

Changing Pentecostal Churches in Europe: Past, Present and Future¹

William K. Kay

Wrexham Glyndŵr University, Wrexham, Wales, United Kingdom

Abstract

Sociological theories offer a measure of predictive power over the future of Pentecostal churches in Europe. Such theories are preferable to metaphorical descriptions which also implicitly predict likely outcomes. If Europe continues to foster liberal democracy and secular states function as neutral arbiters in countries where competing religious and irreligious groups struggle for influence, one may expect Pentecostal churches to grow and diversify while being open to periodic waves of spiritual renewal.

Keywords: Secularisation, Pentecostalism, Europe, projections, messianic Judaism

Introduction

Any attempt to predict the future of Pentecostal churches in Europe is faced with several problems. First, it is necessary to distinguish between theories that are broadly based² and predictions limited to metaphorical insights. It is necessary, second, to decide which sociological or political theories should be applied. Third, given that Pentecostal churches dance to a theological rather than a sociological tune, it is advisable to identify the theological motifs that are likely to guide the leaders of Pentecostal churches. The point here is that, even if sociological theories usefully describe the development of Pentecostal churches, most Pentecostal leaders believe themselves to be led by theology rather than sociology. In the discussion that follows an attempt is made to clarify these issues while drawing upon up-to-date European data.

With regard to metaphorical insights, consider this paragraph by a respected sociologist, the late David Martin:

This [fusion of faith] reached down through semi-stabilised crusts of religiosity to a primal layer of spiritual energy. Under intense pressures the modernising upper levels fired the deep structures, allowing the upward draft of a universal 'holy' spirit to suck a multitude of ambiguous spirits into its inclusive ambit. No wonder Pentecostalism is so potentially ambiguous... All this means that it does not make much sense to regard Pentecostalism as an imported package, especially in situations – the vast majority – which are replete with multi-cultural transfers, and where there has long been a changing market in the gods. Rather it is a repertoire of religious explorations controlled, though sometimes barely, within a Christian frame.³

¹ This paper is based on a talk given at the European Pentecostal Theological Association's annual conference held in Kolding, Denmark, in 2019.

² Such theories include a predictive element by which they may be tested.

³ David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 5,6.

Here, as a way of explaining how Pentecostal phenomena function in diverse societies and cultures, Martin offers an extended *metaphor*. The top layers of the earth's crust fire the structures below and allow an upward gush of the spirit, rather as natural gas escapes from deep rocks. The spirit from below includes lots of other spirits which mix with Pentecostalism, which means Pentecostalism, always impure ("to suck a multitude of ambiguous spirits into its inclusive ambit"), is never an imported religion. The description merges into explanation: because the spirit from below the earth's crust brings other spirits with it, Pentecostalism is always indigenous and not imported.

Martin was too good a sociologist to be reliant entirely on metaphors. Theory was important to him, but metaphor was also important to his theoretical analysis and enlarged and enlivened his exposition. He appears on occasion to "think in metaphors" and in his early discussion of Latin American Pentecostalism he writes, "sociology is analysis framed in a rhetoric that has interesting resemblances to advocacy in a court of law."⁴ Despite its inferences and its theoretical categories, a case is being made that could, by another sociologist advocate, be made in the opposite direction. While Martin does not *depend* on his metaphors for understanding, others may do.

In speaking about *theories* this paper will follow Karl Popper.⁵ The notion of theory has a long history but, in Popper's hands, and especially dealing with scientific theory, it was reformulated. Popper was concerned to show that theory provides predictive accounts of phenomena: the better the theory, the wider the range of phenomena that fall under its scope.⁶ Testable hypotheses derived from theory cover the phenomena at which the theory is directed. To give an example of how this works consider Newton's theory of gravitation. Hypotheses deduced from it predict the trajectory of missiles fired from canons and as well as the regular movement of the tides through the gravitational pull of the moon. The theory to be genuinely scientific must be falsifiable and testable by the accuracy of the predictive hypotheses.

So, when we apply these notions to Pentecostalism we need to make a distinction between theories about Pentecostalism and metaphorical descriptive accounts that appear to be explanatory and predictive but which, compared to good theories, are not. So, if we speak of the charismatic movement as a wave crashing over a continent that, in itself, has implicit predictive features since we know what great tsunamis of water do when they hit a continent and how they sweep aside all that lies within their path for miles inland.

There are two further important consideration to introduce at this stage. This is the distinction between changes brought about by internal developments within Pentecostalism and changes forced on Pentecostalism by external factors. Of course, these two things may interact but in considering the chaotic scenes of revival, on one hand, which are initiated through mechanisms and relationships within the church and, on the other hand, persecution of the church by the malign activity of the state and manifested in the form of arrests, civil disabilities, imprisonment and martyrdom, the distinction between internal and external

⁴ David Martin, *Forbidden Revolutions: Pentecostalism in Latin America, Catholicism in Eastern Europe* (London: SPCK, 1996) 3.

⁵ Paul A. Schilpp A., ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, 2 vols (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974).

⁶ Karl R. Popper, *Unended Quest* (Glasgow: Collins, 1976), 79, 131.

forces is clear enough. Following this distinction there is one further subsidiary point to be made. Sociological theories have been formulated and apply best in *normal* social conditions but at the extremes where revival or persecution operate, such theories lose traction, accuracy and usefulness.

Secondly, there are questions to be asked about theology itself. One can take the view that theology is simply another form of knowledge which is driven by sociological factors, even if these factors are latent or unconscious. By adopting such a position, theology is placed in a subsidiary or subordinate position to sociology which is the real source of knowledge about the progress of human institutions.⁷ But it is equally possible, and from the point of view of the church more desirable, to see the position as the other way around and to designate theology as the true source of knowledge and sociology as a derivative. This was persuasively argued by Milbank who has understood sociological theory to have been in some senses distantly derived from theological understandings of history or of institutions.⁸ Going back as far as August Comte (1798-1857)—who first coined the word “sociology”⁹—it is possible to see a transposition of knowledge taking place by the conversion of theological explanations into sociological categories. This sociological feat is one that many theologians might wish to resist, not the least on the grounds that theological beliefs have a transcendent origin.

Pentecostalism: a social trajectory

Pentecostalism, by common consent, began in revival, or a series of revivals—in Wales,¹⁰ Azusa Street, Mukti, Pyongyang.¹¹ Following the unpredictable events of revival, leaders with a unique blend of gifts formed Pentecostal denominations by drawing up tenets of faith and constitutional arrangements dealing with governance, mission, training and other matters of this kind. So revival leads to structures that facilitate the cooperation of collections of congregations. In Troeltsch’s classic sociological theory, tight-knit religious groups with strong and exclusive doctrines of salvation which stand apart from the rest of society and from historic churches are called *sects*.¹² Sects accumulate personnel, buildings and expertise until they reach a point where they are no longer shunned by other churches or despised by wider society. This early stage is crucial for survival and the early leaders must be people able to resist conformist pressure and manage with scant resources. The exclusiveness of the early days is also critical since it prevents interference by outsiders holding alternative doctrines or attitudes. Once the sect has stabilized and reached a point of viability, often only at the end of the first generation, the second generation of leaders is likely to adopt a more amicable attitude to society as a whole and to other religious groups. In this way, the sect turns itself

⁷ K. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952).

⁸ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

⁹ In French, *la sociologie*.

¹⁰ Eifion Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904* (Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press, 2000), 192.

¹¹ W.J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997); Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); William K. Kay, *Pentecostalism* (London: SCM, 2009); Douglas Jacobsen, *The World’s Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are, and How They Got There* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

¹² Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. Eng. trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1960 [1911]); H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Holt, 1929); William H. Swatos, Jr, “Weber or Troeltsch? Methodology, Syndrome, and the Development of Church-Sect Theory,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 15 (1976): 129-44.

into a *denomination*. Whereas a sect deems itself to be the only vehicle of salvation, the denomination accepts other groupings as being valid.¹³

This trajectory is therefore one where sectarian factions at first stand against society and other religious groupings but then, by adaptation, stand within society, contribute to it and cooperate rather than denigrate other religious organisations. The theory is derived from observation of what has often historically been the case and assumes that human beings are driven by a desire to reduce tension between themselves and the majority of society by equalising values, that is, by communal conformity. It does not, of course, have the same level of certainty as attaches to theories directed at the physical world, but it has been shown to describe the development of many kinds of sect and, to this extent, has a probabilistic value: this is the way religious groups are *likely* to behave over time and this is indeed the way Pentecostal groups (at least in Britain) can be said to have actually behaved.¹⁴

Despite differences within Pentecostalism across the world, it is probably true to say that most Pentecostal groups within the liberal democracies of Europe may be classified as denominations, using that term with its sociological connotations. One of the consequences of taking a denominational stance is that the borders between the denomination and secular society and other religious groupings become porous. Pentecostal denominations now become susceptible to societal and other religious influences much more easily than during their early years when the protective sectarian walls were first erected.¹⁵ There is now traffic between the denomination and society in both directions. This means Pentecostal denominations will absorb the current societal values much more easily than they once did with the consequence that societal problems will become denominational problems. Issues of transgenderism, for instance, will surface within the church as also will issues of marriage, divorce, homosexuality, sexual immorality, drugtaking and the like. Equally, denominational Pentecostals are likely to be affected by any other denominations with which they have an affinity, and the effect may be doctrinal or organisational. So, while there are benefits to the move from sectarianism to denominationalism, there also costs.

In summary, the very earliest Pentecostals were touched by revival and their minds were fixed on religious experience and heavenly things, including the imminent return of Christ. The denomination-founding generation of Pentecostals were strict in their avoidance of sport, card playing, smoking, drinking, cinema attendance, novel reading, ballroom dancing and the like.¹⁶ Clothing was regulated and hats were worn by ladies, jewellery was avoided, and formal attire in church encouraged.¹⁷ Traces of Sabbatarianism were obvious. And now, in many parts of Britain, at least, Pentecostals will attend cinemas, go to pubs, drink alcohol, wear all kinds of fashionable clothing and adopt business practices in the running of the churches. The church, indeed, learns from the commercial and business sector, and pastors are expected to adhere to professional ethics similar to those adopted by social workers or

¹³ Alan Aldridge, *Religion in the Contemporary World: A Sociological Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000), 35, 36.

¹⁴ B.R. Wilson (ed), *Patterns of Sectarianism* (London: Heinemann, 1967).

¹⁵ William K. Kay, "Pentecostal and Charismatic churches: minorities that resist secularisation," in Hans-Georg Ziebertz and Ulrich Riegel, eds., *Europe: Secular or Post-Secular?* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), 127-142.

¹⁶ B.R. Wilson, *Sects and Society* (London: Heinemann, 1961) 79-85.

¹⁷ William K. Kay and A. E. Dyer, eds., *A Reader in Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies* (London: SCM, 2004), 127-143.

school teachers with regard to matters like child protection. In respect of doctrine Pentecostals have now interfaced with other similar religious groups and may have modified their original doctrinal formulations more closely with the positions of the historic churches,¹⁸ a result which has the effect of allowing people to transition into Pentecostalism with less difficulty or, indeed, to move the other way out.¹⁹

The current situation

This paper contends, then, that many Pentecostal and charismatic churches have reached a position where they are both open to societal influences and, in a minor way, able to influence society or to take action that has societal consequences. As a result, Pentecostal and charismatic churches are now much more likely to be secularised than was the case when they were just starting.²⁰ Consequently, secularisation theory describing the transformation of society as a whole is relevant to any expectations we may have about the future of Pentecostalism. Thus two sets of sociological theories are applicable: the first relating to the development from sect to denomination and the second relating to society as a whole.

There is something of an unstable equilibrium here: while Pentecostal churches have become larger and more established and able to provide their members with a religious micro-climate within a pluralistic and secularised environment, they are now too big to avoid the notice of government legislation, a topic that particularly impinges upon laws defining the family. Whereas for over 1,000 years the default position in respect of marriage in European society was a Christian one, this cannot now be taken for granted. Same-sex relationships and polygamous or polyamorous relationships are likely to become more frequently observed. Christian rituals in marriage may therefore be devalued or revised, and the same is likely to be true of funerals and rituals expressing rites of passage. Funerals are already becoming eclectic, involving green or humanistic dimensions or both. The Pentecostal/charismatic churches now face the classic dilemma of weighing the benefits of assimilation with the benefits of standing as counter-cultural entities. One of the counter intuitive consequences of these changes will be to ensure secularisation provokes ardent ecumenism: churches will band together to resist the combined forces arrayed against religion.²¹

Before considering the direct effects of secularisation theory, it is important to notice the way Pentecostal churches have reimagined their biblical ethical mission and transformed themselves from within by taking advantages of the liberties available in liberal democracies. Such *internal* and *theologically driven* changes may include the setting up of educational facilities on the campuses of megachurches, a strong humanitarian drive delivered out of the heart of their worshipping communities—a drive that may prompt ministry to drug addicts, the poor, single parents, the unemployed and other disadvantage groups—as well as the creation of new modes of action brought about by electronic networks utilising Internet-based systems.²²

¹⁸ As is seen in the Elim Pentecostal Church's in 1993.

¹⁹ William K. Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain* (Carlisle, Paternoster, 2000).

²⁰ It is also possible for a mixed mode to occur where some aspects of a large Pentecostal congregation are secularised (for instance in the commercialisation of music) and other aspects (prayer for healing) are not.

²¹ B. R. Wilson, *Religion in a Secular Society* (London: C.A. Watts & Co, 1966) 13.

²² Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

Several secularisation theories have been advanced including those which deconstruct the concept of secularisation itself.²³ The process does seem to involve pushing religion to the margins of society. Religious activities are removed from the public sphere and become a “leisure activity” restricted strictly to the private sphere. The dominant narratives, motifs and spaces of society become non-religious, either nationalistic or individualistic.²⁴ An alternative version, Rational Choice Theory, argues that the quantum of religion within society remains roughly fixed but its providers change.²⁵ This means that religious aspirations and questions will be met by whichever religious group offers the best “return” on investment of time or money. Rational Choice Theory (RCT) explains the viability and variety of religion within an advanced country like the United States of America and would seek to explain the success of Pentecostal and charismatic churches by referring to their capacity to provide psychological help in respect of employment or when existential crises are faced. It would see preaching of the “prosperity gospel” by Pentecostal groups as being entirely compatible with rational choices.²⁶

It is impossible to adjudicate definitively between the main theories and neither is strictly testable since, whereas secularisation theory avers religion is diminishing, rational choice theory avers it is shifting to non-traditional providers.²⁷ Indeed, both theories may be partly correct but, even if that is granted, it is important to re-emphasise what was said earlier, namely that theories only apply under normal social conditions. One has only to look at the argument of Michel Houellebecq’s novel, *Submission*, to imagine how situations can switch themselves around. In the novel an alliance occurs between French Islamists and atheistic left-wing politicians with the result that secular France becomes both Islamic and radically left-wing at the same time. Similarly, one cannot predict the effects of future terrorist acts or large migratory flows. But, if one makes the assumption that European society will continue on the same path as it has followed since the early 1950s, then we might assume the gradual spread of liberal democracy in what Francis Fukuyama has called “the end of history,”²⁸ and the expansion of the European Union to North Africa and Turkey and even Israel.²⁹ In such circumstances, where Christianity is accepted and allowed space to preach and worship, it becomes one entity among many striving to make its voice heard and its values believed. Even so, the situation is balanced: if militant secularists get the upper hand by manipulating our legal framework, Christianity will lose its charitable tax breaks, its rights within the educational sector and any appeal it has to the young. If Christianity can retain legal freedoms, it may continue to make its case within the forum of public opinion and be persuasive and attractive.

Responding to secularisation

²³ Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (Oxford: OUP, 2000).

²⁴ Hans-Georg Ziebertz and Ulrich Riegel, eds., *Europe: Secular or Post-Secular?* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008).

²⁵ L. Iannacone, R. Finke, and Stark, R., “Deregulating religion: The Economics of Church and State,” *Economic Inquiry* 35 (1997): 350–64.

²⁶ Andrew Perriman, ed., *Faith, Health and Prosperity* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003).

²⁷ Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead, eds., *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

²⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2012).

²⁹ Some of these countries are already included in some of the EU’s statistical publications, e.g.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/7053328/KS-GR-15-001-EN-N.pdf/08db83d1-966c-4b4d-869a-4a5dc2a9538d>

Without formulating a conscious response to secularisation Pentecostals have found two ways to guarantee a voice within the public forum: humanitarian activity and political representation.³⁰ Humanitarian activity is to be found in many parts of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement all over the world. In Europe there are examples of Church-related agencies dealing with alcoholism, struggling single parents, debt, poverty and relationships which function either locally or nationally.³¹ These agencies operate in obedience to the words of Jesus to be “light” to society. When Christians build agencies where they see gaps in public provision, they garner civic support although, as in the case of food banks, public discourse may ignore or mask church contributions and thereby rob hard-working volunteer Christians of the credit they are due.³² Moreover, humanitarian agencies may eventually become too expensive for churches to afford with the result that they are then taken over and funded by the state or local councils. What began as a voluntary initiative imbued with Christian values eventually ends up under the control of the generality of taxpayers.³³

While political activism within Europe is limited to signing petitions and speaking to politicians through the normal channels of letters or constituency surgeries, other parts of the world have been much more proactive in this regard.³⁴ Christian political parties and Christian institutions seek to bring Christian values into the public domain. There are Pentecostals who find themselves on the left of the political spectrum and others on the right and, in some countries, the churches are happy to see a range of opinion covered by their representatives. When there is disagreement about which political ideology should be supported (capitalist or socialist), Pentecostal leaders may urge their congregations to elect candidates on the basis of their personal morality rather than political ideology, and in this way support anti-corruption or anti-abortion positions. By focusing upon moral positions rather than left or right political positions Pentecostals avoid spitting their congregations along political lines.³⁵ Research in Britain shows that Christians tend to “vote with the country,” that is, to vote following the currents of popular opinion rather than to vote from Christian first principles. There is also evidence that Anglicans tend to be more conservative, Nonconformists more attuned to Labour and the non-religious to lean leftward.³⁶ In any case, it remains uncommon to find preaching which encourages Christians to make theologically informed political evaluations.

The openness of latter-year Pentecostal churches to society encourages diversity. Such diversity is also evident through the presence of Pentecostal congregations originating with

³⁰ It is also arguable that “public icons” can emerge from the Christian community: for instance Billy Graham, the evangelist, became the confidant of several American presidents. But churches cannot decide to create ‘public icons’ since celebrity is such an evanescent concept. See Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: Hirst and Company, 1998), 168-180.

³¹ Miller and Yamamori.

³² Some church-based charities minimise their religious affiliation so as to receive money from local councils which would be embarrassed to be seen to support a religious organisation.

³³ There are many examples of this effect including 19th century orphanages and schools with strong Christian foundations which eventually passed into secular hands.

³⁴ One effect of the ubiquitous internet is to ramp up the frequency of online petitions and polls.

³⁵ E.G. <https://www.thenation.com/article/amid-crisis-in-brazil-the-evangelical-bloc-emerges-as-a-political-power/>; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/01/brazil-evangelicals-politics-presidential-election>.

³⁶ Laurence A. Kotler-Berkowitz, “Religion and Voting Behaviour in Great Britain: A Reassessment,” *British Journal of Political Science*, 31 (2001): 523–554; B. Clements and C. Smith, *Voting and values in Britain: Does Religion Count?* (London: Theos, 2014).

migrants to Europe, now probably into their second or third generation.³⁷ So-called migrant churches have yet to be fitted into a full Pentecostal taxonomy: some are strictly denominational and have transplanted themselves from an African context, often Nigeria or Ghana, into Europe and retain much of their original ethos within the European context.³⁸ These churches may indeed worship in African languages although, as they proceed to a second generation, the children of these churches become bicultural and bilingual and adapted to their new social and political context.³⁹ Other less denominationally strict migrant churches may more quickly transform themselves by absorbing indigenous culture and yet others have amalgamated with neo-Pentecostal churches (as happened with an African influx to some New Frontiers churches in London) to produce a composite style that retains features of both contributing spiritualities: expository preaching, less emphasis on music from one side and a willingness to insert special ceremonies for birthdays or anniversaries on the other.⁴⁰ Without doubt, though, migrant churches extend the diversity of European Pentecostalism.

But there is also another kind of diversity deriving from a Pentecostal anti-type. This is the diversity of those who oppose Pentecostalism but copy its methods and forms as far as they are able. In Ghana there are groups that propagate African traditional religion while attempting Pentecostal-style meetings.⁴¹ In Latin America Roman Catholicism has produced super-star priests matching Pentecostal celebrities.⁴² In the Islamic world, house groups studying the Qur'an have been put into place, a concept copied from successful Christian groups in Asia. In Singapore a worship leader has transitioned into pop culture and become less a worship leader and more a secular performer.⁴³ The crossover between hitherto separated social spheres is observable and implies a measure of cultural equivalence.

Future scenarios

In seeking to describe what is happening to global Pentecostalism and to predict future trajectories, several metaphors have been made popular. One speaks of the 'charismatic city' that is intended to describe the many different kinds of Pentecostal churches and their complex connections which, like the streets and alleyways of the city, match the pathways between disparate elements within the metaphorical city.⁴⁴ Standing opposed to the charismatic city is the heteropolis which is a darker place, a mirror image. Or, when we speak of the 'Disneyfication' of Christianity, speakers point to the transformation of Christianity into

³⁷ Claudia Währisch-Oblau, *The Missionary Self-Perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

³⁸ Osgood, H. J., "African neo-Pentecostal Churches and British Evangelicalism 1985-2005: Balancing Principles and Practicalities." PhD Thesis, London University (SOAS), 2006.

³⁹ Racheal Adebayo, "Distinguishing between religion and spirituality: Listening to teenagers within the (RCCG) Pentecostal Churches," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 39.1 (2019): 79-94.

⁴⁰ Sam Jeffery and William K Kay, "The Growth of London's New Churches: the example of the Newfrontiers Network," in David Goodhew and Anthony-Paul Cooper, eds., *The Desecularisation of the City: London Churches, 1980 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2019), 241-261.

⁴¹ Marleen de Witte, "Pentecostal Forms across Religious Divides: Media, Publicity, and the Limits of an Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism," *Religions*, 9.7 (2018): 74-86.

⁴² <https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-05-31/brazils-charismatic-catholics-use-evangelical-methods-inspire>

⁴³ <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/society/article/2087782/gyrating-pop-stars-embezzlement-and-faith-singapores-city-harvest> ; <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/city-harvest-case-recap-of-a-saga-that-dragged-on-for-7-years>

⁴⁴ Tanya Riches, "Acknowledgment of Country: Intersecting Australian Pentecostalism's Reembedding Spirit in Place," *Religions* 9.10 (2018): 59-73.

a sanitised, pretty, upbeat and cartoon-like religion full of cute animals and lovable characters. Such a portrayal is potentially found at Christmas time with its cast of well-known heroes or villains.⁴⁵ Or, when we speak of the “McDonaldisation” of Christianity referring to the franchising out of the Christian ‘brand’ to a variety of outlets, each with similar management structures and money-making purposes.⁴⁶

However, despite the appeal of these metaphors, it is important to recognise they are simply descriptive tools without theoretical foundation. It may be that the McDonald’s model does fit churches and that we should view denominations as franchises but the trouble with this descriptive device is that the metaphors are distant from the original theological self-understanding of Pentecostals and charismatics with the result that, so long as the churches remain in touch with the original impulses of their spiritual life, the metaphors will eventually fall away and lose their descriptive and predictive power.

Theological impulses

The fluctuating relationship between Pentecostal churches and their originating theology results in a series of renewals, paradoxically renewals of the renewal. In 1948 the Latter Rain revival in Canada attempted to renew Pentecostalism by returning to what were seen as authentic Azusa Street experiences. The raising up of apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors and teachers as well as the transmission of spiritual gifts by the laying on of hands were part and parcel of the Latter Rain phenomenon which, after a few years, died down but then periodically re-emerged.⁴⁷ In the 1960s the charismatic movement began on a wide front stretching over into the traditional denominations. And then in the 1990s the “Toronto” blessing swept through the charismatic and Pentecostal landscape. There were always theological and doctrinal overtones to these experiential impulses which often shook and enlivened Pentecostal denominations.⁴⁸

The foregrounding of theological perspectives is relevant to Peter Hocken’s interpretation of Pentecostal and charismatic movement by reference to Romans 11.⁴⁹ He saw the charismatic movement as transcending denominational boundaries and as being the first spiritual movement within the historic church that touched both the Protestant and Catholic camps within the universal church. And he saw the movement as carrying eschatological significance by presaging church history’s advance to a climax. The Jewish people would be incorporated within the church (Ro 11:24) fulfilling prophetic expectations of the joining of Jews and Christians in one body in Christ. All the Spirit has been doing in the 20th century is to achieve this goal and thereby prepare the Body of Christ for the Second Coming. The divine purpose of diverse and complex events unfolding since the first signs of the charismatic movement

⁴⁵ <https://mikesplace2017.wordpress.com/2018/12/07/the-disneyfication-of-christianity/>;
<https://internetmonk.com/archive/the-disney-ization-of-faith>;
<https://gralefrittheology.com/tag/disneyfication-of-christianity/>

⁴⁶ J.D. Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity and the Future of The Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000).

⁴⁷ R.M. Riss, “Latter Rain Movement,” in Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, *New International Dictionary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 830-833.

⁴⁸ Michael J. McClymond, “Charismatic renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism: from North American Origins to Global Permutations,” in Cecil M. Robeck, Jr and Amos Yong, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge, CUP, 2014), 31-51.

⁴⁹ Peter D. Hocken, “Baptized in Spirit: An Eschatological Concept: A Response to Norbert Baumert and His Interlocutors,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.2 (2005): 259–270; Peter D. Hocken, *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009).

has been to foster messianic Judaism and prepare the rest of the church to receive their new Jewish brothers. If the church adapts its liturgy to be more harmonious with Jewish rituals, well and good; if Judaism acknowledges the primacy of faith over law, well and good. If the church Catholic and the church Protestant each reform themselves in the light of the critique of the other, this also is within the divine plan – that is the essence of Hocken’s case.

What should be noticed here is that Hocking’s ideas owe nothing to sociological theory. They are based upon hermeneutics and exegesis of New Testament texts.

Statistical perspectives

Is there any statistical evidence that, in Europe, these changes are occurring? In turning to statistics, and limiting oneself to Europe, predictions can be made on the basis of demographic projections. For instance, in Spain a study examined different rates of fertility for the migrant and the indigenous population. It found the migrant population was both more fertile and more religious than the indigenous population and that, if trends continued, some polarisation would take place between the indigenous non-religious population and the migrant religious population with a large group of indifferent people in the middle.⁵⁰

Such predictions are by no means fixed because of uncertain variables (for instance the rate of migration) but current trends indicate that, while some 70% of the population of the European Union would claim to be one kind of Christian or another, and some 40% would believe in a personal God with another 33% believing in a life force or spirit (EVS survey) the percentage of agnostics or atheists is higher than it was 20 years ago. Indeed longitudinal surveys whereby the same question is asked at regular intervals show how belief in God has declined over time. In 1981 68% of people in Denmark believed in God whereas by 2008 this figure had dropped to 63%. In the UK over the same period of time the comparable figures are 83% with a drop down to 65%. Even in Austria there is a drop between 1990 and 2008 of 6%.⁵¹

There have been attempts to examine the values of the European population in relation to religion and at least one study has shown a compatibility between religion and altruism whereby civic altruism is enhanced by a religious population.⁵² But a study to discover whether Christianity could be a focal point for European identity came to a negative conclusion.⁵³ Indeed, even in highly religious countries like Albania (which was under an atheistic government for many years), the percentage of the country believing that “religious leaders should not influence government decisions” stands at 61%; a comparable figure in Austria was 68%, in Denmark 70% and in the UK 56%.⁵⁴ In other words religious leaders were not expected to impose their values or to utilise their values within the political system either of Europe or of individual countries. In short, the model implied is of a secular state acting as an impartial referee while religious belief continues to be held in a private way by large

⁵⁰ Marcin Stonawski, Vegard Skirbekk, Samir K.C. Goujon, Anne Goujon, “Projections of Religiosity for Spain,” Work session on demographic projections, Lisbon, 28-30 April 2010, European Commission, Eurostat.

⁵¹ ZA4804, European Values Survey Longitudinal data file 1981-2008, EVS, published by the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences.

⁵² <https://www.rivisteweb.it/doi/10.1423/88793>

⁵³ <https://www.rivisteweb.it/doi/10.1423/88796>

⁵⁴ <http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=119&year=2008>

swathes of the population. On the other hand, there is some evidence pointing the other way: so, for instance, some 20% of the European population agreed with the proposition that “politicians who don’t believe in God are not fit for public office.”⁵⁵ Perhaps the most interesting finding was the contrast between Protestants and Catholics with regard to the role of the church within society. Catholics expect the church to provide moral leadership whereas Protestants were less disposed to ask for this.⁵⁶

When member states of the European Union in a stratified random sample were asked what the main aims of the Union should be, the vast majority of countries, including the newly joined countries, thought it should ensure good wages across the whole Union rather than to allow disparities. That is, the primary objective was seen to be economic equalisation. However, there were countries where the main aims were seen to be security against terrorism and, in prosperous Scandinavian countries, climate concerns were placed above everything else.⁵⁷

Changes within the demographic balance of the population and within its attitudes may not be relevant to Hocken’s concerns except in one way. Do the figures demonstrate that Christian groups are more like each other than the non-Christian population? Is there evidence of coherence between traditional Christian groups and are they close to the small number of Messianic Jews within Europe? These questions are hard to answer precisely. Attempts to quantify Messianic Jewish congregations have been made and estimates are of 120 congregations in Israel and in Europe about ‘25,000 Messianic Jews are found mainly in the United Kingdom (5,000) and Germany (10,000), Russia (5,000) and Ukraine (5,000).’⁵⁸

But the truth is that Hocken’s ideas cannot be empirically disproved because the timescale over which his expectations might take place is unknown. He may be right, and if he is, then the charismatic movement will be implicated in the growth of messianic Judaism which, in turn, will give rise to reform right across the whole spectrum of traditional Christianity. Part of the difficulty of testing Hocken’s idea lies in the interpretation of Romans 11 and of what exactly is meant by “Israel” in the Pauline text. Hocken himself hoped for a Second Jerusalem Council⁵⁹ along the lines of the one described in Acts 15 and the issuing of decrees that would make it much easier for the Jewish church to join the Gentile one.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ <http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=134&year=2008>

⁵⁶ ZA4804, European Values Survey Longitudinal data file 1981-2008, EVS, published by the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences.

⁵⁷ *Eurobarometer* 479, Oct-Nov 2018, published by the European Commission, 5.

⁵⁸ Richard S. Harvey, “The Conversion of Non-Jews to Messianic Judaism: A Test-Case of Membership and Identity in a New Religious Movement.” Paper presented at the World Union of Jewish Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, July 28th 2013.

⁵⁹ This idea found support from Jack Hayford (S. David Moore, *Pastor Jack: the authorized biography of Jack Hayford* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light, 2020) Kindle: 3618).

⁶⁰ <http://tjicii.org>

Conclusion

Of the sociological theories, Troeltsch's seems most convincing, as already suggested, partly because it well describes the general trajectory of such churches as the Pentecostal groupings have become and because it envisages the border between church and society as becoming porous and allowing for societal ideas to be included, albeit with theological ingenuity, in the evolving body of the church. That this church has been and will in future be subjected to waves of renewalist energy is a speculation based on what has happened periodically over the 20th century. The possibility of a theological reading makes sense as a way of engaging with the self-understanding of Pentecostal churches as they seek to drive their way forward over the 21st-century. The presumption that Pentecostal churches will grow is based upon their past performance during the early difficult years of the 20th century as secularisation, supported by the apparatus of the state, intensified. To predict the future of the church, scholars will need to predict the future of the wider society of which the church is part. In a liberal democracy with the powers of the state or super state operating as a neutral arbiter between contending religious and social factions, it is reasonable to anticipate the Pentecostal churches will continue to diversify and grow. But if the legal framework imposed by the state takes an anti-religious turn as it did in Soviet Russia and may do in China, then a very different outcome will eventuate.

References:

- Adebayo, Racheal. "Distinguishing between religion and spirituality: Listening to teenagers within the (RCCG) Pentecostal Churches." *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 39.1 (2019): 79-94.
- Aldridge, Alan. *Religion in the Contemporary World: a sociological introduction*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000.
- Anderson, A. H. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*. Cambridge: CUP, 2004.
- Casanova, Jose. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994.
- Clements, B. and C. Smith. *Voting and values in Britain: does religion count?* London: Theos., 2014.
- Davie, Grace. *Religion in Modern Europe: a memory mutates*. Oxford: OUP, 2000.
- Davie, Grace, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead, eds. *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.
- de Witte, Marleen. "Pentecostal Forms across Religious Divides: Media, Publicity, and the Limits of an Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism." *Religions*, 9.7 (2018): 74-86.
- Drane, J. D. *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity and the Future of The Church*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000.
- Evans, Eifion. *The Welsh Revival of 1904*. Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press, 2000.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2012.
- Gifford, Paul. *African Christianity: its Public Role*. London: Hirst and Company, 1998.
- Harvey, Richard S. "The Conversion of Non-Jews to Messianic Judaism: A Test-Case of Membership and Identity in a New Religious Movement." Paper presented at the World Union of Jewish Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 28 July 2013.

- Hocken, Peter D. "Baptized in Spirit: An Eschatological Concept: A Response to Norbert Baumert and His Interlocutors." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.2 (2005): 259–270;
- . "Catholic Charismatic Renewal: An Eschatological Sign." Interview in *Good News*, 188 (2007) Special Issue 40 Years Catholic Charismatic Renewal, 26 – 28.
- . *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements*. Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009.
- Hollenweger, W. J. *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997.
- Iannacone, L., Finke, R. and Stark, R. "Deregulating religion: the economics of church and state." *Economic Inquiry* 35 (1997): 350–64.
- Jacobsen, Douglas. *The World's Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are, and How They Got There*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Jeffery, Sam and William K Kay. "The Growth of London's New Churches: the example of the Newfrontiers Network." In *The Desecularisation of the City: London Churches, 1980 to the present*, edited by David Goodhew and Anthony-Paul Cooper, 241-261. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Kay, William K. *Pentecostals in Britain*. Carlisle, Paternoster, 2000.
- . *Pentecostalism*. London: SCM, 2009.
- . "Pentecostal and Charismatic churches: minorities that resist secularisation." In *Europe: secular or post-secular?*, edited by Hans-Georg Ziebertz and Ulrich Riegel, 127-142. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008.
- Kay, William K. and A. E. Dyer, eds. *A Reader in Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*. London: SCM, 2004.
- Kotler-Berkowitz, Laurence A. "Religion and Voting Behaviour in Great Britain: A Reassessment." *British Journal of Political Science*, 31 (2001): 523–554.
- Mannheim, K. *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952.
- Martin, David. *Forbidden Revolutions: Pentecostalism in Latin America, Catholicism in Eastern Europe*. London, SPCK, 1996.
- Martin, David., *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
- McClymond, Michael J. "Charismatic renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism: from North American Origins to Global Permutations." In *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, edited by Cecil M. Robeck, Jr and Amos Yong, eds., 31-51. Cambridge, CUP, 2014.
- Milbank, John. *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. Oxford, Blackwell, 1990.
- Miller, Donald E. and Tetsunao Yamamori. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Social Engagement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Moore, S. David. *Pastor Jack: The Authorized Biography of Jack Hayford*. Delight, AR: Gospel Light, 2020.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. New York: Holt, 1929.
- Osgood, H. J. "African neo-Pentecostal Churches and British Evangelicalism 1985-2005: Balancing Principles and Practicalities." PhD Thesis, London University (SOAS), 2006.
- Perriman, Andrew, ed. *Faith, Health and Prosperity*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003.
- Popper, Karl R. *Unended Quest*. Glasgow: Collins, 1976.
- Riches, Tanya. "Acknowledgment of Country: Intersecting Australian Pentecostals Reembedding Spirit in Place." *Religions* 9.10 (2018): 59-73.

- Riss, R. M. "Latter Rain Movement." In *New International Dictionary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, edited by Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, 830-833. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Schilpp, Paul A., ed. *The Philosophy of Karl Popper* (2 vols). La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974.
- Stonawski, Marcin, Vegard Skirbekk, Samir K.C. Goujon, and Anne Goujon. "Projections of Religiosity for Spain." Work session on demographic projections, Lisbon, 28-30 April 2010, European Commission, Eurostat.
- Swatos, Jr William H. "Weber or Troeltsch? Methodology, Syndrome, and the Development of Church-Sect Theory." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 15 (1976): 129-44.
- Troeltsch, Ernst. *The social teachings of the Christian Churches*. Eng. trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1960 [1911].
- Währisch-Oblau, Claudia. *The Missionary Self-Perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Wilson, B. R. *Sects and Society*. London: Heinemann, 1961.
- . *Religion in a Secular Society*. London: C.A. Watts & Co, 1966.
- Wilson, B. R., ed. *Patterns of Sectarianism*. London, Heinemann, 1967.
- Ziebertz, Hans-Georg and Ulrich Riegel, eds. *Europe: secular or post-secular?* Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008.

Websites:

- <https://www.rivisteweb.it/doi/10.1423/88793>
- <https://www.rivisteweb.it/doi/10.1423/88796>
- <http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=119&year=2008>
- <http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/europa.php?ids=134&year=2008>
- ZA4804, European Values Survey Longitudinal data file 1981-2008, EVS, published by the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences.
- Eurobarometer* 479, Oct-Nov 2018, published by the European Commission, p. 5.
- <https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-05-31/brazils-charismatic-catholics-use-evangelical-methods-inspire>
- <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/society/article/2087782/gyrating-pop-stars-embezzlement-and-faith-singapores-city-harvest> ;
- <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/city-harvest-case-recap-of-a-saga-that-dragged-on-for-7-years>
- <https://mikesplace2017.wordpress.com/2018/12/07/the-disneyfication-of-christianity/>;
- <https://internetmonk.com/archive/the-disney-ization-of-faith>;
- <https://gralefrittheology.com/tag/disneyfication-of-christianity/>
- <https://www.thenation.com/article/amid-crisis-in-brazil-the-evangelical-bloc-emerges-as-a-political-power/>; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/01/brazil-evangelicals-politics-presidential-election>.
- <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/7053328/KS-GR-15-001-EN-N.pdf/08db83d1-966c-4b4d-869a-4a5dc2a9538d>.