

# Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies

Five-year Index (1998-2002)

**Volume 6, Number 1 (January 2003)**

GLOBALIZATION, ECUMENISM AND PENTECOSTALISM  
A SEARCH FOR HUMAN SOLIDARITY IN HONG KONG<sup>1</sup>

Lap-yan Kung

Globalization is a term employed to describe “a process (or sets of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions—assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact, generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and the exercise of power.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, globalization is never restricted to the contemporary era, that is, since the late 1960s, but long before the technological advances, world religions unquestionably constitute one of the most powerful and significant forms of the globalization of culture in the pre-modern era, and even possibly now. One of the differences between the pre-modern and contemporary is simply the degree of interconnectedness, but this degree of difference results in a completely different world.<sup>3</sup> Kofi Annan, the United Nations’ General Secretary, says that “globalization has an immense potential to improve people’s lives, but it can disrupt—and destroy—them as well. Those who do not accept its pervasive, all-encompassing ways are often left behind. It is our task to prevent this; to ensure that globalization leads to progress, prosperity and security for

---

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Asian Pentecostal Society at Union Biblical Seminary, Bangalore, India on August 19-20, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p.16.

<sup>3</sup> See Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World* (New York: Routledge, 2000). He explains the difference in four areas, namely, risk, tradition, family and democratization.

all.”<sup>4</sup> Surely, this is not simply the task of the United Nations, but rather the task of all people of goodwill. If so, can the Christian church take up this task?

Unlike Hinduism and Confucianism, Christianity itself is always global-oriented, due to its ideology of mission. It is not exaggerated to say that Christian mission is a kind of global movement. Nevertheless, this Christian global movement is not only confined to the concern of saving souls and planting churches, but also it is a cultural and socio-political movement. Put theologically, Christian mission is about the evangelization of God’s kingdom.<sup>5</sup> It not only evangelizes, but also creates a new culture of life, that is, a life characterized by solidarity in the understanding of co-responsibility, communion and friendship. This is what we call ecumenism. Ecumenism is more than a concern for the unity of the church. Rather it is a unity that brings the churches together in solidarity and communion with one another as well as the people that the churches serve.<sup>6</sup> But we have to admit that the history of Christian mission is not always like this. It is both promising and disruptive. This is the experience that we, Asian Christians, experience in our countries.<sup>7</sup> If the central Christian message is a message of humanization,<sup>8</sup> a critical attitude

---

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from Samuel S. Kim, *East Asia and Globalization* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), pp. 368-446.

<sup>6</sup> See Emilio Castro, *A Passion For Unity* (Geneva: WCC, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> The history of missionary work in China is a good example of this. On the one hand, Christian mission was associated with imperial power and often did not take local cultures seriously, and on the other, Christian mission helped us to know the true God, and develop education, medical care and other social activities.

<sup>8</sup> Some do not feel comfortable with the word “humanization,” because it may neglect the necessity of the vertical dimension of salvation. This view is reflected in the Vatican’s 1984 “Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation.” But the World Council of Churches, *The Church for Others and the Church for the World* (Geneva: WCC, 1967), p. 78 affirms that “we have lifted up humanization as the goal of mission because we believe that more than others it communicates in our period of history the meaning of the messianic goal. In another time the goal of God’s redemptive work might best have been described in terms of man turning towards God.... The fundamental question was that of the true God and the church responded to that question by pointing to him. It was assuming that the purpose of mission was Christianization, bringing man to God through Christ and his church. Today the fundamental question is much more than

towards the practice of Christian mission should be taken in order that in the era of globalization it would not be an agency of neo-colonialism, but rather an agency of liberation. I suggest that a spirit of solidarity associated with ecumenism is a Christian witness and challenge to globalization. Pentecostalism would be particularly chosen as an example for reference, because I believe that any ecumenical study is inadequacy without taking Pentecostalism seriously (which I will further explain this point later).<sup>9</sup>

### 1. Globalization in Hong Kong

There is no doubt that globalization brings the belief that “no human is an island” into realization. Only a few can escape from its impact. Nevertheless, it is naïve to hold that globalization is simply a matter of westernization. Of course the western nations, and more generally the industrial countries, still have far more influence over world affairs than do the poorer states. But globalization is becoming increasingly de-centered, and its effects are felt as much in western countries as elsewhere. This is true of the global financial system, and of changes affecting the nature of government itself. What one could call “reverse colonization” is becoming more and more common. “Reverse colonization” means that non-western countries influence developments in the West.<sup>10</sup> Examples abound, such as the Latinizing of Los Angeles, the emergence of a globally oriented high-tech sector in India, or the selling of Brazilian television programs to Portugal. Although globalization is led from the West, bears the strong imprint of American political and economic power, and is highly uneven in its consequences, globalization is not just the dominance of the West over the rest; it affects the United States as it does other countries. On the other hand, some argue that economic globalization is bringing about a denationalization of economies through the establishment of transnational networks of production, trade and finance.<sup>11</sup> As S. Strange puts it, “the impersonal forces of world markets...are now more powerful than the states to whom ultimate

---

of true man, and the dominant concern of the missionary congregation must therefore be to point to the humanity in Christ as the goal of mission.”

<sup>9</sup> See Jürgen Moltmann and Karl Josef Kuschel, ed., *Pentecostal Movements as an Ecumenical Challenge* (London: SCM, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World*, pp.33-34.

<sup>11</sup> Held and others, *Global Transformations*, pp. 3-4.

political authority over society and economy is supposed to belong...the declining authority of states is reflected in a growing diffusion of authority to other institutions and associations, and to local and regional bodies.”<sup>12</sup> Neo-Marxists like W. Grieder and K. Ohmae consider that contemporary globalization represents the triumph of an oppressive global capitalism.<sup>13</sup> It creates a world of winners and losers, a few on the fast track to prosperity, and the majority condemned to a life of misery and despair. The old north-south division is argued to be an increasing anachronism as a new global division of labor replaces the traditional core-periphery structure with a more complex architecture of economic power. The growing economic marginalization of many “Third World” states as trade and investment flows within the rich north intensifies to the exclusion of much of the rest of the globe. To a large extent, this criticism is valid, but economic competition does not necessarily produce zero-sum outcomes. While particular groups within a country may be made worse off as a result of global competition, nearly all countries have a comparative advantage in producing certain goods that can be exploited in the long run. In addition, globalization is not just an economic issue. The conditions facilitating transnational cooperation between peoples brought by globalization pave the way for the emerging global civil society.

The complexity of globalization makes it impossible for us to pass a simple judgment on it. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the impact of globalization locally. Hong Kong, the city where I live and work, is chosen for this further examination.

From an economic perspective, globalization involves an explosion of global trade, investment and financial flows across state and regional boundaries. The cheap labor and the labor-intensive light industries of Hong Kong of earlier times helped it achieve industrialization by riding the tide of international trade, investment and finance. Nevertheless, this situation has been changed since the early 1980s. With the intensification of international trade, investment and finance, more countries and regions (mainly Southeast Asia) entered the competition for market and capital. Hong Kong finds itself less competitive against some of the newer developing economies. An obvious example of this is that many factories of Hong Kong have moved to China. As a result, employment provided by

---

<sup>12</sup> S. Strange, *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> See W. Grieder, *One World, Reality or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1997), and K. Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

manufacturing fell from around 880,000 in 1979 to 229,400 in 2000,<sup>14</sup> and the percentage of manufacturing in Hong Kong's gross domestic product dropped from 23.7% in 1979 to 6.2% in 2000.<sup>15</sup> In response to the global economic changes, Hong Kong has taken the route to transform itself from a newly industrialized economy to a world city. Tung Chee-Hwa, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, affirms this view and repeatedly says, "Hong Kong should not only be a major Chinese city, but could become the most cosmopolitan city in Asia, enjoying a status comparable to that of New York in North America and London in Europe."<sup>16</sup> World cities are hub points of the global economy. They are key centers in the spatial organization and articulation of production and markets and are major sites for the concentration and accumulation of international capital. Typically, they are characterized by a concentration of corporate headquarters, banks and firms specializing in producer services.<sup>17</sup>

The most obvious of the economic impacts of globalization is the growing gap between the very rich and the very poor. The income disparity of Hong Kong was never small, but it has become even greater in the last two decades. A Gini-coefficient above 0.5 indicates extremely unequal distribution. In the 1980s, the Gini-coefficient for Hong Kong was 0.45, and in 2001, it reached 0.525.<sup>18</sup> Growing income disparity is typical of many world cities. As industries give way to services, employment in cities like Hong Kong tends to expand at both the high and the low end and to shrink in the middle. Lawyers, bankers, accountants and public relations specialists get paid extremely well, while restaurant and laundry workers, many of whom are new immigrants, can barely get by. Apart from serious income disparity, the rate of unemployment grows higher, because a lot of workers have been sacrificed for the economic transformation, that is, from a newly industrialized economy to a world city. The most recent

---

<sup>14</sup> Department of Statistics, "Employment and Vacancies Statistics (2000)" (<http://www.info.gov.hk/hk2000/eng/07/c07-03.htm>), checked: June 26, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Chow Tak Hay, "Speech by Secretary for Commerce and Industry (2000)" (<http://www.info.gov.hk/hk2000/eng/04/c04-01.htm>), checked: June 26, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Tung Chee-Hwa, "2000 Policy Address by Chief Executive" (<http://www.info.gov.hk/pa99/index.htm>), checked: June 26, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> E. K. Yeoh, "Alleviating the Disparity between the Rich and the Poor (2002)" (<http://www.info.gov.hk/hwb/text/english/speech/sp1121.htm>), checked: June 26, 2002.

unemployment figure is 7.7% (July, 2002), that is, one out of thirteen working people is unemployed. On balance, Hong Kong so far has been a beneficiary of globalization, but no one can guarantee that Hong Kong can continue to be a beneficiary. In fact, Hong Kong has suffered serious economic difficulties since the Asian financial crisis and it takes much longer road for her to rehabilitate. It is clear that globalization generates a more severe competition among countries and even within a country than a sense of global responsibility and solidarity.

From a socio-cultural perspective, globalization involves the massive movement of people across state borders and the fusion of cultures on a global scale. People movement is not new to Hong Kong. Traditionally, Hong Kong was a major departure point for Chinese emigrants going to other parts of the world. Since the issue of 1997 came up large numbers of Hong Kong residents (about 7% of the population) immigrated to North America, the South Pacific and Europe, but surprisingly, this does not cause Hong Kong a serious problem of brain drain, because many of them once obtain their foreign passports, they return to work in Hong Kong. In fact, the economic and business opportunities provided in Hong Kong unmatched by other locations attracts people moving to Hong Kong. On the other hand, for the purpose of family union, there are 150 people daily coming from China to settle in Hong Kong. Although many of them are unskilled immigrants, they also contribute to Hong Kong in important ways. For example, Hong Kong's birth rate has fallen steadily in the last two decades. Without an increase in fertility, immigration is likely to be the core element of population change. Nevertheless, most of the people in Hong Kong do not recognize the contribution made by the immigrants. Especially since the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the people in Hong Kong put the blame on them by condemning them as a burden for Hong Kong, for many of them live on social benefits. Filipinos working in Hong Kong are the second group of people to be blamed, because they are accused of taking up most of the domestic job. Finding a scapegoat and a feeling of exclusiveness become one of the serious tensions caused by globalization.<sup>19</sup>

Symbols of western consumerism, such as Coca-Cola and blue jeans, are prevalent in far-off concerns of the world. On the other hand, ethnic cuisine, fashion and music from different parts of the world are now popular fixations of western metropolises. Hong Kong is not only a passive consumer and conduit of international cultural products, but also

---

<sup>19</sup> Giles Gunn, *Beyond Solidarity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 25-47.

becomes a producer and exporter. Hong Kong's cultural products, be they indigenized international products or purely local creations, have become more influential in other places, especially among other ethnic Chinese communities. Direct satellites bring Hong Kong kung-fu movies, soap operas and pop singers to ethnic Chinese homes. The ideologies and values embedded in these products become part of the shared consciousness of Chinese all over the world. Thus, Hong Kong has emerged as a cultural center in the transnational Chinese public. Nevertheless, the success of Hong Kong's cultural products is simply a success of commercialization, because Hong Kong's popular cultures are mainly dominated by a kind of prosperity ideology (success as measured by money and wealth), an apolitical and amoral mentality, and consumerism.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, from a political perspective, the impact of globalization refers to the tendency for political decisions and actions in one part of the world to generate widespread reactions and consequences elsewhere. The global movement of people, news and images along with the global flow of goods and capital has turned many a local event into international concerns. For instance, labor policies in one place can affect the wage levels of another, and the environmental standard of one country can have ramifications for the quality of air in another. Traditionally, Hong Kong was largely an apolitical territory. "Living on borrowed time in a borrowed place,"<sup>21</sup> many devoted themselves to business activities while showing little interest in politics. Since the Tiananmen Square event in 1989 the people of Hong Kong are more active and participatory in social issues than before. Political globalization has not only changed the political structure of Hong Kong, but also imposed serious constraints on China's policy toward Hong Kong. Beijing probably wishes to impose stricter political control over Hong Kong, as it does elsewhere in China, but its capacity to do so is seriously constrained by the political attention that Hong Kong commands on the global political agenda. For instance, the Hong Kong government intends to follow Beijing's move to condemn Falun Gong, but

---

<sup>20</sup> See Ng Chun Hung, ed., *Reading Hong Kong Popular Cultures 1970-2000* (in Chinese; Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> This is the phrase used by Askbar Abbas in his interesting story of Hong Kong's culture, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 2.



the government is hesitant to pass any law to condemn Falun Gong, because the issue of Falun Gong has become an international concern.<sup>22</sup>

We notice from the foregoing analysis that globalization is a long-term historical process that is fraught with contradictions. Hong Kong is a beneficiary of globalization as well as a victim. I think this also applies to many countries. In the following, I would like to highlight one particular issue arising from the experience of Hong Kong in order to reflect what the Christian community can respond, namely, the threatening otherness.

## 2. The Threatening Otherness

If globalization implies a high degree of interconnectedness, the experience of Hong Kong shows that close interconnectedness means high competitiveness. Competitiveness is not necessarily evil, for competitiveness does bring improvement. It is unimaginable that there could be a society without a sense of competitiveness. But under the domination of the market economy, the culture generated by competitiveness seems more threatening than motivating, because competitiveness is not simply about a description of what is going on, but also becomes an ideology in a very business sense. This is successfully reinforced by sports. From the most recent World Cup Soccer (2002) held in Korea and Japan, sport is one of the most successful globalized industries. Ideally, sports bring nations together in contexts supportive of peace and friendship. Although this does occur, the reality is that powerful transnational corporations have joined nation-states as major participants in global politics. Sports have been increasingly used for economic as well as political purposes. Because sports can capture the attention and emotions of millions of people, corporations need symbols of success, excellence and productivity that they can use to create marketing handles for their products and services and to create public goodwill for their policies and practices. This is why corporations have invested so much money into associating their names and logos with athletes, teams and sport facilities. The dominant images and messages are consistent with the interests of the major corporate sponsors, and they tend to promote an ideology infused with capitalist themes of individualism, competition, productivity and consumption. In nations with market economies, sports

---

<sup>22</sup> Lap Yan Kung, "New Religions and Religious Liberty: A Case of Falun Gong," *Fujian Religions Studies* 3 (2001), pp. 187-208 (in Chinese).

are often associated with success and hard work. Instead of reference to collectivism and the common good, there are references to competition and individual achievement. Instead of an emphasis on comradeship, there are stories showing how individuals have reached personal goals and experienced self-fulfillment through sports. In a sense, the vocabulary and stories that accompany sports in market economies tend to emphasize that using competition to achieve personal success and to allocate rewards to people is natural and normal, while alternative approaches to success and allocating rewards are inappropriate.<sup>23</sup>

Under the ideology of the market economy, those who fail in competition would be discarded. When competitiveness is portrayed as a fair game, those who fail are no longer considered as the victims of an unequal game, but rather reflect their inability, and therefore, society has no responsibility to take care of them. Put bluntly, poverty is the result of their incompetency. But all we know that globalization does not guarantee fair competition, for the rich always have a better position. For instance, if technology is the infrastructures of globalization, those who are able to access to this technology are in a better position, and contrariwise, the poor are further marginalized. Although the rich may not be the winners in all competitions, the opportunity for the poor to do so is much less than for the rich. But through the implicit ideological propaganda, our society gradually accepts that survival of the fittest is the norm of relationship. As a result, a more self-centered mentality is nurtured.

Globalization brings our world closer, and this assumes that we can experience the diversity of human culture, but this is not always the reality. In fact, the globalization of culture dominated by economic power makes our world less possible or less tolerant for the existence of diversity. Ironically our world becomes more homogeneous. Local cultures are given up for the way of Sony, McDonalds and Coca-Cola, because they represent the signs of modernization. Despite the fact that some local cultures can be preserved, they probably become commercialized under the development (invasion) of tourism. Take the example of sports again. When sport is associated with economic power, this affects people in relatively poor nations to de-emphasize their traditional games, and to focus their attention on sports that are largely unrelated to their own values and experiences.

Last but not least, globalization brings with it the fragmentation of economy and society.<sup>24</sup> Globalization increases mobility and the way in

---

<sup>23</sup> Jay Coakley, *Sport in Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), pp. 312-49.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Albrow, *The Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), pp. 64-68.

which the autonomous subsystems of the social world are becoming independent together with the increasing competition between high cultures that have taken separate courses in history. When mobility has become the norm, the norms and values of the place and society in which one was born and practical knowledge of them lose their significance. The future of the individual is not determined. This change has transformed human social life. The old communal organization of the social world with its warm nest has been replaced by the impersonal, contractual, formal order of society. The direction of culture, which was formerly regulated by tradition, has primarily been taken over by the individual, who has become autonomous. Transitoriness and the contingent have become the constitutive characteristics of our everyday culture. It has lost its organic unity and has become segmented, like a mosaic.<sup>25</sup> A single space which can easily be surveyed has become an enchanted castle with many niches which are unequal because they are incalculable. For a long time politics has been an autonomous sphere of the social system. Soon the economy made itself independent of politics. Multinational concerns have often become more powerful than the states in which they are active. Science and technology have developed their own drives and criteria and forms of development. Research centers, universities and industries are autonomous domains. The media have a cultural power which competes with the educational system. All these and further spheres appeal to their own logic and resist a comprehensive integration. What, then, holds all the independent systems functioning together as a whole in society? What ties together the systems as far as meaning and purpose? And whom should society respond to and judge among all the divergent global claims made by each of its systems? This is what Anthony Giddens calls the “runaway world.”<sup>26</sup>

Finally, although Hong Kong is on the direction to transform itself to be a globalized city, a globalized city, according to Tung Chee-Hwa, is chiefly understood in terms of economic rather than global responsibility. Thus, globalization does not bring us to share responsibility for other parts of the world. Ironically, it leads us to be more self-centered, because our concern is survival.

Globalization does bring us to have a close interconnectedness, but many people, especially the poor, experience that the close interconnectedness is threatening more than positive, because they are

---

<sup>25</sup> See Alasdair McIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984).

<sup>26</sup> See A. Giddens, *Runaway World*.

forced to follow the so-called globalized (capitalist) way of life. The ambiguity of globalization is its interconnectedness and alienation. The former describes a social reality of relationship, while the latter describes what the nature of this relationship is about. Does this mean that we have to refuse globalization? Perhaps it is not a matter of yes or no, because globalization is unavoidable and unstoppable. Our concern thereby is how to make use of the interconnectedness brought by globalization and formulate it to become a community of friendship rather than a community of aliens. Here, I find Christian experience important.

### 3. An Alternative Global Movement

As said at the beginning, I consider that the Christian mission is a global movement. This is an ecumenical movement, a movement of friendship. However, I have to admit that the history of Christian mission cannot be separated from western imperialism, although these two are not synonymous.<sup>27</sup> Ye Xiaowen (葉小文), the head of the Religious Bureau of the Chinese government, agrees with this.<sup>28</sup> Ecumenism means communion (*koinonia*),<sup>29</sup> but this is not restricted to the communion among Christian communities. Otherwise, the church would become a ghetto and betray its identity. Theologically speaking, the church is always a sacrament.<sup>30</sup> The symbolic and instrumental value of the communion of the church is to serve the purpose of God to gather the whole of creation under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The church is called as a witness to the saving and liberating purpose of God for all creation (Eph 3:8-11). The communion to which the Lord calls the church is a communion for the benefit of the world, so that the world may believe (John 17:21). The church is called as a priestly people to intercede for the salvation of the whole world (1 Peter 2:9). The church, therefore, is a society in the world which exists for the sake of those who are not members of it. Dietrich

---

<sup>27</sup> See Stephen Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Mission* (London: Lutterworth, 1966).

<sup>28</sup> Ye Xiaowen, "Review The Last One Hundred Years of Religion in China," in *The Future of Religions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Peter Ng (Hong Kong: Centre for the Study of Religion and Chinese Society, 2001), pp. 27-46 (in Chinese).

<sup>29</sup> See Nicholas Sagovsky, *Ecumenism, Christian Origins and the Practice of Communion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1974), pp. 58-70.

Bonhoeffer wrote, "The church is the church only when it exists for others.... The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary life, not dominating, but helping and serving."<sup>31</sup> The communion of the church is a parable and a reality anticipating the one humanity. It is an encouragement for every attempt to overcome any of the barriers that divide humanity. Since the church is a sacrament the communion of the church should be visible. Without this visible sign, the church would be fragmented into a multitude of disconnected signs. Moltmann writes, "The visible coming together of visible people in a special place to do something particular stands at the center of the church. Without the actual visible procedure of meeting together there is no church."<sup>32</sup> This is why the unity of the church is so important.

I consider that the communion of the church is based on the experience of reconciliation with God. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 tells us that the ministry of Jesus Christ is to reconcile humans with God, and the church is called to continue the ministry of reconciliation. Reconciliation is about a change of relationship from hostility to harmony. I call this change friendship. God invites humans to be his friends. Does this mean that God needs friendship? On the one hand, the answer is no, because the Trinitarian God is a relational God, and therefore, God does not need something other than himself (herself) to have an experience of communion. On the other hand, the answer is yes, because the Trinitarian God is a relational God, and therefore, God is open to relationship. The openness of God allows humans (the creation) to share their trinitarian mystical love and relationship. The friendship of God with humans is fully revealed in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus' friendship with the sinners and tax-collectors of his time breaks down the barriers of the equality principle. That is to say, the friendship of the "wholly other" God which comes to meet us, makes open friendship with people who are "other" not merely possible but also interesting, in a profoundly human sense. More importantly, Jesus' friendship is not simply for his own sake, but for the sake of his friends, and he even died for them (John 15:14-15). It is interesting to note that in John's eyes, Jesus died for his friends rather than for sinners. The latter still has a sense of inequality, but the former completely changes the God-humans relationship.

The friendship that Jesus shows is an acceptance of others in their difference. Other people's difference is not defined against the yardstick

---

<sup>31</sup> D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM, 1971), pp. 382-83.

<sup>32</sup> J. Moltmann, *The Church in Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1977), p. 334.

of our own identity and our prejudice about people who are not like us. The difference is experienced in the practical encounter which mutually reveals what we are and what the other is. Therefore, friendship is not about identifying who my friends are, but about sharing my friendship with others. This is a friendship characterized by solidarity, inclusiveness and freedom. The community of Christians thereby can interpret itself not only as an assembly of believers, but also as a society of friends. The motive for this is not the moral purpose of changing the world. It is festal joy over the kingdom of God which, with the name of Jesus and in his Spirit, has thrown itself wide open for “the others.” This is the nature of the ecumenical movement.

The history of the World Council of Churches (WCC) is a concrete example actualizing the unity of the church.<sup>33</sup> The WCC was created in a merger of two prominent movements: Faith and Order, and Life and Work. The continuing existence of these two currents is often recognized; various agenda items within the movement are ascribed to this or that current. While the doctrinal dialogues are assigned to Faith and Order, social, economic and political issues are understood to be the concerns of Life and Work. Various attempts at overcoming the division have been made. The sixth assembly of the WCC (1983) called for the development of a conciliar process for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. The intention was to bind together the so-called socio-political issues with the ecclesiological ones and thus affect a unity of faith and life. Within this search for conciliarity, the unity of the church is more than about doctrinal clarification, but also should include and be tested by a reference to God’s basic attitude towards creation and history. This would help the church to discover in depth the unity already existing and facilitate growth into a wider unity. But this combination is not to promote a belief that “doctrine divides, service unites.” Rather the possibility and reality of mutual service have become important instruments in the growth of trust, the display of mutual love and better service to the world. Common witness through proclamation and service reflects the unity that already exists and nourishes the unity the churches seek. At the same time, the churches must be prepared to find themselves in situations where the type of services they feel called to offer creates controversy and even division among them. If the unity of the church is strong enough to generate service to humanity, it must also be strong enough to stand up to disagreements on the type of service to be given and to engender a degree of trust which will allow them to have confidence that the aims they are pursuing are the same. In a world

---

<sup>33</sup> See *Crisis and Challenge of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1994).

in which the reconciling vocation of the church is more necessary than ever, the church cannot offer wise or pious counsel to warring factions in humanity without showing that the church can overcome its own historical divisions and provide a parable of the potential reconciliation of every human conflict.

#### 4. A Spirit of Solidarity

When an environment is considered as hostile and threatening, friendship usually comes into existence for mutual protection. In other words, friendship becomes another word for exclusion. For instance, many of the European nations work together to form a regional bloc (that is, the European Economic Community) in order to protect their interests. Something like this also has been taking place between Hong Kong and Guangdong Province to form a Pearl River Delta Economic Zone. This is the friendship that happens in globalization. Nevertheless, such a kind of friendship does not ease our anxiety, but rather we fall into a deeper anxiety, because our relationship is based on mutual-benefit more than trust.

The Christian ecumenical movement is about human solidarity. It is not about an alliance to defend our own interest. Nor is it generated by our self-interest. Rather it is always for the sake of others, and is a way to overcome individualism (regionalism) and human division by bearing with one another. Nevertheless, ecumenism is not something like business expansion. It is to give more than to receive. More importantly, "it is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church."<sup>34</sup> Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; to participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people.

God's mission reveals to us his preferential option for the poor.<sup>35</sup> The image of God is so universal in the Christian scriptures that the cry of the oppressed becomes a technical linguistic term meaning an appeal reaching up to and moving God in unyielding fidelity to humans. When Israel reflects theologically on the origin of evil in the world, the breakup of fellowship that this evil represents is imaged as the cry of the murdered brother's blood reaching up to God (Gen 4:10). In the prophetic tradition it

---

<sup>34</sup> J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), pp. xxv-xxvi.

is said that God does not hear the prayer of those who have “their hands...full of blood” (Isa 1:17-18). In the Psalms the theme of God who defends the blood spilt when fellowship is broken and the theme of the cry of the oppressed are joined together: “For the avenger of blood has remembered; he has not forgotten the cry of the afflicted” (Ps 9:13). It is these two converging experiences—the experience of the intolerability of oppression and genocidal repression seeking to maintain injustice and the experience of the God of Jesus Christ in the struggle against this death-dealing power.

Besides, it is in the foot washing that the evangelist John perceives the ultimate justification for an attitude of celebrating life in the name of Jesus and his continued presence in history through the Spirit, an attitude that motivates a table fellowship with the poor. Jesus’ practice is not simply an act of humility in the sense of modesty, but as the action of the one who is affirming that in the new human community there is no inequality in the sense of stratified ranks. Nor is there any servitude, but only mutual service, a co-responsibility of brothers and sisters, one to another, a friendship linked to the same mission and the same destiny. To express solidarity is to restore the banners of justice and dignity to the resistance of the poor. God’s solidarity is characterized by the cross. The cross of Jesus reminds us that there is a distinction between the *Pax Christi* and the *Pax Romana*. The cross of Jesus reveals that the authority of God is then no longer represented directly by those in high positions, the powerful and the rich, but by the outcast Son of Man, who died between two wretches. The rule and the kingdom of God are no longer reflected in political rule and world kingdoms, but in the service of Christ. The consequence for Christian theology is that it must adopt a critical attitude towards political religions in society and in the churches. The political theology of the cross must liberate the state from the political service of idols and must liberate humans from political alienation. It must prepare for the revolution of all values that is involved in the exaltation of the crucified Christ.

Globalization brings us closer than before, but it does not necessarily tighten our relationship. On the contrary, many people are left behind, and they are always the poor. Under the ideology of competitiveness, they are no longer to be seen as the victims. Rather they have to be responsible for their “inability,” and as a result, a spirit of indifference is promoted rather than that of solidarity. Christian ecumenism is a movement that is shaped by a spirit of solidarity, because this is the core of the gospel, which is to say, God becomes human. Thus, globalization can be welcome as an instrument for the church to realize human solidarity, because the more we close, the more concrete our prayer is.



## 5. A New Form of Ecumenism

Globalization is not simply a belief, but is something that has been taking place in our daily life. Therefore, it is not enough just to provide a theoretical-theological reflection on it. Furthermore, if ecumenism is a Christian response to globalization, ecumenism itself has to be a living reality more than a confession.

Apart from the institutionalized ecumenical movement (such as WCC and Christian Conference in Asia), there is a new form of ecumenical movement, namely, the Pentecostal/charismatic movement. Pentecostals proclaim the truly amazing size of the worldwide movement. Beginning in 1901 with only about 40 students in Charles Parham's Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, and gaining world-wide prominence through William Seymour's Azusa Street Mission after 1906, the growth has been exponential. According to Peter Wagner, "in all of human history, no other non-political, non-militaristic, voluntary human movement has growth as rapidly as the Pentecostal-charismatic movements in the last 25 years."<sup>36</sup> Within less than a century Pentecostals are in the process of outgrowing all other Protestant churches taken together. A growth from 0 to more than 460 million in 1995 (if these statistics are to be believed) is unparalleled in Protestant church history.<sup>37</sup> Barrett projects that according to present trends of figure is likely to rise to 1040 million or 44% of the total number of Christians by 2025.<sup>38</sup> Pentecostals are rightly drawing attention to this extraordinary growth.<sup>39</sup> Besides, the influence of Pentecostalism is not restricted to Pentecostal churches, but rather its influence penetrates into different denominations (including the Roman Catholics). It is really an ecumenical movement (although I have to admit that Pentecostalism also brings schism among churches). Ralph Martin saw the Charismatic renewal as the vehicle for bringing the sacramental and the Evangelical churches together. In Martin's view, the Charismatic movement was the only force that could weld these forces together for a unified Christian

---

<sup>36</sup> Quote from Vinson Synan, *The Spirit Said "Growth"* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1992), p. ii.

<sup>37</sup> See David Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>38</sup> D. B. Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission 1997," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21:1 (1997), pp. 24-25.

<sup>39</sup> Lesile Newbigin, *The Household of God* (New York: Friendship, 1954) prophetically saw Christianity moving towards a convergence of three streams, namely, the sacramental, the Evangelical and the Pentecostal.

witness.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, people like Harvey Cox<sup>41</sup> and Douglas Petersen<sup>42</sup> highly appraise this movement and positively consider that Pentecostalism would bring a new impetus to Christianity and society. If so, any study of the ecumenical movement should not ignore Pentecostalism.

What contributions does it bring to the ecumenical community? The history of Pentecostalism shows us that it basically is a contextual grass-root movement. It is a religion of the poor, because it is rooted in the black oral history.<sup>43</sup> The black oral quality of Pentecostalism consists of the following: orality of liturgy; narrative theology and witness; maximum participation at the levels of reflection, prayer and decision-making and therefore a reconciliatory forms of community; inclusion of dreams and visions into personal and public form of worship that function as a kind of oral icon for the individual and the community; an understanding of the body-mind relationship that is informed by experience of correspondence between body and mind as, for example, in liturgical dance and prayer for the sick. These are the practices that we still can find among Pentecostals although there are various in different churches. The black oral tradition is not simply about an ethnic culture, but rather it symbolizes the outcast, because at that time (the beginning of the twentieth century) the Blacks were discriminated against. Although the white Pentecostal churches of North America do not associate these practices with the history of the Blacks and replace it by the middle-class culture, the Blacks at that time found their identity in Pentecostalism. This is why the Black consciousness and the Pentecostal movement cannot be easily distinguished.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the Pentecostal movement is a movement about a struggle of the Blacks to be themselves. The Pentecostal movement is a people's movement, and a voice of the poor.

Besides, the Pentecostal movement is an ecumenical movement. It comes from the Blacks, but not confined to it. The early Pentecostals were hopeful that this revival would bring worldwide Christian unity. Charles

---

<sup>40</sup> Ralph Martin, *Fire on the Earth* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1975), pp. 30-42.

<sup>41</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

<sup>42</sup> Douglas Petersen, *Not by Might Nor by Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1996).

<sup>43</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), pp. 18-19.

<sup>44</sup> See Robert Beckford, "Black Pentecostals and Black Politics," in *Pentecostals after a Century*, eds. Allan H. Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 48-59.

Fox Parham, the pioneer of Pentecostalism, was troubled by the confusion of denominationalism. He wrote,

Unity is not to be accomplished by organization or non-organization. Unity by organization has been tried for 1900 years and failed. Unity by non-organization has been tried for several years and resulted in anarchy, or gathered in small cliques with an unwritten creed and regulations which are often fraught with error and fanaticism. We expect to see the time, when baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body, the gloriously redeemed Church without spot or wrinkle, will have the same mind, judgment and speak the same things.<sup>45</sup>

W. F. Carothers who served as the Field Director for Charles F. Parham's Apostolic Faith Movement wrote: The restoration of Pentecost means ultimately the restoration of Christian unity.<sup>46</sup> Even the Assemblies of God shared the view that something unique was happening in the Pentecostal movement, yet its founders viewed themselves as standing in full continuity with other Christians. From the event of the Azusa Street, the unity that Pentecostals restored was not simply about Christian unity, but rather broke down human barriers caused by racial prejudice, and created fellowship among them.<sup>47</sup> Vinson Synan writes,

The Azusa Street meeting was conducted on the basis of complete racial equality. Pentecostals point out that just as the first Pentecost recorded in Acts 2:1-11 included "men out of every nation under heaven", the modern "Pentecost" at Los Angeles included people of every racial background. Participants in the meeting reported that "Negroes, whites, Mexican, Italians, Chinese, Russians, Indians," and other ethnic groups mingled without apparent prejudice on account of racial origins. The fact that Cashwell was forced to reform his racial prejudice after arriving at the Asuza Street Mission indicated that the trend in early Pentecostal services was toward racial unity in contrast to the segregationist trends of the times.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Quote from Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, p. 348. See Cecil M. Robeck, "Pentecostals and Ecumenism in a Pluralistic World," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism*, eds. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen, (Carlisle: Regnum, 1999), pp. 338-62.

<sup>46</sup> Quote from Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, p. 348.

<sup>47</sup> Lap Yan Kung, "Outpouring of the Spirit: A Reflection on Pentecostals' Identity," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:1 (2001), pp. 3-19.

<sup>48</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 170-71.

This is really the sign of the anticipation of one humanity. Nevertheless, the history of Pentecostalism reveals that it took a rather negative attitude towards ecumenical movement and even condemned it. It is not the purpose here to give the reason to it,<sup>49</sup> but in the last ten years, we notice that the Pentecostal churches retrieve their ecumenical tradition. For instance, the formation of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America claims that its membership would seek new partnerships “in the Spirit of our Blessed Lord who prayed that we might be one. It goes on to pledge a commitment to “the reconciliation of all Christians regardless of race and gender as we move into the millennium.”<sup>50</sup> In fact, a lot of ecumenical dialogues between Pentecostals and other churches, such as, Roman Catholics, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, WCC have taken place in the last decade.

Unlike the traditional ecumenism of that denominational structures and theological systems standing in the way of organizational unity from the top down, the experience of the Pentecostals occurs in local prayers and praise meetings. It emphasizes both the participatory of the laity and the plurality of the structures of the churches.<sup>51</sup> This is due to their belief of charisms. According to St. Paul, charisms are given by the Spirit in Christ, but are never restricted to a particular circle of persons. This is always universal, and no members of the church are without charisms. Therefore, the division into those who serve the community and those who allow themselves to be served is ecclesologically untenable: each person is to serve with his or her specific gifts and each is to be served in his or her needs. Nevertheless, charisms given by the Spirit are not for the sake of individual enhancement. They are always for the sake of building up the church, and therefore, the universal distribution of the charisms implies shared responsibility for the life of the church. At the same time, the emphasis on charisms of Pentecostals allows them to accept the differences among them, because charisms are given by the Spirit. This is why their service allows different ways of expressions coming from the congregations. A kind of unity in diversity and diversity in unity emerges. Nevertheless, this is an ideal or a vision far from reality. In fact, Harold

---

<sup>49</sup> Robeck, “Pentecostals and Ecumenism in a Pluralistic World,” pp. 342-44.

<sup>50</sup> “Pentecostal Partners: Racial Reconciliation Manifesto,” *Pneuma* 17:2 (1995), pp. 218-222 (218).

<sup>51</sup> See Harold D. Hunter, “We Are the Church: New Congregationalism,” in *Pentecostal Movements as an Ecumenical Challenge*, eds. Jurgen Moltmann and Karl Josef Kuschel, pp. 18-21.

Hunter complains about “the rise of bureaucracies and shibboleth monitors” in the Pentecostal churches. Nancy Bedford, who teaches theology in Buenos Aires, made the following observation there about the ethos of some rapidly growing charismatic churches:

It centers on following spiritually gifted *candillos* (largely male) who are both charismatic and authoritarian. Thus the form seems congregational but the ecclesiological substance reverts to the worst kind of priest-centered Catholicism.... It is an example of the gospel adapting to a culture and growing (in some case phenomenally)—but at what price!<sup>52</sup>

Despite it, the Pentecostals still can provide a different ecclesiology that inspires our understanding of ecumenism.

Apart from the deficiencies, what Pentecostal movement shows us is a movement of the poor of that it allows their way of life to be integrated into the Christian faith, a movement of friendship of that it seeks for unity, and a movement of valuing each individual of that it believes God’s charism given to each individual. Krister Stendahl wrote, “The Spirit as teacher renews the faith of the church and the intellectual quest of humanity; the Spirit as unifier renews the love of the church and the solidarity of humanity; the Spirit as liberator renews the justice of the church and the moral energy of humanity; and the Spirit as vivifier renews the hope of the church and the aspirations of humanity.”<sup>53</sup> This is the spirit that our world urgently needs in order that we can see others as companions and friends rather than the threatening aliens.

## 6. Pentecostals in Captivity

If the above analysis is the tradition of Pentecostalism, our concern is to what extent this understanding is still found among the Pentecostals in Hong Kong.<sup>54</sup> I do not have a statistical survey on Pentecostalism in Hong Kong, but it does not mean that Pentecostalism among Christianity in

---

<sup>52</sup> Quote from Hunter, “We Are the Church,” p. 43.

<sup>53</sup> Krister Stendahl, *Energy of Life* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), pp. 49-50.

<sup>54</sup> The following criticism is not only found in Hong Kong, but also in other countries. See Allan H. Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger, ed., *Pentecostals after a Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). In this book, cases of Pentecostalism in Britain, South Africa, Chile and South Korea are chosen.

Hong Kong is less influential. Many churches in Hong Kong have felt themselves drawn to emulate the charismatic style or simply encountered it as a tendency embraced by many of their own members. Some traditional churches like the Methodists even hold two separate forms of worship service (charismatic worship and traditional worship) in order to satisfy the needs of different groups of their church members.

For the analysis purpose, I identify there are three different charismatic groups in Hong Kong. The first group is the Pentecostal churches associated with the historical Pentecostal tradition. They may be very different in the understanding and practice of Pentecostal teachings, but there is no main difference between them and the Evangelical churches, for they consider saving souls and planting churches the prime mission of the church. They never speak on any social issues, for they believe that spiritual revival is the answer to the fallen world. The second group is the Evangelical churches with charismatic practice, such as healing. Because of the fact that the theology of these churches does not take social transformation as an integral part of mission, they pay no attention to the history of Pentecostalism but selectively borrow (copy) some practice of Pentecostalism that they find useful. Their main concern is how to make the church more appealing to their members instead of how the church can serve society better. Besides, due to the difference between Pentecostal and Evangelical theology, it often leads to controversy among them, and even schism.<sup>55</sup> Finally, there are charismatic groups who identify themselves with “the third wave” more than the historical Pentecostal tradition. They have a strong zeal for mission. Although they never consider that striving for social justice is the mission of the church, they really work among with the poor and marginalized. For instance, St. Stephen Society mainly takes care of the drug addicts and the homeless; JiFu mainly takes care of the new immigrants; Light of the Temple Street mainly takes care of the despised. Some may criticize that these are all charity works and far from social justice but no one can deny the importance of these works. Nevertheless, my concern is what happens to most of the historical Pentecostal churches. When Pentecostalism becomes very influential in Christianity, according to Barrett and Newbiggin, what contribution it can make to the churches and society in general? I am convinced that if Pentecostalism is faithful to its tradition

---

<sup>55</sup> For instance, one congregation of the Evangel Free Church (Hong Kong) breaks away from its denomination. In fact, the pastor of this congregation is asked to leave the Evangel Free Church, for he introduces charismatic elements into the congregation.

and belief, it can create an alternative to the global-capitalistic system. Before that, the Pentecostals in Hong Kong have to repent in four areas.

Firstly, the Pentecostals in Hong Kong are inclined towards a kind of religious (denominational) chauvinism, and lose the Pentecostals' ecumenical spirit. Religious (denominational) chauvinism is a projection of a particular religious (denomination) identity with the claim to be the universal. Here religions vie with each other to catch the global religious market and sell their spiritual goods as the best, and even the only one. What appears to be a global outreach hides a power-agenda that is behind such aspirations as to see the whole world as its own faith. The process of globalization has added fuel and supplied the instrumentalities for the competing of religions, and indeed for religious (denominational) conflicts. What is worse is that religious (denomination) chauvinism does not allow any room for self-criticism, incapacitates it to revise its own traditional image of the other religious groups. In this way, the insider/outsider polarity gets theologically, culturally and politically rooted at the expense of genuine universality. The attitude is that of self-righteousness and exclusion. Religious nationalism is but a political expression of an ideologically oriented religious chauvinism. Much like the process of globalization which progresses by continuously excluding more and more people, so too religious (denomination) chauvinism excludes all those who do not belong to it. It could assume different forms and expressions, from a theological re-assertion of "without the baptism in the Spirit no salvation" to political and cultural exclusion of Christians and Muslims as aliens and as not belonging to the Indian nation because they are not Hindus.

Secondly, church growth becomes the ideology of Pentecostalism in Hong Kong, and the Pentecostal churches become more inward looking and self-centered. In order to recruit more members, the Pentecostals accommodate themselves to fit the needs of society. An example of this is the Yoido Full Gospel Church, which becomes the model for Pentecostals. Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho's philosophy of ministry is "find need and meet need." For him, the important question is how the Korean church can meet what the majority of Korean people need. Why do the Korean working class and particularly the women go to the shaman? Because they need health, wealth and success in their life ventures. Cho's preaching meets those needs exactly: "Anything is possible if you have faith." He often claims that the Christian faith is positive thinking and that Jesus Christ is a positive thinker.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, the gospel loses its transforming power,

---

<sup>56</sup> See Yoo Boo-Woong, *Korean Pentecostalism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 115-136.

but becomes a consumer product. When church growth becomes a significant sign of God's blessing, there is no place for statistics on how many souls die without Christ every minute if they do not take into account how many of those who die because of hunger and violence. With the ideology of church growth, the gospel is truncated in order to make it easy for everyone to become Christian. Church growth can be a way out for the churches to go on sinning under a respectable name, but not all that grows is the church. Cancer grows too.

Thirdly, Pentecostalism in Hong Kong is inclined towards a kind of prosperity theology. When our society has become preoccupied with material prosperity and obsessed with concern for health, Pentecostals become a captive to this life. The good life of TV commercials defined by possession- a well-furnished house, late-model car, high-tech imports gives rise to prosperity theology. Prosperity theology is fundamentally anthropocentric and is a product of the highly individualistic and self-centered culture of late twentieth century western capitalism. Besides, in the midst of social change and disruption, the one thing left that we think we can control is our bodies. Having lost faith in traditional communities and institutions, they took within themselves for answers. This narcissism signifies not so much self-assertion as a loss of selfhood.

Finally, signs and wonders, especially healing, become the phenomena of Pentecostalism in Hong Kong. These phenomena are considered as the presence of the power of the Spirit. Different "healing assemblies" are held in Hong Kong. W. MacDonald describes the healing evangelists as follows:

Single women, especially widows, are the preferred diet of this species of religious wolf. The evangelist weeps and melts the heart of the women. He declares that the Kingdom of God is about to collapse and his own stronghold is in danger unless substantial financial resources are sent to him immediately. But Paul never collects money to build up organization.... The greatest threat to the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement in the last two decades of this century will be the rise and fall of personal kingdoms, because when they fall, as inevitably they must, the faith of those who do not have their eyes on Jesus, will fall.<sup>57</sup>

They see the world as a cosmic and moral duality. Everything is either divine or demonic. They emphasize the conflict between God and the evil, but the tendency of many, including John Wimber's *Power Evangelism*, is

---

<sup>57</sup> W. MacDonald, "The Cross Versus Personal Kingdom," *Pneuma* 3 (1982), pp. 26-37 (35).



to see this struggle against demonic powers as too other-worldly and not to see that spiritual warfare must correspond to the geography of evil—this sinful and evil structures of society. They must see that the texture of social living makes no easy distinctions between the personal and social.<sup>58</sup>

Pentecostalism, according to my thesis, is a powerful movement of the poor, of unity and valuing each individual, and as such is pregnant with potential for the transformation of society. It can generate a new culture in an era of globalization, that is, human solidarity. However, if it does not re-traditionalize its tradition, it would easily become institutionalized, withdraw from social struggles with the people and turn to become a ghetto or a middle class's prosperity gospel. For this conformity with the schemata of this (capitalist) world, the price is the sacrifice of the poor: the tears of the poor who are discarded by society. The price is the millions of starving people whose own subsistence economies have been destroyed in the interests of a so-called free-market, because it does not fit the schemata of this world, the schemes of the *koinonia* of the elites.

### 7. Ecumenism at the Crossroads

Roland Robertson, a sociologist, draws upon globalization theory to describe a series of processes by “which the world becomes a single place, both with respect to recognition of a very high degree of interdependence between spheres and locales of social activity across the entire globe and the growth of consciousness pertaining to the globe as such.”<sup>59</sup> But he sees it,

There is an emerging problem of the definition of the global human situation. The increasing sense of shared fate in the modern world rests, primarily, upon material aspects of rapidly increasing global interdependence and conflicts associated with the distribution of material and political power. On the other hand, notwithstanding recent developments relevant to the embryonic crystallization across national boundaries of modes of discourse concerning, in the broadest sense, the meaning of the modern global human circumstance, global

---

<sup>58</sup> Eldin Villafane, *The Liberating Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 201.

<sup>59</sup> R. Robertson, “The Sacred and the World System,” in *The Sacred in a Secular Age*, ed. Phillip Hammond (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 19.

consciousness is indeed relatively unformed in comparison with the mere sense impression of material interdependence.<sup>60</sup>

Globalization demands a new sense of meaning, but the materialist accounts do not suffice.

In such a context, fundamentalism addresses classic issues of group boundaries and identity in a world undergoing a clear process of globalization. Robertson comments to this point:

With respect to both the exacerbation of concern with societal identities and the nature of individual attachment to one's own society, it would be expected that societies in the modern world would experience fundamentalist movements which make special claims to exhibit the real identity of society in question and also, perhaps, the true meaning to be given to the global circumstance. Indeed, we have witnessed the proliferation of such movements across the globe in recent years- some of them being explicitly concerned not merely with the identity of the societies in which they have arisen but also with the positive and negative identities of other societies in the international system- indeed, with the meaning of the global condition itself. My argument is that the fundamentalist and absolutist religious (and non-religious) movements of our time should be seen in terms of global developments and not simply in terms of their being reactions to particular *Gesellschaft* trends which a large number of societies have in common.<sup>61</sup>

The strain brought along by globalization is the lack of a new integrative meaning system for the new global economic and political interdependence. Absent alternative voices in providing meaning for this new dislocation of received worldviews and discourses, fundamentalism enters the arena with its own meaning system.

The case of Pentecostalism in Hong Kong reveals to us that it inclines to fundamentalism more than ecumenism. This does not only restrict to Hong Kong, but is also found in other part of the world.<sup>62</sup> What concerns me most is the tribal mentality of fundamentalism, not the

<sup>60</sup> Roland Robertson and JoAnn Chirico, "Human Globalization and the World Wide Religious Resurgence: A Theoretical Explanation," *Sociological Analysis* 46 (1985), pp. 224-238 (225-26).

<sup>61</sup> R. Robertson, "A New Perspective on Religion and Secularization in the Global Context," in *Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered*, vol. III, eds. Anton Shupe and Jeffery Hadden (New York: Paragon, 1989), pp. 52-66 (65).

<sup>62</sup> See David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

contents of its belief, because the former always leads to some kind of militant exclusivism. Put bluntly, it creates boundaries among people rather than breaks down human barriers caused by nations, race, gender, religions and ethnic. The ambiguity of Pentecostalism is that it is a worldwide movement, but not necessarily ecumenical. Nevertheless, the origin of Pentecostalism is ecumenical. Therefore, Pentecostalism is at the crossroads, whether it sees itself as an ecumenical movement or just a “Pentecostal” movement in a restricted sense.

Errata for *AJPS* 5:2 (July 2002) Issue

The editors apologize to two authors for our oversights. The corrections are:

- Table of Contents: The title which Erlinda Reyes reviewed is *Jesus the Healer* instead of *The Holy Spirit: An Appeal for Maturity*. The actual text contains correction information.
- The last sentence of Monte Rice (p. 312) failed to appear in its complete form. The last sentence should read:

This pattern of “critical reflection and action” as a didactic purpose seems to reflect then the Acts 13:1-2 missiological paradigm, wherein both the didactic and prophetic ministries helps the church respond to what the Spirit is saying.

Our web version has been corrected. Please accept the editors’ sincere apology to the contributors and our valued readers.