yahweh's spirit makes the new David become Yahweh's faithful agent whose delight is in the fear of Yahweh, the charismatic function of Yahweh's spirit empowers him to carry out Yahweh's given task, which is to establish a kingdom of righteousness. This implies that a new David (the recipient) in Isaiah 11:1-5 can become Yahweh's faithful agent who effectively carries out that task only through his experiences of the coming of Yahweh's spirit that makes him delight in the fear of Yahweh (non-charismatic) and also empowers him to carry out the task (charismatic).

The above finding has implications for Pentecostal pneumatology. Since the beginning of modern Pentecostalism, the doctrine of Spirit-baptism, which is grounded on Luke-Acts, has been one of the major concerns of Pentecostals. They have argued that the coming the Spirit upon the disciples in Acts 2 was to endow with power for witness (cf. Acts 1:8). While Pentecostals are justified in arguing that the charismatic role of the Spirit empowers the recipients to become effective witnesses based on Luke-Acts, our exegetical analysis of Yahweh's spirit in Isaiah 11:1-5 reveals that it is the non-charismatic role of the Spirit that makes the recipient become Yahweh's faithful agent whose thoughts and actions are fully congruent with his intention. This implies, therefore, that in order to become Jesus' faithful witnesses, it is essential for modern Pentecostals to pay enough attention to both the charismatic and the non-charismatic roles of the Holy Spirit.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Chris E. W. Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation: Vocation, Holiness, and Scripture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2020). xvi + 237 pp. \$18.95 paper.**

In *Sanctifying Interpretation*, Chris E. W. Green proffers a constructive bibliology for classical Pentecostals that redirects attention away from an overt focus on epistemology, toward the much-overlooked *sanctifying* Spirit-Word dynamic of Scripture. Reminiscent of ascetic exhortation, the book argues for a *sensibility*, “an attitude toward interpretation” (xii), espousing that the challenging, *purgative* process of biblical interpretation sanctifies (xi-xii). His approach re-emphasizes the Spirit’s role as the one who makes present the words and works of God not just in the text but also through the lives of its message-bearers.

Being a second edition of his earlier monograph, Green presents the same argument for a soteriologically inclined Bible reading and interpretation through the lens of Christian identity and vocation, adding textual case studies and practical guidance to make his proposition clearer and more accessible. In broad stroke, he presents his arguments in three parts of vocation, holiness, and Scripture.

First, Green elaborates on the Christian vocation as part and parcel of Christian identification with Christ (15). In fact, with Christian conversion comes belonging and collaborative participation in the works of Christ. Interpreting Scripture, then, should come from the outflow of our identity in Christ and our participation in his priestly and prophetic vocation to the world (18-20). Green writes: “Joined to him in the washing of water and by the indwelling of the Spirit, we receive Christ’s priestly sensitivity to ‘the need, the chaos, the darkness of the world’ and his prophetic passion to enter into that darkness as ‘the light of the world’ (Mt. 5.14)” (25). Both priestly and prophetic vocations stem from our identity and participation in Christ.

With this understanding, the church, not just the individual, is recognized as a medium (and sacred space) for God’s transformative work in humanity.

Second, Green provides a corrective to the Pentecostal understanding of holiness. In Wesleyan fashion, he surmises holiness as a product of love, a relational outflow of abiding love in God (85). The process of sanctification comes from the “constant re-energizing and re-ordering of our loves. . . . The Spirit frees us from loving the wrong things, then more deeply, trains us to love the right things the right way” (86). The weight of holiness, however, does not just result in loving God and our neighbors, but even strangers and enemies (100-101).

Interestingly, Green promotes not just a sanctified life washed in the love of God, but also sanctified worship (i.e., liturgical practice) that posture Christians towards “sacred awareness of and openness to the Spirit” (116). He exhorts Pentecostals to crucify their self-made judgments and emotions into conformity with Christ (117-118).

Third, Green brings to a climax his exploration of vocation and holiness by using it as the foundation for a hermeneutic that recognizes the sanctifying effect of pneumatic interpretation (125). He writes: “the Scripture does not merely tell about salvation. By the Spirit’s grace, the Scripture works salvation, renewing our vision of the world by transforming us at the depths of our being” (127). A hermeneutic that recognizes the living, renewing, and transformative Word through the Spirit’s charism, allows readers and interpreters to grapple with even the most difficult texts and embody the persistence, world-defying love, and wisdom of one who trusts in an unfathomable God.

Hence, Green asserts that when biblical interpretation is recognized as a sanctifying process built on identification with Christ and participation in the Triune God’s mission, the method *per se* does not matter as much as the conformity to Christ that results from it. Once again, readers of *Sanctifying Interpretation* are reminded that the author’s aim is not a methodological process but rather a *sensibility* toward Scripture.

The book succeeds in re-directing attention towards the oft-forgotten sanctifying role of Scripture. Hermeneutics, for the most part, has a critical component that sometimes subsumes pneumatic charism. However, hermeneutics, as Green proffers, remains to be a divine-human collaboration. It is a work of God in and through believers; it is also the priestly and prophetic vocation of the church to the world. Green succeeds in emphasizing this message not just through a forward-moving dialectic, but also through textual studies of difficult pericopes used as evidence for his argument.

Green’s strength also lies in a writing style that induces reflection and meditation. He remains academic and irenic, as evidenced by his mastery of scholarly literature across traditions. Yet, like a priest and a prophet himself, Green speaks to readers and invokes a change of paradigms. His masterful demonstration of *sanctified* interpretation (tinged with Barthian and Wesleyan sensibilities) demonstrates a bibliology reflective of Holiness Pentecostals. Undeniably, the integrative use of vocation and holiness in the interpretative process is a good addition to the ongoing discussion of Pentecostal hermeneutics.

The publication of *Sanctifying Interpretation* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition presents once more the growing hermeneutical prowess of Holiness Pentecostals in North America. Much of the ideas and ethos in Green’s pages reflect

the message of Holiness Pentecostal scholars like Steven Land, Cheryl Bridges Johns, Rick D. Moore, and John Christopher Thomas. His work also builds on Barth and Wesley, as well as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Daniela Augustine. Non-Wesleyan Pentecostals would benefit from seeing the Holiness-Pentecostal hermeneutic at work, especially on *difficult-to-expound* texts.

Moreover, Green uses the filters for discerning interpretation and experience—Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the Community. Holiness Pentecostals have been appropriately espousing the community orientation of the Spirit and the Word. The Spirit-Word dynamic, which Land and Moore (among others) have carefully articulated in their writings, serves as the backbone to Green's understanding of sanctifying interpretation. Accordingly, the Spirit-Word dynamic and the triangle of discernment make Holiness Pentecostal hermeneutical method distinctive in the global Pentecostal circles. Truth be told, the distinctiveness of their hermeneutical method is worth emulating.

In conclusion, through the second edition of *Sanctifying Interpretation*, Green once more espouses a Pentecostal approach to bibliology that does not subsume the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the interpretative process. Moreover, through Green's meditative dialectic of vocation and holiness, readers are moved towards a transformed understanding of hermeneutics, recognizing that salvation, and its accompanying progressive sanctification, is a necessary component of pneumatic interpretation, embodiment, and proclamation of God's divine message.

I recommend this book to a variety of readers, especially pastors, theological educators, and even laypersons. Green's writing centers on one thought: sanctification matters. If Pentecostal/Charismatics are serious about their identity as Spirit-empowered people, then Christian identity and vocation should be demonstrable in a sanctified life and a sanctified reading of Scripture. Green's provocative proposition deserves to be heard by the global Pentecostal/Charismatic family.

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**Jerry M. Ireland, *The Missionary Spirit: Evangelism and Social Action in Pentecostal Missiology*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021). 202 pp. \$17.01 (Kindle)**

This book is a breath of fresh air that brings clarity and direction to the expanding enterprise of Pentecostal ministries of social concern.

Pentecostals have been engaged in ministries of social concern from the beginning of the movement. Following the lead of early missiologists like Alice Luce and Melvin Hodges, missionaries prioritized the proclamation of the gospel through evangelism and church planting. According to Ireland, however, (xxi) a shift began to take place in 1991, with the publication of the widely read book, *Called and Empowered*, edited by Murray Dempster, Douglas Petersen and Byron Klaus, who have had extensive involvement in Latin America, as well as some of the works of Amos Yong, Wonsuk Ma, Julie Ma and Andy Lord. (xxi) Ireland contends that these authors call for a more holistic mission in the sense of the broader *Missio Dei*.

Ireland's response to this shift represents the central thesis of the book and is worth quoting at length because of its importance to the entire book:

My central thesis in this book is that these shifts represent a turning away from the inherent genius intuited by early Pentecostal missionaries who held tightly to the priority of proclamation even as they engaged in social action in a multiplicity of ways. They did so neither because early Pentecostals were oblivious to the need and importance of social justice nor blind to the liberating work of Christ or the holistic nature of salvation; neither were they ignorant of the need for genuine dialogue with those of other faiths. (xxi-xxii)

It is worth noting that Ireland himself came to Christ through an Assemblies of God drug rehab program. As a result, when he began his missionary career in Africa, he was fully in the holistic camp but was surprised to discover that not all in his denomination, the Assemblies of God, agreed on the issue. (xxiii) As he began to study the issue academically, his position began to shift.

The book is divided into seven chapters entitled, (1) *How Shall They Hear?: The Priority of Proclamation in Pentecostal Perspective*, (2) *The Missionary Nature of Tongues in the Book of Acts*, (3) *Language, Missions, and Glossalalia in Patristic Literature*, (4) *From Solidarity to Sodaloty: Compassionate Mission and the Local Church*, (5) *A Pentecostal Approach to Discipleship in Missions*, (6) *From Ubuntu to Koinonia: The Spirit-Formed Community and Indigenous African Compassion and*, (7) *The Secularizing and Anti-Secularizing potential of African Pentecostalism*, along with a concluding epilogue.

The title of the first chapter and its place in the book indicates that he has shifted from being in the holistic camp toward the more traditional

Pentecostal approach. But he is also clear that giving primacy to one does not call for or even allow ignoring the other. (1) For starters, Ireland begins by defining what he means by Pentecostalism. He limits his study to classical Pentecostalism, although he deals respectively with more inclusive positions (i.e., Allan Anderson). In documenting the drift toward holism that he claims is rooted in *Called and Empowered*, he agrees with the integration of *kerygmatic, koinoniac, and diakonic* functions of the church, but claims that integration does not require equal priority (8). He agrees with Alan Johnson that if ministry in the local church has the same priority as global missions, then there is no compelling motivation to cross geographic and cultural boundaries. (Ibid.) I strongly agree. Ireland goes on to note, however, that despite these strong arguments, many Pentecostal scholars have followed Dempster. (9) He rightly goes on to warn that if Pentecostals continue to follow this trend, they will go the way of other denominations and lose their prophetic voice. (11)

In chapter two, he proposes a narrower view of Pentecostal missions based on the evidence of *glossolalia* in the book of Acts, a view which he claims sets him apart from most contemporary Pentecostals. (31) This arises from the fact that Acts is replete with evidence concerning people moving out in missionary work under the impulsion of the Holy Spirit (i.e. 13:1-2) and verbally proclaiming the gospel. While social justice is given a prominent role in Luke-Acts, it is not the top priority. (41)

Chapter 3 delves into language, missions and *glossolalia*, in patristic thought, including exploring the reasons for why tongues nearly died out as time passed, drawing heavily on a PhD dissertation done by Yulila Minets.<sup>1</sup> Ireland notes that the issue of tongues, along with the debate between *xenolalia* and *glossolalia* carries on into the patristic literature of the early church. This area of study is well beyond my expertise, but I do agree with his summary statement at the end of the chapter that “. . . missions and a missional outlook may be the greatest contribution that *glossolalia* makes in terms of ecclesiology, and this, surely, is worth guarding” is true. (83) He connects this to social action in the following chapter.

In chapter 4, he demonstrates the relationship between ecclesiastical structures, compassion ministries and the local church, demonstrating that social work is the result of proclamation, evangelism and church planting. (85) They are inseparable, although some Pentecostals, rather disturbingly, do not see the connection. Some of these include missionary candidates with the Assemblies of God World Missions, with

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<sup>1</sup>Yuliya Minets, “The Slow Fall of Babel: Conceptualization of Languages, Linguistic Diversity and History in Late Ancient Christianity,” PhD diss., Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, 2017.

which I have been a missionary for thirty years. This is indeed a matter of great concern. Using Ralph Winter's modality-sodality approach, which both form the *ekklesia*, which, he argues, must be interdependent for the global *ekklesia* to function properly and achieve the task of proclamation and, by extension, social work. (92-3)

Chapter 5 moves on to consider a Pentecostal approach to discipleship in missions. Here, noting the appalling ethnic genocide that took place in "Christian" Rwanda in 1994, he convincingly notes a lack of discipleship all over the world, even if the Rwanda situation was extreme. (109) His point is well taken. He narrows the focus of this subject to, ". . . to the question of compassionate missions, and whether or not our cross-cultural efforts in compassion are producing fruit that endures." (110) This is especially as it relates to the Holy Spirit—a traditional hallmark of Pentecostal missions. He contends that the trend toward a project-centered approach to compassion threatens this priority and threatens to replace spiritual power with structural power. While this is certainly a concern if this is true, I find his argument a bit unconvincing due to my own experience of combining evangelism, church planting and social concern in our own missionary work. This combination has been a focus of Assemblies of God World Missions since its inception in 1914, although the structuring of ministries of social concern began only in the 1980s.

In chapter six he focuses on the "Spirit-formed" *ekklesia* and indigenous compassion in Africa. Despite the stupendous church growth on that continent, one scholar Ireland cites claims that Africans are forty percent worse off than they were in the 1980s, (135) although he does note that Pentecostals have fared better because of their emphasis on personal transformation. (142) This is in contrast to places like Latin America and possibly South Korea and the Philippines, etc., that have also seen stunning church growth and national economic improvement. The main thesis of this chapter is that the biblical concept of *koinonia* does have the power to make a difference because, here, Christians share fellowship in addressing the needs of the believing community. (145) It can also be a powerful evangelistic tool.

Chapter seven concludes the book by dealing with the "Secular and Anti-Secularizing Potential of African Pentecostalism," which may also be applied elsewhere. (153) Here, he contends that the prosperity gospel, which has had such an impact on the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement globally, ". . . represents a turn away from classical Pentecostalism's historic and theological roots and [is] an embodiment of some of the key elements found in secularism. . . ." (154) On the other hand, he contends that what he calls "missional Pentecostalism" provides an effective antidote to this secularizing trend." (154) Interestingly, he contends that

secularism and pluralism, which he claims is a result of secularism, has contributed to a resurgence in interest in African Traditional Religion (156) which, by contrast are inherently anti-secular. Secularism and pluralism have led to the weakening of Christianity in Europe and could do so in Africa. (157) The stratospheric rise of Pentecostal Christianity in Africa, however, has counteracted this trend, (157) undoubtedly enhancing the sacralization of African worldviews—which are the driving force of any culture. This anti-secular trend, combined with solid biblical exegesis in the previous chapters, reinforces his call for Pentecostals to prioritize evangelism and church planting, while not neglecting compassion ministries.

In the epilogue, Ireland does correctly state that missionary organizations must differentiate between the work of cross-cultural missionaries and the work of the local church—which should bear the brunt of social action. (173) I wholeheartedly agree. Those missionaries who also engage in ministries of social concern must ever hold to the primacy of proclamation, holding these things in creative tension.

Ireland has done a wonderful job of calling us back to Spirit-empowered evangelism, discipleship and church planting, while not negating social action. I heartily recommend this book to missionaries and missions teachers and scholars and hope it finds a wide, global audience.

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**Caryn A. Reeder, *The Samaritan Woman's Story: Reconsidering John 4 After #ChurchToo* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022). xi + 211 pp. \$24.00 paper; \$23.99 ebook.**

I grew up in a Pentecostal church, and while I cannot remember specific sermons on the Samaritan woman in John 4, I inherited a narrative that concentrated primarily on the life of a sinful and adulterous woman. As I marched slowly through Reeder's work, I decided to probe social media friends for their sense of this story as it is proclaimed in their Pentecostal churches. I was saddened by similar results. Though I have long since abandoned the narrative of my youth, I saw Reeder's title, and I knew intuitively she would challenge the careless and abusive history of interpretation! As Reeder marches through a startling history of reception on John 4, I experienced intense emotion. I would often cry

or gasp at the sexualizing language and reductionist approaches by well-known voices across Christian history, and I felt rage over the effects of such toxic interpretation. Thankfully, Reeder challenges the dominant reception with a much-needed corrective.

In part one, Reeder demonstrates the necessity of reception history. Scholars of reception history celebrate the recovery of lost or forgotten readings and applications of Scripture. Historical inquiry often leads to a reintroduction of interpretative insights for the contemporary church. However, as in this case, the opposite may also be true. The overriding interpretation of this story finds its beginning by way of Tertullian (d. 220), a Christian theologian in Carthage, who describes the Samaritan woman as a prostitute. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407) emphasizes the woman's intellect and evangelistic zeal, but he decries her wicked and shameful sin. A millennium later, John Calvin makes an excessive effort to describe the Samaritan woman as an adulterer who forces her husbands to divorce her. As nineteenth-century revivalist D. L. Moody views the destructive effects of the Industrial Revolution, he finds fodder for his concern over a world filled with gin, opium, gambling, and prostitution. When it comes to more recent messengers, Mark Driscoll describes the woman as "the dirty, leathery faced town whore," and John Piper argues that Jesus "uses a whore" to instruct us about worship.

Reeder also reveals that the dominant reception is not the only story. She unravels a web of marginalized voices who attempt to correct the prevailing narrative. For example, she discovers a formidable cast of sixteenth-century women who participated actively in the Protestant and Catholic Reformations. Through publications, debate with and against men, and clergy counsel, women such as Marie Dentièrre, Margeurite de Navarre, Argula von Grumbach, Katharina von Bora Luther, Katharina Schütz Zell, Jeanne de Jussie, Margarethe Prüss and Caritas Pirckheimer make considerable contributions to Christian worship and praxis.

Reeder celebrates Dentièrre (1495-1561), who not only declares her right to teach in the church, but authors a proactive survey of women in the Bible. In Dentièrre's assessment of the Samaritan woman, she argues for support of women in leadership and emphasizes that the Samaritan woman and Mary Magdalene (the first witness of the resurrection!) are commanded to preach by Jesus. Dentièrre denounces Catholic teachers who refuse women the opportunity for Scripture study while commonly portraying women as mere objects for male pleasure. Regrettably, Geneva's city council censors Dentièrre's work. Her story is all too familiar. Time and again, through silencing and censorship, the Samaritan woman cannot represent a successful evangelist and model for women's—and men's—ministry, and she continues to fall prey to the majority interpretation that focuses on her "sin." The cumulative effect

of countless similar interpretations leads Reeder to an inevitable conclusion: “The treatment of the Samaritan woman in the history of interpretation is a textbook case of the trivialization, marginalization, and even sexual demonization of biblical women, which reflects and promotes the parallel treatment of real women in the church” (17).

In part two, Reeder provides a masterful corrective. She states emphatically what John 4 does not mention. The Samaritan woman is not some kind of *femme fatale*. The story does not mention sin, forgiveness, or repentance. Instead, John’s Jesus engages in a lively conversation with an intelligent and insightful woman. Reeder compares Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman with the earlier account of Nicodemus. Jesus speaks roughly twenty sentences to both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, but Nicodemus speaks roughly five sentences while the Samaritan woman voices eleven sentences. So much for an ignorant or silenced woman! Further, how does a woman with such a repulsive past not only carry the first gospel message to Samaria, but attract a large crowd? Her Samaritan neighbors knew her marital history, but they do not condemn her; instead, the Samaritans trust her voice and believe Jesus because of her witness. Moreover, John sandwiches this story between Jesus’ exhortation for the disciples to look to the fields for the harvest and the woman’s successful evangelism among her Samaritan neighbors.

Reeder also reminds readers that a critical purpose for this story must focus on the foregrounding of the Jewish-Samaritan conflict and their respective views on the Temple. The woman demonstrates keen awareness of the Jewish and Samaritan story and grows in her understanding. If Jesus tabernacles among his people, he makes God’s glory visible and replaces the Temple’s purpose (John 2:13-21). Jesus provides an answer to centuries of separation by shifting the focal point of worship away from Jerusalem or Mt. Gerizim to worship in “Spirit and truth” (John 4:24). To break this barrier, the Samaritan woman models Christian discipleship. She is an exemplary evangelist. She sets a precedent for all disciples, both women and men, who bear witness to Jesus’ mission. She is the first person to hear an “I am” statement in John’s Gospel. Reeder argues persuasively: “Instead of a sexualized sinner, the woman becomes an insightful theologian. Instead of a danger to the men around her, she becomes a teacher who helps others understand the truth.” How is it that sermons on John 4 often focus more on unstated assumptions than what the text says? How might a redeemed reading of the Samaritan woman’s story impact contemporary Christian circles?

The reception of John 4:4–42 consistently vilifies, belittles, and silences the Samaritan woman. Reeder argues further that this same

pattern often follows other biblical women: Dinah, Vashti, Huldah, Phoebe, the woman in Luke 7:36–50, and Mary Magdalene. Reeder, professor of New Testament and co-coordinator of the Gender Studies program at Westmont College, is no stranger to the converge of hermeneutics, sexism, and abuse. She claims persuasively that the cumulative effect of reductive sexualization and minimization of women in the Bible has contributed to the crisis of sexual abuse. In a world where many women experience unrelenting harassment, assault, and rape, the church must not turn a deaf ear to voices enabled through the #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements. If I might share some hope for Pentecostal readers, I am grateful for the growing voices among Pentecostal scholars. In 2021, Melissa Archer themed the Society for Pentecostal Studies conference around global violence against women.<sup>2</sup> I hope their voices make their way to our pews.

In a further academic vein, I would like to enliven a student for a thesis/dissertation or a scholar to a project on Pentecostal readings of the Samaritan woman. Reeder offers a broad sweep of church history, but what about a Pentecostal reception of this story? My hypothesis is two-fold. On the one hand, I suspect that Pentecostal voices (via commentaries, pamphlets, sermons—paper, audio, and visual, and official documents) generally follow the dominant narrative. On the other hand, I want to believe that Pentecostal emphasis on Spirit-empowered witness will also reveal the Samaritan woman's role as an evangelist. Finally, beyond my hypothesis, I wonder about global Pentecostal readings? Has the dominant Euro-American reception history also taken root in global Pentecostal contexts? Have Global North Pentecostals exported this interpretation? I look forward to such a work.

I strongly recommend this work for courses on women in the Bible, women in ministry, and the Gospel of John. I also urge educators to consider this work for courses on homiletics and hermeneutics; Reeder provides an exceptional test case that demonstrates the negative and positive results of Scripture study and proclamation. Every preacher of John 4 should read this book. I hope a careful reader of the biblical text will reconsider the long and prevailing interpretation. May Reeder's work help stem the tide against a maddening abuse of this narrative and its horrific implications on women. May Reeder's efforts lead to

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<sup>2</sup>See [https://www.sps-usa.org/download/programs/program\\_2021.pdf](https://www.sps-usa.org/download/programs/program_2021.pdf). Various essays from the conference are published by Kimberly Ervin Alexander, Melissa Archer, Mark Cartledge, and Michael Palmer, eds. *Sisters, Mothers, Daughters: Pentecostal Perspectives on Violence against Women* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

celebration of the Samaritan woman as an exemplary disciple and evangelist.

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**Dave Johnson and Rick Wadholm, Jr., editors, *Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World: The Graduate and Post-Graduate Level* (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 2022). 213 pp. \$12.99 paperback; \$9.99 Kindle.**

*Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World: The Graduate and Post-Graduate Level* is the first volume of a three-volume series to be published by APTS Press to bring Pentecostal perspectives on Majority World theological education to the marketplace of ideas. The second and third volumes will address undergraduate and non-formal Pentecostal theological education. The authors in the first volume write primarily from a classical Pentecostal experience, but, in the words of Rick Wadholm, their ideas pertain more broadly to “the global Spirit-movement with emphasis upon the baptism in the Holy Spirit and charismatic expressions as pertaining to the life of the Spirit” (2). The authors speak from a wide range of experiences in the Majority World and the West, including Ethiopia (Gary Munson and Temesgen Kahsay), the Philippines (Dave Johnson), India (Josfin Raj), South Africa (Peter White), Spanish-speaking Latin America (Jeremiah Campbell), Australia (Dean O’Keefe and Jacqueline Grey), Europe (Danial Topf), Asia in general (Vee J. D-Davidson), and the Asian American experience (Amos Yong).

As Rick Wadholm observes in the introduction to the series, extended Pentecostal engagement in the marketplace of ideas has been slow in coming (1). I remember hearing some of my professors in the United States in the 1990’s remark that the term “Pentecostal scholar” was considered an oxymoron. Indeed, almost all our textbooks were from non-Pentecostal sources. Since then, Pentecostals have been setting up stalls in various sections of the marketplace of ideas, often focused on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. *Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World* broadens that offering by wrestling with topics like orality versus western academic norms (Munson), cultural barriers that affect cross-cultural teaching (D-Davidson), the colonial roots of Pentecostal theological education (Yong, Topf),

creating a Pentecostal research culture (Johnson, Raj), and the enduring educational divide between “the West and ‘the rest’” (Yong, 45).

Readers should engage this volume as if they are entering the marketplace of ideas. Such a marketplace is crammed with stalls and sellers. Some sellers have a reputation for high-quality goods, while others offer cheap, low-quality items with no refunds. Depending on the buyer’s taste buds, the strong smells of the market can be either delicious or foul. Visitors to an open-air market need purpose (to find what they need) and discernment (to find quality). Otherwise, they can be overwhelmed by the cacophony of sights, sounds, and smells. Readers of this volume need purpose and discernment as well.

Readers who pick up this volume with the purpose of finding practical solutions to problems in theological education will probably not find what they are looking for. One outstanding exception is the chapter by Vee J. D-Davidson on cross-cultural teaching and learning. D-Davidson walks through a series of key topics such as high- and low-context communication, individualism versus collectivism, and cultural views of honor, guilt, or shame. She approaches each topic with wonderful clarity, appreciation for the complexities of “multiple-culture” environments (27, note 1), and the heart of a practitioner. In addition to offering excellent suggestions for teachers, this chapter is a good resource for courses in cross-cultural communications or intercultural education.

Readers who approach this volume for the purpose of exploring the marketplace of ideas for fresh insights will likely find some useful treasures. Three chapters stand out in this regard. First, Amos Yong’s discussion of the trajectory of Pentecostal theological education is both perceptive and grounded in common experience. His discussion points the way to a more “substantive dialogue between the West and the Majority World regarding how to understand Christian faith (including theologies and dogmatic confessions) afresh in the newly emerging world Christianity” (59). Second, Temesgen Kahsay offers an insightful discussion on the role of the Holy Spirit in contextualization, which he asserts Pentecostals were doing before contextual theology became a topic of concern to scholars and practitioners (181). Third, Josfin Raj’s analysis of Pentecostal knowledge production in India (which has been too dependent on ecumenical or evangelical frameworks) points to a way for Pentecostals to find their authentic voice (99). While western theology emerged from the university, theological research in India has its roots in mission and social realities (90). His picture of the future summarizes the goal of this volume: “When the wide gap between the academy and the church is mended, there is radical growth in the flourishing of research culture” (109).

Readers should also approach this volume with discernment, that is, they should not expect to agree with every idea presented. For example, two chapters present ideas I could not accept because of my understanding of the biblical text and my experiences in theological education in Cambodia. First, O’Keefe and Grey draw interesting links between exilic and post-exilic Israel and Pentecostal pedagogy. They argue that Pentecostal theological education, like exilic Israel, takes place in a “location of exile” (191), where “the political environment does not support Christian faith, and in some instances is aligned with a different religious belief” (192). They analyze Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and Ecclesiastes (Qohoeleth) as pedagogical models for Pentecostals to consider. Some of the conclusions they draw from this analysis are helpful, such as the use of testimony in Daniel as a pedagogical tool (194-195) and the experience of Ezra as a precedent for the validity of secular government accreditation for Pentecostal theological institutions (203). However, their handling of Esther as a positive testimony to be read in critical conjunction with Daniel (196-197) does not offer much to the discussion on theological education. Unlike Daniel, Esther did not practice her faith publicly and hid her Jewish identity until it was necessary to reveal it. Esther’s story offers intriguing insights into being a minority community (197), but it does not deliver a model for Pentecostal pedagogy as the chapter title suggests.

Gary Munson’s chapter on social and cultural issues affecting Pentecostal theological education also requires critical discernment. Munson correctly points out that the approach for establishing “graduate level educational centers in Majority World contexts has often been to transplant western institutional paradigms into a new home” (7). He argues that the underlying assumptions of these institutions about ways of knowing and applying biblical truth (7-8) amount to a western hegemonic universalization of knowledge that does not value other ways of transmitting knowledge. Munson offers the use of “stories, parables, proverbs, dances, and music” in Africa as an example (10), which he views as engendering “holistic and integrative thinking” by nature (11-12). This line of thinking leads to a misleading oral/propositional dichotomy. Human societies have many different ways of knowing and transmitting knowledge, both high context (oral in this discussion) and low context (propositional). Munson oversimplifies the problem by suggesting that western scholarship needs to overcome its “negative perception of oral culture” (11) because such an effort would not bring oral ways of knowing to the marketplace of ideas in an effective way. Rather, there needs to be a marketplace “trade language” that values disparate ways of knowing while making them accessible to the global academic community. This academic trade language requires some

degree of low-context (propositional) communication because high-context communication (i.e., stories, parables, and proverbs) is by nature difficult for outsiders to access or interpret correctly.

*Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World: The Graduate and Post-Graduate Level* does more than argue that Pentecostals need to participate in the marketplace of ideas. This ambitious volume contributes to that process by going beyond the usual topics of the person and work of the Holy Spirit to bring Pentecostal perspectives on a wide range of issues confronting Pentecostal higher education in the Majority World. Developing Majority World Pentecostal scholars is a long-term project that requires serious investment in individuals as well as durable institutions situated in the Majority World to support their work. APTS Press exists to be part of that project. Both APTS Press and this series are concrete responses to Temesgen Kahsay's call "to be unapologetically academic and unashamedly spiritual" (175).

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(Continued from front inside cover)

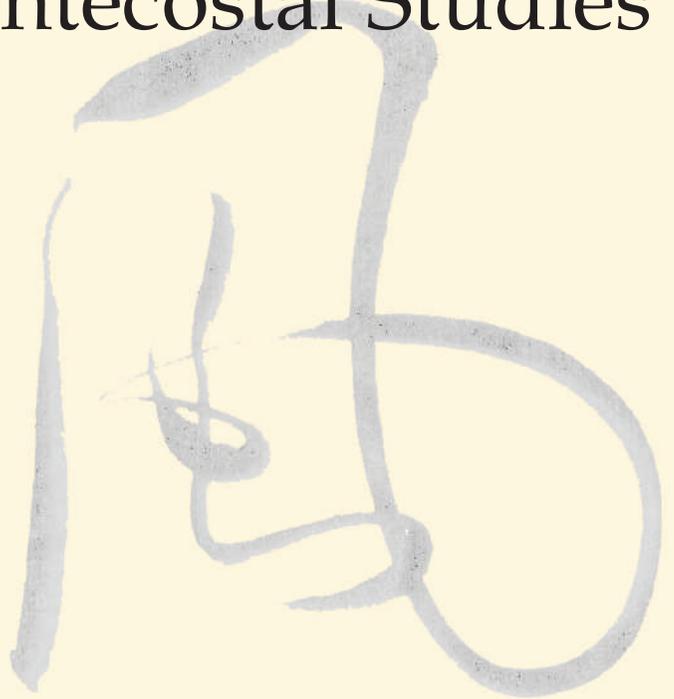
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