The Spirit of Pentecost, Social Transcending Communities, and Renewing Embodied Life: Indicators of a Pentecostal Theology of Grace

Steven M. Studebaker

Multnomah University, Portland, OR

Abstract

Exuberant charismatic worship and spirituality characterise Pentecostal experience. Social and economic mobility, however, are also common fruits of Pentecostal experience. This article considers two historical and two contemporary cases in the Pentecostal movement. The early Pentecostal experiences at Pandita Ramabai's (1858–1922) Mukti Mission and William J. Seymour's (1870–1922) Azusa Street revivals fostered social transcending communities—communities that transcended social, class, and ethnic bigotries. By enacting the inclusive community of Pentecost, they indicted the racist and chauvinist societies that surrounded them. Vietnamese and Latin American Pentecostals demonstrate that the Pentecostal experience of grace renews embodied life. Participating in Pentecostal renewal transforms the material circumstances of peoples' lives. Charismatic worship and spirituality do not sublimate the need for addressing bleak social and economic conditions. On the contrary, they are the incubators for the Holy Spirit to empower new patterns of life in and for this world. Sociological analyses, relying on a Weberian paradigm, often suggest that social mobility is a by-product of Pentecostalism (e.g., Miller and Yamamori's "Pentecostal ethic"). The theological yield of this investigation of historical and contemporary cases in the Pentecostal movement is that the social and material experience of redemption among Pentecostals is intrinsic to the grace of the Spirit of Pentecost. The social and material features of Pentecostal experience, moreover, map to the ministry of the Spirit anointed Christ and the inclusive community of the Spirit of Pentecost.

Keywords

Pentecostal — Spirit —grace —social renewal — social deprivation theory—embodiment

Introduction

Individual charismatic experience and otherworldly spirituality often characterise the practice of Pentecostal Christianity. The Spirit of Pentecost, however, empowers social transcending communities and the renewal of all the dimensions of life in and for this world. Yes, the eschatological hope of the new creation is central, but the promise of Pentecost is that the

new creation is emerging now. Stated in more detail, correlating Pentecostal experience (historical and current global practices) with biblical Christology and pneumatology yields theological foundations of a Pentecostal soteriology that showcases social empowerment and the renewal of embodied life.[1]

Methodologically, this argument first focuses on ways that Pentecostals experience grace. The purpose is not to ignore doctrinal accounts of Pentecostal self-identity. But the primary goal is to identify characteristics of the Pentecostal experience of grace—the concrete manifestations of Pentecostal encounters with the Holy Spirit. Second, it highlights the public and social character and consequences of the Pentecostal experience of grace. Third, it examines ways Pentecostals experience renewal across time and space. The resources for this investigation are, consequently, historical and global studies of Pentecostalism, especially those employing sociological methods of investigation. The first section explores the social transcending nature of Pandita Saraswati Ramabai's (1858–1922) Mukti Mission and William J. Seymour's (1870–1922) Azusa Street revivals. The second section features the embodied nature of Pentecostal renewal among Vietnamese and Latin American Pentecostals. Each section, moreover, correlates the social and embodied features of Pentecostal renewal with the Spirit anointed Christ and the Spirit of Pentecost.

1. Social Transcending Communities and the Spirit of Pentecost

This section considers two of the early outpourings of the Holy Spirit in the emergence of global Pentecostalism and ways that they endeavoured to transcend debilitating social circumstances. The first is Pandita Ramabai's experience of the Holy Spirit at the Mukti Mission. Ramabai and the Mukti mission inspired resistance to the Hindu caste system, patriarchalism, and colonialism and compassion ministries for women, the poor, and people with disabilities. The second is the Azusa Street revivals under the leadership of William J. Seymour and ways that it empowered early Pentecostals to form a community that eclipsed the tribalisms of race, gender, and class.

Pandita Ramabai and the Mukti Mission

The Pentecostal revival at Mukti, "Pentecost in India," points to the social transcending character of the Pentecostal experience of grace.[2] The Mukti revival began early in 1905 when

[1] Extended arguments for this Pentecostal soteriology are available in Steven M. Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement: Pentecostal Contributions and Challenges to the Christian Traditions*, T & T Clark Systematic Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology, series editors Daniela C. Augustine and Wolfgang Vondey (New York: T & T Clark, 2021), chapters 7, 8, and 9.

[2] Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 77–89 and Gary B. McGee, "'Latter Rain' Falling in the East: Early-Twentieth-Century Pentecostalism in India and the Debate over Speaking in Tongues," *Church History* 68, no. 3 (1999): 648–56. Note that other Pentecostal-type revivals took place independently from both Mukti and Azusa in the Khassia Hills in northeast India, China, Korea, and Australia. For "Pentecost in India," see *The Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 3 (Nov. 1906): 1. Also,

Pandita Ramabai, along with other women at the Mukti Mission, began praying for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The prayer group grew to include about 500 women. They saw their prayers answered in June 1905. They received a renewing work of the Spirit that catalysed an eighteen-month revival that led to many conversions, over one thousand baptisms, extended prayer meetings, and ministry teams being sent out into the regions around the Mukti Mission.

Yan Suarsana makes a convincing case that ideological (political and theological) motivations drive the interpretations of Mukti's significance. The Keswick and Higher Life interpretation sees Mukti arising from the Welsh revival in 1904 and the influence of Minnie Abrams. Accordingly, the purpose of Spirit baptism is the sanctified life. News of speaking in tongues at Mukti, created problems for this narrative, however. Pentecostals associated with the Azusa Street revivals, taking tongues as the initial evidence of Spirit baptism, saw Mukti arising organically from their movement. This interpretation serves the interests of church denominations that trace their origin story to the Azusa Street revivals and colonial and paternalistic western attitudes.[3] Contemporary scholars prefer the view that Mukti supports the global emergence thesis of the Pentecostal movements rather than privileging Azusa Street as the origin of Pentecostalism. This view also counters the doctrinaire view of Pentecostalism that regards tongues as the essence of and the exclusive sign of Spirit baptism.[4] Suarsana argues that this interpretation of Mukti is a historical construction governed by contemporary multicultural and political motivations as much as desires for ecclesial self-legitimacy drove interpreting Azusa Street as the origin of the Pentecostal movement.[5] Both views, according to Suarsana, marginalise the nationalist and anti-colonial narrative of the revival put forth by Ramabai.[6]

For my part, I recognize the contribution of the Higher Life connection to the Mukti revival and Mukti precedes Azusa. But Ramabai's aspiration for revival needs to be set in the context of her deeper motivations for social and religious liberty for Indian women. In other words, the holiness and Higher Life connections are vital, but Ramabai's search for, in modern terms, social liberation precedes them. Adjudicating the question of the original source of the Pentecostal movement is not my concern. Mukti and Azusa are part of the global Pentecostal movement.[7] I find convincing Michael J. McClymond's argument for historical and theological

note that this brief report does not mention western missionaries as bringing the revival, but says the people "are simply taught of God."

[3] Yan Suarsana, "Inventing Pentecostalism: Pandita Ramabai and the Mukti Revival from a Post-colonial Perspective," *PentecoStudies* 13, no. 2 (2014): 173–96.

[4] Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 77–89 and McGee, "'Latter Rain' Falling in the East: Early-Twentieth-Century Pentecostalism in India and the Debate over Speaking in Tongues," 648–56.

[5] Suarsana, "Inventing Pentecostalism: Pandita Ramabai and the Mukti Revival from a Post-colonial Perspective," 178 and 181.

[6] Suarsana, "Inventing Pentecostalism," 173–96.

[7] Edith L. Blumhofer also makes this argument even though Ramabai refused to insist on speaking in tongues as the sign of Spirit baptism and so distanced herself from early Pentecostalism. See Blumhofer, "Consuming Fire: Pandita Ramabai and the Early Pentecostal Impulse," in *Indian and Christian: The Life and Legacy of*

reasons that the scholarly discussion of Pentecostal origins should move beyond the binary polygenesis (global origins) or monogenesis (Azusa Street) debate and understand the emergence of Pentecostalism in terms of "inclusive origins."[8] Ramabai established the Mukti Mission to provide a haven and training school for impoverished girls and young women (especially widows of child marriages). Her conviction that Indian (Hindu) women could gain genuine freedom only through Christianity and economic independence was foundational to the mission.[9] Although initiated to rescue destitute women from social depredations, additional ministries were established for the sick and elderly, orphaned boys, and the blind.[10] The argument here is that Ramabai's quest for social liberation that came to fruition at Mukti was the manifestation of the promise of the Spirit of Pentecost to create a social transcending community of "'all people'" (Acts 2:17). The question is, what social conditions was Ramabai's Mukti Mission transcending?

Two features characterize the social transcending character of the Mukti Mission. First, Ramabai believed that Christianity could provide freedom from the Hindu caste and the colonial hierarchies.[11] Ramabai's Mukti Mission created a community in which women could experience freedom from the oppression and poverty of their patriarchal society and achieve the dignity of living in fellowship with others and an authentic expression of their relationship with God. Second, Ramabai wanted to transcend ecclesial bigotry. Ramabai's search for an Indian expression of Christianity (which Allan Anderson situates in terms of Ramabai's connection to Indian proto-nationalism) was a quest for the many tongues of Pentecost.[12] Ramabai's eventual resistance to the doctrine and practice of speaking in tongues as initial evidence of Spirit baptism may be an example of her opposition to ecclesial colonialism by western (especially American) Pentecostal missionaries. She believed that the Spirit would inspire "a contextual form of Indian Christianity."[13] American Pentecostal missionaries showing up and demanding that Indians speak in tongues to legitimise their experience of the Holy Spirit was simply another form of colonial imperialism, although in ecclesial garb. Her resistance can be understood as the empowerment of one of the many tongues of Pentecost.

Cultural and individual integrity and freedom from oppression are essential to the empowerment of the many tongues of Pentecost. Ramabai's quest for social and economic freedom for Indian women and for an authentic indigenous Indian expression of Christianity preceded the Pentecostal revival at the Mukti Mission. The Pentecostal revival and social

Pandita Ramabai, ed. Roger E. Hedlund, Sebastian Kim, and Rajkumar Boaz Johnson (Delhi: MIIS/CMS/ISPCK, 2011), 127–54.

[8] Michael J. McClymond, "'I Will Pour Out of My Spirit Upon All Flesh:' An Historical and Theological Meditation on Pentecostal Origins," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 37, no. 3 (2015): 356–74.

[9] Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 78.

[10] Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: A Biographical Introduction," in *Pandita Ramabai's America: Conditions of Life in the United States*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg, trans. Kshitija Gomes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 37–43 and Frykenberg, "The Legacy of Pandita Ramabai," 66.

[11] Frykenberg, "Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: A Biographical Introduction," 7–14.

[12] Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 84–85.

[13] Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 85.

liberation, moreover, were a common cause for Ramabai. They should be understood on a continuum of participating in the Spirit of Pentecost.[14] Throughout her spiritual quest she saw religious salvation as the source for "women's emancipation."[15] Regarding the Mukti Mission revival under a spiritual or religious category alone is reductive. It, moreover, misses the vision of Ramabai's life and ministry and the nature of Pentecost.

William Seymour and Azusa Street Revivals

The first and most influential period of revival at Azusa Street took place between 1906 and 1908. Azusa became a clearinghouse for pastors, evangelists, and missionaries seeking spiritual revival.[16] Resolving the debate over whether or not Azusa is the catalyst for the modern Pentecostal movement is not the focus here.[17] What is clear is that many of the key leaders responsible for leading the early Pentecostal revivals and establishing the Pentecostal churches and denominations passed through the Azusa Street Mission. What characterised the Pentecostal revival at the Azusa Street Mission?

The Azusa Street revivals were a social transcending community. Known for restoring charismatic experiences to the churches, such as speaking in tongues, another, and unfortunately, less enduring experience of the Spirit of Pentecost was also on display at Azusa. Whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians came together to experience the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.[18] The Azusa revival transcended not only racial, but also class and gender bigotries. The class aspect of Azusa comes into focus when framed in the wider social context of early-twentieth century Los Angeles. Relative to many other places in America, LA was progressive on race relations. LA had a thriving middle and upper-middle class African American community.[19]

---

[14] Robert Eric Frykenberg describes her experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the "Great Revival" at Mukti as the fourth major turning point in her Christian life. See Frykenberg, "Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: A Biographical Introduction," 49–53. Also see Frykenberg's account of Ramabai in *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present*, Oxford History of the Christian Church, ed. Henry Chadwick and Owen Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 382–411.

[15] Ram Bapat, "Pandita Ramabai: Faith and Reason in the Shadow of the East and West," in *Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity*, ed. Vasudha Dalmia and Heinrich von Stietencron (New Delhi: Sage, 1995), 248. Bapat argues, however, that Ramabia's focus on spiritual salvation stalled her development of thoroughgoing social reform for women. See Bapat, "Pandita Ramabai," 250–51.

[16] Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 45–47.

[17] Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 49. For detailed accounts of William Seymour, see Gastón Espinosa, *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography and Documentary History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014) and Cecil M. Robeck Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017).

[18] Gastón Espinosa demonstrates that Latino Pentecostalism traces its roots to the Azusa Street revivals, but most of the history of the movement concentrates on the black-white origins of the revival (Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 35–36).

[19] Cecil M. Robeck Jr., "The Azusa Street Mission and the Historic Black Churches: Two Worlds in Conflict in Los Angeles' African American Community," in *Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture*, ed. Amos Yong and Estrelda Y. Alexander (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 26.

The Azusa Street revivals, however, were primarily a church of and for the new working- and lower-class African Americans. The problem with the Azusa Street revival was not only the colour of its leader and its primary congregants, but their class. They were uneducated, poor, and given to emotional excess. The lampooning of Azusa in the press was due not only to the charismatic displays on display, but the class status of its participants.[20] Even the middle and upper middle classes of the mainline black churches repudiated the early black Pentecostals as uneducated fanatics.[21] The rhetoric of the people participating in the Azusa revivals also exhibits class consciousness and antimony. The *Apostolic Faith* celebrates their social marginalisation—e.g., being "turned out of the big wood and brick structures."[22] It declares that the Azusa revivalists do not need "song books of earth" or "organs and pianos." Why? Because the Holy Spirit gives "anthems from the paradise of God."[23] Unstated was the underlying economic reality that they could not afford buildings of wood and stone and the instruments of worship found in the middle- and upper-middle-class churches.

The Azusa Street Mission recognized that its "interracial and intercultural" character was remarkable.[24] One report in *The Apostolic Faith* highlighted that "it is noticeable how free all nationalities feel. If a Mexican or German cannot speak English, he gets up and speaks in his own tongue and feels quite at home. . . . No instrument that God can use is rejected on account of colour, dress, or lack of education. This is why God has so built up the work."[25] The author identifies the revival's egalitarianism and inclusion of people from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds as the basis for receiving God's blessing. Sharing leadership not only among whites and blacks but also women was a distinguishing feature of Azusa. Indeed, women comprised more than half of the leaders at the Azusa Mission.[26] This social empowerment of women at Azusa took place more than a decade before the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution recognized the right of women to vote in 1920. The Azusa revivals established a social transcending community relative to its wider cultural context.

Social Transcendence and the Spirit of Pentecost

Pentecostals are familiar with the tongues and gifts that arise from the outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost. But more fundamental, indeed what tongues and charismatic gifts signify, is the multicultural community created by the Spirit of Pentecost. The Spirit of Pentecost enabled the people from the nations to come together and to establish the early church (Acts 2:5–6 2:42–47). The Spirit of Pentecost is for "'all people.'" The Spirit of Pentecost takes in "'sons and daughters,'" "'young'" and "'old,'" and "'even . . . my servants, both men and women'" (Acts 2:17–18). This character of the Spirit of Pentecost correlates with the Spirit's

[20] "Weird Babel of Tongues," *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 18 April 1906 (p. 1).
[21] Robeck, "The Azusa Street Mission and the Historic Black Churches," 31–35.
[22] *Apostolic Faith* 1.2, October 1906 (p. 4, col. 2).
[23] *Apostolic Faith* 1.4, December 1906 (p. 2, col. 5).
[24] Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 48.
[25] "Bible Pentecost: Gracious Pentecostal Showers Continue to Fall," *The Apostolic Faith* 1.3, November 1906 (p. 1, col. 1).
[26] Anderson, *Spreading Fires*, 50.

activity in the life of Jesus Christ. As the Spirit anointed messiah, Jesus Christ transcended ethnic bigotries, chauvinism, moral pretentiousness, and social pomposity to share God's love and grace with people. Christ sends the Spirit of Pentecost to extend that social transcending nature of God's kingdom with all the world. Mukti and Azusa enacted the inclusive community of Pentecost and indicted the racist and chauvinist societies that surrounded them.

Ramabai's revival and her quest for gender equality, economic security, and indigenous and contextualised expression of the Christian life at the Mukti Mission was the empowerment of the Spirit of Pentecost to create the social transcending Pentecostal community of "'all people.'" Ramabai declared that Isaiah 61:1 was central to the gospel for India—"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because The LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."[27] Pentecost begins the realisation of that promise. The Spirit of Pentecost is poured out on all people, especially those marginalised by mainstream society. Hence, Joel's prophecy highlights that "'your young men . . . your men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days'" (Acts 2:17–18).

Ramabai's Mukti Mission was a Pentecostal community because it gave dispossessed and discarded people a place to flourish in community and to achieve economic sustainability, without which you cannot have good news to the poor (Isa 61:1). Indeed, and as previously noted, Ramabai's rejection of western Pentecostal missionaries and their attempt to press the Mukti revival into their paradigm can be understood as her effort to retain the unique tongues of the Spirit of Pentecost emerging at Mukti. American Pentecostal missionaries demanding that Indians speak in tongues to legitimise their experience of the Spirit's outpouring was just another colonial boot. The Spirit of Pentecost empowers a return to life unburdened from oppression. The many tongues of Pentecost recognise the integrity of human diversity and freedom—in other words, an indigenous theology and practice of Indian Pentecostalism.

The Azusa Street revivals embodied the two elements of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit announced in Acts: 1) the inclusion of diverse people—many tongues—in the community of Pentecost and 2) charismatic manifestations. For the most part, Pentecostal churches have focused on charismatic manifestations and dropped the diversity and inclusion—social transcending nature of Pentecost. Charismatic manifestations without the formation of the inclusive community of the Spirit of Pentecost, however, are racket. They are what the Apostle Paul calls "clanging cymbals" (1 Cor. 13:1–13). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and Peter's sermon in Acts 2 emphasize the many tongues and their many people. The purpose of tongues is not an individual spiritual experience. Tongues testify to the inclusive community created from "'all people'" by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The narrative focus of Acts reinforces that point. The Gospel goes from Jew to Samaritan and to Gentile and then to the ends of the earth. Acts is not a story of individuals indulging in

[27] Rajkumar Boaz Johnson, "The Biblical Theological Contribution of Pandita Ramabai: A Neglected Pioneer Indian Christian Feminist Theologian," *Ex Auditu* 23 (2007): 114–15.

charismatic experiences. It is a story of the Holy Spirit drawing "'all people'" into the community of the risen Christ. Speaking in the tongues of Pentecost and participating in the gifts of the Spirit are not ends in themselves. They are the sign that the Holy Spirit is gathering "'all people'" and reconciling them to each other and to their God. The Spirit of Pentecost resolves the rupture in the history of redemption—the alienation from God and each other indicated by the shame of nakedness and the expulsion from Eden (Gen 2:8–24). The many tongues of Pentecost are the proleptic participation in the gathering of the people from all the nations in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:22–26). The outpouring of the Spirit Pentecost inaugurates the gathering of the nations.

"'All people,'" Jew and Gentile, become the community of Pentecost and in their diversity, their many tongues, they are the body of Christ. Social transcending community does not mean assimilating the individual into an ecclesial collective. The church is not a Christian Borg. The Spirit of Pentecost empowers people to transcend the prejudices used to marginalise and dehumanise people. The Spirit of Pentecost empowers people to "wash away" the "colour line." The Spirit of Pentecost provides the power to transcend bigotries of the world and embrace the "'all people'" of Pentecost.[28] As Michael J. McClymond argues, creating inclusive communities that harbour the "poor, the weak, and the marginalized" and transcend race, ethnic, class, gender, and political prejudices is the message of Pentecost.[29] McClymond calls this "*empowering inclusion*."[30] Seymour and Azusa Street embodied this understanding of Pentecost—empowering inclusion. Seymour's emphasis on love and social inclusion captured the essence of the promise of Pentecost.[31] The Azusa revivals, one of the formative experiences of the Pentecostal movements showcased a primary promise of the Spirit of Pentecost. Cheryl Bridges Johns is correct to call contemporary Pentecostals to recover this original Pentecostal experience for contemporary Spirit empowered life.[32]

2. Embodied abundant life and the Spirit Anointed Christ

Pentecostal spirituality is paradoxically otherworldly and materialistic. Pentecostals pine for heaven. This world is not their home. This world is a pilgrim place. They fix their minds on heavenly things. At the same time, they believe that God blesses this heavenly spirituality with payoffs in this world in terms of better jobs, bigger houses, and fancier cars. The prosperity gospel is the popular term for this feature of Pentecostalism. My focus is not the particulars of the prosperity gospel's theology, but the common expectation and

[28] Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles*, citied in Michael McClymond, "'I will Pour Out of My Spirit Upon All Flesh': An Historical and Theological Meditation on Pentecostal Origins," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 37, no. 3 (2015): 369.
[29] McClymond, "'I Will Pour Out of My Spirit Upon All Flesh,'" 374.
[30] McClymond, "'I Will Pour Out of My Spirit Upon All Flesh,'" 370 (emphasis original).
[31] McClymond, "'I Will Pour Out of My Spirit Upon All Flesh,'" 371.
[32] Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the Oppressed,* Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series, 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 70 and 100–1.

phenomenon among Pentecostals that their experience of the Holy Spirit transforms the material circumstances of their lives. Social mobility and economic success are common fruits of Pentecostal experience among Pentecostals around the world even if they do not embrace the prosperity gospel. Pentecostal Christianity, moreover, is not necessarily a spiritual ersatz pursued in lieu of more effective social and political solutions to the material problems of life. This interpretation of Pentecostalism is called the social deprivation theory.

The social deprivation theory regards Pentecostalism as a misguided reaction among the uneducated and poor to their unpromising social circumstances. Robert Mapes Anderson's *Vision of the Disinherited* is the classic work in this trajectory of interpretation.[33] Pentecostalism's otherworldly and anti-worldly preaching and charismatic spirituality reinforces rather than resolves social marginalisation and economic inopportunity.[34] Studies of Pentecostals in Vietnam, India, Latin America, and Africa, however, show that charismatic worship and spirituality do not sublimate the need for addressing bleak social and economic conditions.[35] On the contrary, they are the incubators for the Holy Spirit to empower new patterns of life in this world. Sociological analyses, relying on a Weberian paradigm, often suggest that social mobility can be an unintended by-product of Pentecostalism (e.g., Miller and Yamamori's "Pentecostal ethic").[36] The argument here, however, is that the holistic experience of redemption among Pentecostals is intrinsic to the grace of the Spirit of Pentecost. The following describes the social empowering and holistic experience of grace among Vietnamese and Latin American Pentecostals and maps that experience to the Spirit of anointed Christ.

Vietnamese Pentecostals

Vietnamese Pentecostals are overwhelmingly poor ethnic minorities living in the Central and Northwest Highlands and migrant urban workers. They are marginalised from the majority

[33] Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[34] I address problems with the social deprivation theory in Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement*, 130–34. For critical analyses of this theory also see Peter Althouse, "Waxing and Waning of Social Deprivation as a Model for Understanding the Class Composition of Early American Pentecostalism," in *A Liberating Spirit: Pentecostals and Social Action in North America*, ed. Michael Wilkinson and Steven M. Studebaker (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 113–29; Adam Stewart, "Re-Visioning the Disinherited: Pentecostals and Social Class in North America," in *A Liberating Spirit: Pentecostals and Social Action in North America*, ed. Michael Wilkinson and Steven M. Studebaker (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 136–57; and Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 199, 202–5.

[35] I treat Vietnamese and Latin American Pentecostals below, for Africa, see Lawrence Schlemmer, *Dormant Capital: The Pentecostal Movement in South Africa and Its Potential Social and Economic Role* (Johannesburg: The Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2008), 75. This report is also available online as "Under the Radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa and Its Potential Social and Economic Role," Centre for Development and Enterprise, March 6, 2008. https://www.cde.org.za/under-the-radar-pentecostalism-in-south-africa-and-its-potential-social-and-economic-role/. For India see Tomas Sundnes Drønen, *Pentecostalism, Globalisation, and Islam in Northern Cameroon: Megachurches in the Making?* Studies of Religion in Africa, 41 (Boston, MA: Brill, 2013).

[36] Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 21.

and socially dominant Viêt ethnic group. They are political outsiders without access to state economic development programs and privileges of patronage from the Communist Party of Vietnam. Consequently, they often suffer from various forms of economic exploitation (e.g., land grabbing) and religious persecution.[37] Disenfranchised from the majority culture and its economic and social benefits, many of these Vietnamese people have found Pentecostalism a source of hope not only for heaven but for renewed life in this world.

What is the appeal of Pentecostalism for these poor and socially marginalized ethnic minority Vietnamese people? Pentecostalism's "belief in divine intervention," according to Vince Le.[38] Pentecostalism offers hope that God can deliver them from their desperate social circumstances. Central to this Pentecostal faith is that God can provide material blessings that will improve the social and economic conditions of their lives.[39] The social deprivation thesis of Pentecostalism maintains that indulging in charismatic experience and the eschatology of heavenly hope subverts people from pursuing practical and real-world solutions to their dire social disadvantages. Poor Pentecostals should join trade unions and participate in political and cultural institutions that can enact meaningful change. Instead, they distract themselves by retreating to the spiritual narcotic of charismatic worship and the hope of spiritual succour in the afterlife.[40] In the case of Vietnamese Pentecostals, however, their practice of worship and apocalyptic imagining empowers a vision for the improvement of their lives in this world.

First, Pentecostal worship introduces people to an encounter with God that reassures them that God is with them. Politicians and economic actors may prey on them, but experiencing God in worship assures and comforts them that God stands with them. The experience of God's presence gives them the hope that they can overcome their social disadvantages. The Pentecostal belief in divine intervention does not prevent pro-active initiatives by individuals and the Pentecostal church communities. Belief in divine intervention is not reliance on magic. Vietnamese Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit will give the direction and power that will enable them to overcome their social and economic marginalisation. The encouragement Vietnamese Pentecostals receive from their experience of the Holy Spirit in worship does not sublimate their need for social transformation in a spiritual and ethereal fantasy. Worship among these Pentecostals empowers a vision of new ways of living that transcend their "negative life experiences of marginalization, oppression, and abuse."[41] Le argues that the Holy Spirit inspired imaginative space facilitated by Pentecostal worship is tied to life in this world and not heavenly dreaming. Pentecostal worship and the vision for

[37] See "Losing the Plot: Land Grabs in Vietnam," *The Economist* March 16, 2013, pp. 42–43; James Lewis, "The Evangelical Religious Movement among the Hmông of Northern Vietnam and the Government's Response: 1989–2000," *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16, no. 2 (2002): 79–112; and Tam T. T. Ngo, "Protestant Conversion and Social Conflict: The Case of the Hmong in Contemporary Vietnam," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 46, no. 2 (2015): 274–92.

[38] Vincent Le, *Vietnamese Evangelicals and Pentecostals: The Politics of Divine Intervention*, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 29 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 122.

[39] Le, *Vietnamese Evangelicals and Pentecostals*, 122.

[40] E.g., see Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 229.

[41] Le, *Vietnamese Evangelicals and Pentecostals*, 133.

transformed life assumes a theological horizon of Spirit enabled new life, transformation, and empowerment. Testimonies are vital to their worship experiences. In worship, Vietnamese Pentecostals hear other believers share testimonies of overcoming debilitating circumstances. These testimonies of transcending social and economic difficulties inspire other members of the congregations to imagine their "particular vision of an enhanced and better life."[42]

Second, apocalyptic theology helps Vietnamese Pentecostals to imagine a transformed world in which their lives prosper.[43] Apocalyptic theology or eschatology speaks to people suffering the ignominious conditions of social injustice. A dysfunctional society that preserves privileges for elites and favoured groups through political and cultural institutions and oppresses, exploits, or otherwise marginalises minorities and the poor. Corruption preserves power and siphons resources and wealth for cultural elites. The problem is not apocalyptic theology and the appeal it has to people suffering injustice. The inequitable social structures and the people who organise and perpetuate them are the problem. "Apocalyptic theology is a protest from the margins in a religious register."[44] Apocalyptic theology is a message of hope for the disruption of the injustice of this world and its replacement with a better one. Eschatological imagining is not always pining for a heavenly escape. Some forms of Pentecostal spirituality succumb to that temptation. This world is almost entirely eviscerated of value. The only useful activities in this world are attending to spiritual disciplines, attending church, and winning souls for heaven. Traditional Pentecostal eschatology, especially the premillennial form, emphasises that freedom from the trials and travails of this life happens only by going to heaven, being raptured at Christ's second coming, and the establishment of God's heavenly kingdom after the Battle of Armageddon. But that is not the whole story of Pentecostal eschatology and apocalyptic imagining.

Apocalyptic imaging for Vietnamese Pentecostals is more about achieving a prosperous life in this world than dreaming for transport to an off-world heavenly place. They hope for an outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost that will make the "land that was laid waste . . . like the garden of Eden" (Ezek 37:35). Le maintains that apocalyptic theology is "an invitation to imagine a new, improved condition of life . . . for Vietnamese [Pentecostal] evangelicals . . . a settled life . . . a rooted life in a relatively peaceful, undisputed land, with a just social structure and good social and economic conditions to support human flourishing."[45] The worldly orientation of Pentecostal apocalyptic imagination challenges the social deprivation theory.

[42] Le, *Vietnamese Evangelicals and Pentecostals*, 134.

[43] David Smilde uses the term "imaginative rationality" to describe ways that converting to evangelical (pentecostal) Christianity provides concepts for renewing their economic and social prospects. Although based on sociological research in Latin America, Smilde's imaginative rationality captures the personal-social transformation that I am describing in theological terms as the fruit of the Spirit of Pentecost. Smilde also argues that the social inhancements accruing from conversion are not by-products, but intentional aspirations among the converts. See David Smilde, *Reason to Believe: Cultural Agency in Latin American Evangelicalism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 13.

[44] Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement*, 142.

[45] Le, *Vietnamese Evangelicals and Pentecostals*, 27 and 31.

Apocalyptic imagination, at the least among Vietnamese Pentecostals, is not primarily hope for everlasting repose in heaven. It inspires a vision for renewed and just life in this world. A hope for life that transcends and "that subverts and disrupts abusive hierarchies and systemic inequities and replaces them with life structured according to the peace and justice of God's kingdom."[46]

Latin American Pentecostals

Pentecostalism in Latin America also offers people a socially empowering vision of God and of their identity in the world. Pentecostalism inspires people to break free from the crippling class hierarchy and social immobility—a lingering legacy of Spanish colonialism—and the moral dissipation that ruins many individual lives and families. The default worldview of many Latin American people is that life is fatalistic and determined. Class hierarchy is essential to this social vision. Born poor, you die poor. Social mobility is an illusion.[47] Only elites and the wealthy have power and freedom. Everyone else is a victim with little control over their circumstances. People also find that Pentecostalism provides a pathway to the restoration and renewal of healthy family life. Becoming a Pentecostal often leads to the healing of dysfunctional and abusive relationships between spouses and parents and children. Husbands (in most cases) become loving and caring spouses and parents by leaving behind their infidelities, alcohol and drug abuse, and gambling. Jens Köhrsen calls this phenomenon the "self-disciplining effects" of Pentecostalism that promotes stable families, financial security, and upward social mobility.[48] Pentecostal Christianity opens pathways to personal and social renewal for many people. Although a study of Pentecostals in Brazil, Cecília Loreto Mariz maintains that "all religious groups that are popular among the poor are materially useful."[49] Being transformed into the image of Christ by the Spirit of Pentecost transforms peoples' social context. Affirming the social benefits of Pentecostal grace does not mean ignoring the importance of solving systemic social problems.

A vision of the resurrected Christ is central to this renewal of life provided in Pentecostal Christianity. The Pentecostal message proclaims the power of the Spirit of Pentecost to bring the new life of the resurrected Christ.[50] Christ is not a hapless victim of abuse and shame and wider social circumstances. He is the living Christ who conquers death and the grave. Pentecostal Christianity encourages people to read Scripture and imagine the living God they

[46] Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement*, 143 and Le, *Vietnamese Evangelicals and Pentecostals*, 27.
[47] Virginia Nolivos and Ely H. Nolivos, "Pentecostalism's Theological Reconstruction of the Identity of the Latin American Family," in *Pentecostal Power: Expressions, Impact and Faith of Latin American Pentecostalism*, ed. Calvin Smith (Boston, MA: Brill, 2011), 210.
[48] Jens Köhrsen, "Pentecostal Improvement Strategies: A Comparative Reading of African and South American Pentecostalism," in *Pastures of Plenty: Tracing Religio-Scapes of Prosperity Gospel in Africa and Beyond*, ed. Andreas Heuser, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity, vol. 161 (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), 53–54.
[49] Cecília Loreto Mariz, *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Base Communities in Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 155.
[50] Nolivos and Nolivos, "Pentecostalism's Theological Reconstruction of the Identity of the Latin American Family," 217–19.

find in its pages acting in their own lives. Pentecostalism presents a new vision of God and self that empowers a new and proactive life.[51] The resurrection of Christ and the power of the Spirit of Pentecost provide Latin American Pentecostals with a paradigm for personal renewal and an improved life in this world. The key point is that this social and economic upward mobility is not understood as a by-product of Pentecostalism, but a direct outcome of a life participating in the Spirit of Pentecost.

Embodied Grace and the Spirit Anointed Christ

The experience of grace among Vietnamese and Latin American Pentecostals correlates with the redemptive work of the Spirit anointed Christ. After healing a blind and a mute person, Jesus proclaimed "'if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you'" (Matt 12:28). Christ's ministry of bringing the new life and the renewal of the kingdom of God cannot be separated from the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ was the Spirit anointed messiah from conception to resurrection (Matt 1:20, Luke 1:35, Rom 1:4, and Rom 8:11). When Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue, he self-identifies as the Spirit anointed Christ. Christ will "'proclaim good news to the poor . . . freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind . . . set the oppressed free'" because "'the Spirit of the Lord is on'" him (Luke 4:16–18). Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, and comforted the broken hearted. Focusing on the miracles can obscure the wider social implications they set in motion, however. Perhaps concentrating on events is part of Pentecostalism's heritage in conversionistic traditions of Christianity. Pentecostal spirituality can tend toward an emphasis on events—e.g., conversion and Spirit baptism—and forget that the Christian life is ever unfolding into a horizon of the Spirit of Pentecost. Every footstep into the coming of the new creation arises from the prior work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life.

The man Jesus healed of leprosy in Matthew 8:1–4 (and Luke 5:12–16) provides a case study. Lepers in first century Palestine were extreme outcasts. Not only were they social pariahs, but they also existed on the physical pale of society. Lepers "had to wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their faces and shout 'Unclean! Unclean.'"[52] People would not touch them for fear of being defiled. They were barred from participating in social activities. Jesus, nevertheless, "reached out his hand and touched the man" and healed him. The healing of the leper was a redemption of embodied life and of social renewal. Consider the radical social consequences the healing had for the man. He could reintegrate with society. He could be restored to family, friends, and occupational connections. The healing of the leper includes all the dimensions of his life. Christ was not only concerned with saving the man's soul for heaven. Christ brings renewal to the entirety of his life. The social, physical,

[51] Dena Freeman documents similar effects among African Pentecostals in "The Pentecostal Ethic and the Spirit of Development," in *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*, ed. Dena Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 9–15.
[52] Francois P. Viljoen, "Jesus Healing the Leper and the Purity Law in the Gospel of Matthew, *In die Skriflig* 48, no. 2 (2014): 5.

economic, personal, and familial facets of the leper's healing were not secondary to, but the substance of the grace Christ brought to his life.

Acts of healing demonstrated Christ's divinity and identity as the Son of God. But they also demonstrate that grace transforms all dimensions of human life. God is not only concerned with saving souls. The gospel of the Spirit anointed Christ renews human dignity and the material conditions of life. Although assessing African Pentecostalism, Ogbu Kalu's point also applies to Vietnamese and Latin American Pentecostalism. He maintains that the anticipation that God's grace includes the "material, physical, and psychic" aspects of life does not arise from the cultural influence of American consumerism "transposed in the religious key of the prosperity gospel."[53] On the contrary, it carries on the holistic vision of redemption in the prophets of the Hebrew Bible.[54] Because the Holy Spirit raises Christ to new life, Christ is the "shepherd" that leads his sheep through the "gate" and into the lush meadows of the new creation, the emergence of God's kingdom in human life (John 10:1–18). The early followers of Christ understood this character of the grace of Christ. His Spirit empowered followers healed the sick, shared their resources, and "there were no needy persons among them" (Acts 3:1–10, 4:32–37, and 5:12–16).[55]

Conclusion

This article showcases four Pentecostal renewal movements. Two are at the origins of the movement—Pandita Ramabai and the Mukti Mission and William Seymour and the Azusa Street revivals. Two represent global Pentecostalism today. The goal is to highlight the social and holistic character of the Pentecostal experience of grace. What is the theological yield of this investigation of historical and contemporary Pentecostal movements and people? It indicates two theological implications. First, the Pentecostal experience of grace fosters social transcending communities, which correlates with the promise of the many tongued community of the Spirit of Pentecost. Second, the Pentecostal experience of grace empowers holistic redemption of embodied life that maps to the Spirit anointed Christ's promise of abundant life and whose compassion for the poor, the disabled, and the marginalised rebuked the indifference and exploitive practices of cultural power brokers.

Bibliography:

Althouse, Peter. "Waxing and Waning of Social Deprivation as a Model for Understanding the Class Composition of Early American Pentecostalism." In *A Liberating Spirit:*

[53] Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement*, 143.
[54] Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 255–63.
[55] Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement*, 143.

Pentecostals and Social Action in North America, edited by Michael Wilkinson and Steven M. Studebaker, 113-29. Eugene, OR: Pickwick.

Anderson, Allan. *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

Anderson, Robert Mapes. *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Ram Bapat, "Pandita Ramabai: Faith and Reason in the Shadow of the East and West." In *Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity*, edited by Vasudha Dalmia and Heinrich von Stietencron, 224-52. New Delhi: Sage, 1995.

Blumhofer, Edith. "Consuming Fire: Pandita Ramabai and the Early Pentecostal Impulse." in *Indian and Christian: The Life and Legacy of Pandita Ramabai*, edited by Roger E. Hedlund, Sebastian Kim, and Rajkumar Boaz Johnson, 127-54. Delhi: MIIS/CMS/ISPCK, 2011.

Drønen, Tomas Sundnes. *Pentecostalism, Globalisation, and Islam in Northern Cameroon: Megachurches in the Making?* Boston, MA: Brill, 2013.

Espinosa, Gastón. *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

_____. *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography and Documentary History.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.

Freeman, Dena. "The Pentecostal Ethic and the Spirit of Development." In *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*, edited by Dena Freeman, 1-38. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Frykenberg, Robert Eric. "Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: A Biographical Introduction." In *Pandita Ramabai's America: Conditions of Life in the United States*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg, trans. Kshitija Gomes, 37-43. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

_____. *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Presen.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Johns, Cheryl Bridges. *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the Oppressed.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.

Johnson, Rajkumar Boaz. "The Biblical Theological Contribution of Pandita Ramabai: A Neglected Pioneer Indian Christian Feminist Theologian." *Ex Auditu* 23 (2007): 111–136.

Köhrsen, Jens. "Pentecostal Improvement Strategies: A Comparative Reading of African and South American Pentecostalism." In *Pastures of Plenty: Tracing Religio-Scapes of*

Prosperity Gospel in Africa and Beyond, edited by Andreas Heuser, 49-64. New York: Peter Lang, 2015.

Lewis, James "The Evangelical Religious Movement among the Hmông of Northern Vietnam and the Government's Response: 1989–2000." *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16, no. 2 (2002): 79–112.

Le, Vincent. *Vietnamese Evangelicals and Pentecostals: The Politics of Divine Intervention*. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

Mariz, Cecília Loreto. *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Base Communities in Brazil*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

McClymond, Michael J. "'I Will Pour Out of My Spirit Upon All Flesh:' An Historical and Theological Meditation on Pentecostal Origins." *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 37, no. 3 (2015): 356–74.

McGee, Gary B. "'Latter Rain' Falling in the East: Early-Twentieth-Century Pentecostalism in India and the Debate over Speaking in Tongues." *Church History* 68, no. 3 (1999): 648–56.

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

Ngo, Tam T. T. "Protestant Conversion and Social Conflict: The Case of the Hmong in Contemporary Vietnam." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 46, no. 2 (2015): 274–92.

Nolivos, Virginia and Ely H. Nolivos. "Pentecostalism's Theological Reconstruction of the Identity of the Latin American Family." In *Pentecostal Power: Expressions, Impact and Faith of Latin American Pentecostalism*, edited by Calvin Smith, 205-226. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Robeck Jr., Cecil M. *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017.

_____. "The Azusa Street Mission and the Historic Black Churches: Two Worlds in Conflict in Los Angeles' African American Community." In *Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture*, edited Amos Yong and Estrelda Y. Alexander, 21-41. New York: New York University Press, 2011.

Schlemmer, Lawrence. *Dormant Capital: The Pentecostal Movement in South Africa and Its Potential Social and Economic Role*. Johannesburg: The Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2008.

Smilde, David *Reason to Believe: Cultural Agency in Latin American Evangelicalism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.

Stewart, Adam. “Re-Visioning the Disinherited: Pentecostals and Social Class in North America.” In *A Liberating Spirit: Pentecostals and Social Action in North America*, edited by Michael Wilkinson and Steven M. Studebaker, 136–57. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010.

Studebaker, Steven M. *The Spirit of Atonement: Pentecostal Contributions and Challenges to the Christian Traditions*. New York: T & T Clark, 2021.

Wacker, Grant. *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Suarsana, Yan. “Inventing Pentecostalism: Pandita Ramabai and the Mukti Revival from a Post-colonial Perspective.” *PentecoStudies* 13, no. 2 (2014): 173–96.

Viljoen, Francois P. “Jesus Healing the Leper and the Purity Law in the Gospel of Matthew.” *In die Skriflig* 48, no. 2 (2014): 1-7.