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Discerning the Spirit in Culture: Toward Pentecostal Interculturality

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Introduction

For years Canadian Pentecostalism has been overshadowed by its US counterpart. More specifically, Canadian Pentecostalism has often been viewed as an offshoot of the Azusa Street revival. Only recently have Canadian Pentecostal scholars begun to retrieve the development and legacy of the Canadian side of the story of the global multi-stranded and multi-national movement commonly identified as Pentecostalism. Canadians scholars are beginning to acknowledge diversity among Pentecostals. Michael Wilkinson, for example, reminds us that in the context of Canada there are thirteen "Classical" Pentecostal denominations alone, and many independent churches.[1] While I would not be surprised that similar issues and concerns are also found among other Pentecostal groups, here I want to focus primarily on the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Canadian Pentecostals have begun to acknowledge its poly-ethnocultural constituency. Often this comes out of a well-intentioned motivation to "include" other cultural groups under the

[1] Michael Wilkinson, "Introduction," in *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation*, ed. Michael Wilkinson (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009), 5.

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national official version of multiculturalism, which paints a distorted picture of Canada as open to ethnocultural diversity. As has been demonstrated repeatedly, the idea and official policy of multiculturalism in the context of Canada (and other places where multiculturalism has been implemented) has meant the affirmation of the dominant cultures (Anglo and French) over the rest of the Canadian cultural landscape.[2]

In view of the ethnocultural diversity among Pentecostals, in this article I argue that Pentecostalism in Canada ought to undergo a structural and theological reconfiguration that reflects more truly its plural-cultural constituency. Along the lines of theology, other cultural groups' theological horizons and epistemologies ought to become part of the theological education for Pentecostal ministers, in order to become more culturally competent in the diverse context of Canada. At stake is the building of a Pentecostal theology fully conscious of the rich ethnocultural reservoir and wisdom among the diverse ethnocultural groups. The direct implication is the theological redefinition of the event of Pentecost as the quintessential eschatological event of pneumatological ethnocultural inclusion. The Spirit is both guiding and challenging us to construct an Intercultural Pentecostal theology.

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[2] Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2000); Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

(Re) Situating Canadian Pentecostalism

Most accounts of Canadian Pentecostalism centre almost exclusively on its growth among white-Anglos. They portray early Canadian Pentecostalism as ethnoculturally homogeneous, and view ethnocultural diversity as recent phenomena. Evidence is beginning to emerge that debunk the idea that Canadian Pentecostalism irrupted only among the white-Anglo population. For example, Robert Burkinshaw tells us that Pentecostalism was present among the First Nations of British Columbia as early as the 1930s. While it was not until the 1950s that the PAOC expanded significantly and numerous congregations were founded among the first nations, Pentecostalism was there well before such "explosion."[3] By the turn of the twentieth century Canada was already fairly diverse, and it is highly probable that peoples from other cultural groups were exposed, and actively participated in the expansion of the movement much earlier than the available data reveals. Thus, just as Wilkinson and Althouse challenge the Azusa centred side of the story of Canadian Pentecostalism,[4] I wish to challenge the notion

[3] Robert K. Burkinshaw, "Native Pentecostalism in British Columbia," in *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation*, ed. Michael Wilkinson (Montreal & Kingston: McGill University Press, 2009), 142–70.

[4] Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse, "Introduction," in *Winds from the North: Canadian Contributions to the Pentecostal Movement*, ed. Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1–13.

that Canadian Pentecostalism since its inception has been ethnoculturally homogeneous.

Relevant to our present, diversity among Canadian Pentecostals has received some attention only recently. Scholars such as Michael Wilkinson have pointed out that the phenomena of globalization and its resulting global forces of migration have contributed to the diversification of Pentecostal believers in Canada.[5] Correctly, he notes

[5] Wilkinson traces the beginning of globalization as far back to the 15th century, most likely in the Renaissance. He appears to organize the development of globalization and modernity as an intra-European development, whereby its "advance" is inherent to itself, and without any connections with the world outside. As he comments, it is only in the third phase of globalization that the rest of the world is included. Michael Wilkinson, *The Spirit Said Go: Pentecostal Immigrants in Canada* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 48. Such delineation of globalization and modernity for that matter is profoundly problematic. In agreement with Dussel, I argue that the so-called "globalization" and "modernity" were the result of a larger more insidious process of colonization. It was because imperial Europe expanded precisely at the end of the 15th century (1492 to be exact) that globalization was born and all of the necessary structures where set in place for the possibility of modernity to occur. Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, ed. and trans. Eduardo Mendieta (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996); Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization*, trans. Deke Dusinberre (New York & London: Routledge, 2002). Let us not forget that the advancement and riches of Europe and the US are closely connected to the exploitation of the Americas, Asia, and Africa. The development of Europe and North America is not the result of an inherent virtue. The unforeseen implication of Wilkinson's focus on migration and globalization is that without the expansion of Europe, and without the structures of power in place the expansion of Christianity and of Pentecostalism would have been

that for the last 30 years or so the ethnocultural composition of immigrants to Canada has changed.[6] The shift corresponds to unique racialized social and political structures in Canada's immigration. The migration of peoples from other ethnocultural groups (other than white European) into Canada relates directly to racialized and discriminatory migration policies and practices. Only recently has the Canadian government been forced to open its borders to peoples from various cultural backgrounds that in other times did not fit the Canadian imaginary and national building project.[7] This shift in the ethnocultural composition of Canada corresponds to systemic racialized exclusionary structures. Awareness of the underlying causes of the shift in the composition of the immigrant communities helps prevent misconceived ideas that these more "recent" immigrants are the recipients of Canada's kindness.

With all the tensions, contradictions, and problems that accompany the phenomena of migration, whether early or late arrivals, the fact remains that by 2001 the PAOC reported a total of 120 congregations representing a broad range of ethnocultural traditions from Asia,

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very different. In many ways, Pentecostalism was allowed to enter because the armies of the empire made it possible.

[6] Wilkinson, *The Spirit Said Go: Pentecostal Immigrants in Canada*, Chapter 3.

[7] See also Néstor Medina, "Hibridity, Migration, and Transnational Relations: (Re)Thinking Canadian Pentecostalism from a Latina/o Perspective," in *Many Tongues: Globalization and the Transformation of Pentecostalism*, ed. Michael Wilkinson, International Studies in Religion and Society Series (Brill, forthcoming).

Africa, and North (Mexico) Central and South America.[8] Appropriately, it can be stated that migration is "transforming theologically, culturally and organizationally" Pentecostalism in Canada.[9] This ethnocultural diversification has encountered mixed responses in the PAOC. According to Thomas William Miller, "Missions Canada" was created in order to *respond* to the question of immigrants arriving to Canada. The motivating factor was the evangelistic responsibility that the PAOC felt for other cultural groups. The objective was to reach the many immigrants coming to Canada. In other words, while the PAOC sees the world as the mission field, it must also reach the immigrants here.[10] This shows that, "Missions Canada" operates under the misguided assumption that immigrants coming to Canada are "non-Christians."[11] Canadians from other ethnocultural groups are seen as an extension of the "mission field." This view is simply incorrect. Among Latina/o-Canadian Pentecostals, for example, the largest contributing force of growth is migration and not conversion.[12] Migrants already ascribe to Pentecostalism. This is also confirmed by Michael Di Giacomo concerning the Italian Pente-

[8] Wilkinson, *The Spirit Said Go: Pentecostal Immigrants in Canada*, 48.
[9] Michael Wilkinson, "What's 'Global' About Global Pentecostalism?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 17 (2008): 108.
[10] Thomas William Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada* (Ontario, Canada: Full Gospel Publishing House, 1994), 371.
[11] Ibid., 379.
[12] Medina, "Hibridity, Migration, and Transnational Relations."

costal community. And I would not be surprised that other cultural groups display similar patterns.

While the plurality of cultural groups is "celebrated," their contributions are kept at arm's length. Their theology is undermined, and their leadership skills are reserved for their own ethnocultural group. Bible colleges continue to teach a history of Christianity that is Eurocentric and fail to acknowledge the multiple well-documented histories outside of the context of Europe and North America. I agree with Andrew Walls as he writes that in order for Christian history to reflect other developments in the world a clearer paradigmatic shift ought to occur so as to conceive European history as one chapter in the larger history of Christianity, which has many precedents and traditions in other regions in the world.[13] This is true as well for the way Pentecostal history is conceived and taught. The Pentecostal story students receive is ethnoculturally homogeneous and US centred; students of different ethnocultural backgrounds do not find their side of the story in the dominant narratives. While theological literature from these communities may be used, the general methodological framing of theology taught is Eurocentric and preserves the European Enlightenment supremacy of reason. Other sources of knowledge are dismissed as unimportant or secondary. For example, Frank Macchia emphasizes "orality" as a

[13] Andrew F. Walls, "Eusebius Tries Again: The Task of Reconceiving and Re-Visioning the Study of Christian History," in *Enlarging the Story: Perspectives on Writing World Christian History*, ed. Wilbert Shenk (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 1–21.

central aspect of Pentecostal culture, but he points out that the supremacy of reason remains the standard in our Bible colleges.[14] Similarly, the various ways in which the Bible text is approached by different ethnocultural communities is dismissed at best, and silenced at worst.[15] The general national leadership of the fellowship and faculty of Bible colleges is reserved for White-Anglos. Even the office of missions does not reflect the ethnocultural composition of the PAOC. White Anglos alone determine the direction of the fellowship. This is clearly seen in the publication of the latest document dealing with what they call "Authentic Pentecostalism," but where other cultural are a minor concern.[16]

Overall, the general leadership of the fellowship does not reflect the larger population of Canada and of Canadian Pentecostals. The organizational structures are designed in ways that impede that people from other cultural groups come to the table as equal partners. These structures prevent Pentecostal brothers and sisters from other ethnocultural backgrounds and traditions from aspiring to national level positions of leadership. The

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[14] Frank D. Macchia, "The Kingdom and the Power: Spirit Baptism in Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspective," in *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism*, ed. Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 111.

[15] Néstor Medina and Alison Hari-Singh, eds., "Orality in a Hermeneutical Key: Toward a Latina/o-Canadian Pentecostal Narratival Hermeneutics," in *Reading In-Between: Biblical Interpretation in Canada* (forthcoming).

[16] See David Wells and Van Johnson, eds., *Authentically Pentecostal: Here's What we See–a Conversation* (Mississauga, Ontario: The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, International Office, 2010).

institution places other cultural groups in a position of subalternity under the "leadership" of White Anglos. As it appears to me, there is still an operative "Manifest Destiny" orientation by which those in power–White Anglos–view themselves as the source of and responsible for taking the gospel to the "rest of the world."

By all accounts, these structures prevent people from other cultural groups to contribute to the PAOC by way of becoming leaders at the national level. It is important to expose the exclusionary nature of the present structures of the PAOC because they prevent real mutuality among cultural groups, including the dominant culture. I am challenging Canadian Pentecostals not to follow the same dangerous path of assimilation as their US counterpart. After having extraordinary poly-ethnocultural origins, the Assemblies of God reflected the segregation laws of Jim Crow. In the process, not only were "white" Pentecostals unwilling to work along and under the leadership of African descendants and people from other cultural groups, but also displayed deep racist motivations behind their institutional organization in 1914. The predominant version of US Pentecostalism focuses on its white Anglo roots, while often undermining African-American and Latino/a roots.[17] Only when those in power relinquish control and share their power will we see the birth of real mutuality.

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[17] Arlene M. Sánchez-Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Iain McRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

Pentecostal Theology and Cultural Plurality

These are serious questions of social justice, equality, and fairness. However, I wish to engage the theological dimension of these issues. I believe ethnocultural inclusion is morally right and conducive to the construction of a fellowship that models what it means to be Pentecostal. The changes that I am calling for are intrinsic to our Pentecostal identity. They set a new path toward reimagining a new way of conceiving the church as an inclusive body. On one hand, in terms of social justice what concerns me is the degree to which the church and fellowship structures reflect such levels of social inequality and racialized exclusion. I propose, however, that social justice is part and parcel of the outworking of the Spirit. For this reason, I reject Miller and Yamamori's idealization of "progressive" Pentecostals as an example and replacement of the "vacuum created by the decline of Liberation Theology."[18] In the final analysis, this "progressive" move in Pentecostalism leaves unchallenged present structures of exclusion and asymmetry. Instead, I propose that when it comes to issues of social justice, what is really happening is that Pentecostal churches are arriving to the realization that the social and the cultural are also dimensions of the Pentecostal experience. This is something akin to what Liberation theology affirmed

[18] Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 215.

much earlier than any other movement. Perhaps, Pentecostals can learn something here by incorporating some of the insights of Liberation Theology into their understanding of the activity of the Spirit. It is for this reason that I agree with Martini's notion of "whole gospel," as appropriately more accurate than the notion of "full gospel," by which he means that salvation involves "the visible this-worldly activity of the Spirit," which in my view includes the cultural dimension.[19]

In terms of theology, I insist the Pentecostal movement has it within itself to include the other cultures of the world as a necessary consequence of the work of the spirit. Such inclusion means, however, the reconfiguration of theology. Here I just want to focus on the reconfiguration of our understanding of church, the person of Christ, and our eschatological interpretation of Pentecost.

The elaboration of these three elements goes beyond the scope of this paper. Here I only wish to provide a sample of specific aspects that, in my view, can contribute to the construction of a truly intercultural Pentecostal theology. By *interculturality*, I do not mean the traditional Eurocentric missionary approach, which was oblivious of the colonizing, and culturally assimilationist ways in which missionaries engaged other cultures. The resulting detrimental outcome was the

[19] Jeromey Martini, "Christ, Our Saviour," in *Authentically Pentecostal: Here's What we See–A Conversation*, ed. David Wells and Van Johnson (Mississauga, Ontario: The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, International Office, 2010), 12.

imposition of their culture ensconced behind the excuse of sharing the gospel. Similarly, I have noticed that often interculturality is being used as simply another way to speak of "cross-cultural missions" but without the necessary critical cultural sensibilities. Interculturality, as I introduce it here, is a categorical reformulation of the intersection between culture and faith whereby the cultural background of the people is not only celebrated but also elevated as a constitutive part of human existence. In other words, I am rejecting the notion that it is possible to divest of one's culture, that there is one thing as the gospel divorced from ethnocultural traces, and that it is possible to transmit the gospel without its carriers sharing their own cultural universe as well. People develop the necessary openness and sensibility to recognize (read discern) the divine at work in other cultures, only when they become conscious of their own cultural baggage and conditioning. As a result they enter the space of ethnocultural interaction, the threshold of intercultural exchange. This can only take place in open critical mutual interaction.

Toward an Ethnoculturally Inclusive Ecclesiology

The records of the New Testament provide us with the memory of the early church as it was formed, established, and matured. Pentecost was first and foremost conceived as the outworking of the Spirit in the formation of the church. Other ethnocultural groups were a central part in the formation of the early church. I need not remind us

that the incidents in the book of Acts display the inclusion of all the peoples of the known world into the nascent church. It is no accident that the people present "heard the disciples speak in their own language" (Acts 2:6). Language here represents the fundamental material expression of ethnocultural diversity present and receiving the divine stamp of approval.

This is no Babel experience where division and confusion reign. Rather, the event of Pentecost brings clarity, openness, and inclusion. As David Daniels puts it, for Charles Mason to be baptized in the Spirit also meant to struggle against any notion that separates the church on the basis of ethnoracial differences.[20] It was such an event that caused the expansion of the gospel across the known world. We see that plurality of languages (poly-glossa) was intrinsic to the very character of the birthing church and of the Pentecostal experience. It was not too long after that conflicts developed regarding how the church was to tend for the widows of the Jews and the Greeks. There was no sense here of hierarchies, but issues of shared power and responsibilities. Peter's encounter with the Romans at Cornelius' home (Acts 10) reminds us that inclusion was actualized not to "call unclean" what God has cleansed. Paul's conversation with the Samaritans (Acts 19:1-8) creates the space of inclusion for those that at one point were rejected. And Phillip's reaching out to

[20] David Daniels, "Forging an Ecumenical Future: Framing the Afro-Pentecostal Past," Keynote address, Society of Pentecostal Studies: Receiving the Future: An Anointed Heritage (Memphis, TN, March 10-12, 2011).

the Ethiopians (via the Eunuch) in Acts 8:26-40 actualizes the divine inclusion of those once excluded. The incidents in the book of Acts are examples of the plural ethnocultural inclusive nature of the church. In concrete terms, the wall of division and hierarchies among ethnocultural groups has fallen (Ephesians 2:14).

The ethnocultural make-up of the church demands that we rethink our ecclesiology when it comes to reimagining the relations between cultural groups within the same fellowship. Historically the relation between Christianity and culture was negotiated in such ways that Western European and Anglo North American communities saw themselves as the gatekeepers of a "pristine" version of the gospel; their job was to prevent other ethnocultural groups (non-Europeans) from corrupting it. Although expressed differently at different points in history, such ideas led to the privileging of White Western European and Anglo-North American versions of Christianity and understanding of the Church. Pentecost offers us a different ecclesiology, one where "all the believers had all things in common" (Acts 2:44). The basic concern is to create an environment and build a church where all people, as ethnocultural entities can come together and be at home.

This poses a challenge to the present configuration and structures of the PAOC where peoples of other cultural groups can be affiliated, can contribute financially (tithes and offerings), but are not equal brothers and sisters at the highest levels of leadership. If McRoberts is right, that is, that Roman Catholics

emphasizes sacraments, Protestants emphasize the Preaching of the Word, and Pentecostals emphasize the participation of the people,[21] then I ask: What will it take for our White-Anglo *brothers* to open the door for the possibilities of building a truly diverse church where all positions of leadership reflect its ethnocultural constituency? How much larger will Pentecostals from other cultural groups have to be in order for our white Anglo counterparts decide to include our theologies, sources of knowledge, and professors as part of the mainstream curriculum and faculty in Bible Colleges across Canada?

A Cultural Reading of Jesus

Consistent with the Pentecostal experience we need to rethink the theological underpinnings of the Jesus of history. The emphasis on the historical Jesus points to the cultural conditioning of the incarnate gospel: "the word became flesh" points to the necessary theological move toward the word became "culturalized."

While scholars have been wrestling with these questions for quite some time, they approach the relation of faith experience and culture from a position of clearly definable boundaries between the two. This is the reason for which Richard Niebuhr is able to come up with his five paradigmatic alternatives of the relation between

[21] McRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism*, 1.

Christ and Culture.[22] Privileging the "Christ Transformer of Culture" paradigm, he operates with a view of Christ as transcultural. He views Christ as inhabiting the abstract spaces of reason. Christ is easily accessible though faith, and remains unaffected by the cultural context of the individual and outside the cultural context of the historical Jesus. Paul Tillich also entertains these questions. While concluding that religion is the content of culture, and culture the form of religion, he settles with the notion that religion is found in each culture's concerns for ultimacy.[23] What this means, and what it look like in other cultures, remains profoundly vague. A closer perspective to what I propose here as culture is expressed by Kathryn Tanner.[24] In her work, she challenges traditional conceptions of culture as having clearly defined borders, easily definable, and the result of collective consensus. Taking a postmodern approach, she proposes culture as fluid, indefinable, and always in a state of flux. The disappointing aspect of her work is her initial starting point and way of framing the question of culture. Her points of reference are the views of culture as articulated among the French, German, and British. This makes her work profoundly Eurocentric, and ultimately undermines her initial attempt at searching for ways to speak about

[22] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks/Cloister Library, 1956).
[23] Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, Galaxy, 1964).
[24] Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, Guides to Theological Inquiry Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

culture in more inclusive ways. For the sake of this paper, I refer to culture as the most basic elements by which communities and cultural collectives make sense and engage their reality. I refer to the complex process of codification of reality by which people learn to interact with their world, context, with each other, and other cultural collectives. And it is this space of the cultural that has profound implications for the way people conceive and interact with the divine and interpret their experiences of faith.

I suggest we cannot think of the person of Jesus outside the confines of a first century Palestinian culture however mixed it might have been.[25] The affirmation of Jesus' life, teachings, and ministry lose their meaning and relevance unless we take the time to pay attention to the cultural, social, and political context within which he lived, and the early church was born and developed. As Orlando Espín puts it, the divine act of grace-for-and-within-us would remain utterly meaningless were it not because "that grace entered our creaturely world, worked through and within our histories and our cultures, and molested [sic] itself to our [cultural] understandings..."[26] In saying this, Espín opens the door for conceiving the human-divine dialogue in terms of a divine act of

[25] Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1995).
[26] Orlando O. Espín, "An Exploration Into the Theology of Grace and Sin," in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 124.

condescension, limiting God's self-revelation precisely at the level of culture.

It was Athanasius who affirmed, "what had not been assumed was not redeemed." If we consistently affirm the humanity of Jesus, by necessity we have to conceive the issue of culture as a necessary element in the incarnation. This Christological move brings two implications: First, "culture becomes a necessary condition in the event of God's self-disclosure; and second, culture is also a necessary locus of divine pneumatic activity."[27] On the one hand, Jesus drew from his cultural universe available to him to communicate the *Evangelion*—the good news. We take for granted that other cultures participated in the weaving of the gospel accounts. On the other hand, there is a fundamental undeniable cultural aspect in the life of Jesus that is intrinsic to his life of faith, and even must be perceived as energized by the Spirit. The outworking of the Spirit manifests even as far as energizing the most elementary elements of human culture as necessary for our interaction with the divine. Christologically speaking, culture becomes a central feature in our understanding of the person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit among us, making it possible for us to welcome the divine invitation.

I am drawing here from Steven Bevans' notion that any understanding of the divine and Christ should

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[27] Néstor Medina, "The Pneumatological Dimension of Orlando Espín's Theological Work and Its Implications for Engagement with Pentecostal Communities," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology*, Thursday September 16, 2010, Http://www.latinotheology.org/node/96 (accessed October 12, 2010).

start with the pneumatic. For him, the ministry of Jesus should be understood as taking place within the dimension of the Spirit. He claims that Jesus' baptism and empowerment by the Spirit is what allowed him to fulfill his ministry. Appropriately, it was by the Spirit that he was able to perform miracles, heal the sick, and proclaim the good news.[28] In my view, this pneumatic shift is crucial for our appreciation of the empowering role and function of the Spirit in Jesus' life even at the level of culture: Jesus necessitated the empowering work of the Spirit to function, to draw from his cultural context to make his message intelligible, and to operate in the lives of his audience to understand the message of good news.

Similarly, Jürgen Moltmann argues that the construction of a Christology must take seriously the pneumatological dimension: He sets out to articulate a "Pneumatological Christology."[29] For him, we must recognize that "Jesus' life cannot be understood outside of the activity of the Spirit. The relationship between Jesus and the Spirit cannot be understood but as a divine condescension of the Spirit, a *kenosis* in which the Spirit is self-emptied as it indwells in the human Jesus"[30] This means the Spirit shares in Jesus' weaknesses, suffering,

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[28] Stephen B. Bevans, "God Inside Out: Toward a Missionary Theology of the Holy Spirit," *Journal of Missionary Research* 22 (July 1998): 102–05.

[29] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 78.

[30] Néstor Medina, "Jürgen Moltmann and Pentecostalism(s): Toward a Cultural Theology of the Spirit," *Toronto Journal of Theology: Love and Freedom: Essay in Honour of Harold G. Wells* 24 (2008): 105, ed. Rob Fennell.

and mortality. Moltmann connects the indwelling of the Spirit on Jesus with the indwelling of the Spirit upon women and men. Stated this way, affirming the activity of the Spirit on the person of Jesus opens the door for conceiving the activity of the same Spirit beyond the historical person of Jesus.[31] "This explains the connection between the fellowship of the Spirit as encompassing human existence and creation. Fellowship, as the defining gift of the Spirit, is characterized by a self-giving of the Spirit, which then permeates all aspect of life," including the cultural dimension.[32]

Stated differently, the kenosis continues even in culture. The same Spirit that operated in Christ comes and empowers believers in all aspects of life, even culture, in the same way Jesus was. In light of this, it is plausible to discern the activity of the Spirit at the level of culture. Understood as the continuation of the kenosis, it is conceivable to understand the activity of the Spirit in enabling our humanly constructed and imperfect cultures to gain the capacity to understand the divine disclosure and inject it with the capacity to communicate with the divine. This is what I call elsewhere *Pneumatological Cultural Kenosis*. That is, the divine kenosis continues even at the level of culture, making culture a necessary element without which interaction with the divine becomes impossible. This has profound implications for Pentecostals everywhere. The Spirit operates in and through the concrete culturally conditioned experiences of

[31] Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 94.
[32] Medina, "Jürgen Moltmann and Pentecostalism(s)," 105.

the people and these become necessary for understanding the gift of good news. If this is the case, and I believe it is, we can claim categorically that, there is no universal version of Pentecostalism and no cultural group holds a monopoly of the divine mystery of salvation. It is only in conversation with each other, with our epistemological and cultural horizons, that we can enter the space of intercultural interaction and fuller divine disclosure. As a Latino-Canadian, I know all too well that Latina/o-Canadian Pentecostals express their faith and live the Pentecostal experience very different than other ethnocultural groups. Numerous Latin American and Latina/o Pentecostal scholars have insisted that for their communities' orality, narrative, dreams, visions, music and embodiment are elements without which the Pentecostal experience would make no sense.[33] These

[33] See Samuel Soliván, "Sources of a Hispanic / Latino American Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective," in *Hispanic / Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando F. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 134–50; Gastón Espinosa, "*El Azteca*: Francisco Olázabal and Latino Pentecostal Charisma, Power, and Faith Healing in the Borderlands," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67 (Summer 1999): 597–616; Elizabeth Carrillo García, "Renovación carismática en las iglesias protestantes históricas en Cuba," in *Carismatismo en Cuba*, ed. Reinerio Arce and Manuele Quintero, comp. Elizabeth Carrillo (La Habana: Ediciones CLAI, 1997), 47–86; Darío López, *Pentecostalismo y transformación social: Más allá de los estereotipos, las críticas se enfrentan con los hechos* (Buenos Aires: Kairos, 2000); Bernardo L. Campos, "El retorno del símbolo y lo lúdico en la cultura post-industrial y globalizada: Comentario," in *Religión y postmodernismo*, ed. Estuardo Zevallos (Lima, Peru: Proceso Kairós, Perú; Centro Cristiano de Promoción y Servicios (CEPS), 1997), 104–09; Carmelo E. Álvarez, "El Pentecostalismo

elements are key in teasing out the significance of cultural diversity even in the Pentecostal experience. Yet, when members of our community go to Bible College their education does not include explorations on these elements.

On a related note, I believe this is the underlining idea behind Hollenweger insightful comment. For him, the ecumenical problem of the future will not be a discussion between Catholics and Protestants. The issue is whether a dialogue can be established between those representatives of a written theology and oral theology. As he puts it, "the problem becomes more acute because a good portion of the theologians of 'orality' are poor and of colour, while the majority of the theologians of the 'written' have financial means and are white." (Translation mine)[34]

Pentecost as the Eschatological Event of Ethnocultural Inclusion

Finally, our original understanding of speaking in tongues and the manifestations of the Spirit have generally been interpreted as part of the eschaton – as part of the realized dimension of the end times. As with Paul and the Thessalonians, countless Pentecostals have thought they will live to see the fulfillment of the eschaton within their

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Latinoamericano y en el Caribe," Conference presentation at the Seminario Evangélico de Teología (Matanzas, Cuba, 2010).

[34] Walter J. Hollenweger, *El pentecostalismo: Historia y doctrina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Aurora, 1976), 479.

lifetime. All of them died convinced that the coming of the Spirit and speaking in tongues was proof they were living the final moments before the second coming. The eschaton is not my point of contention here. I want to suggest, however, that our understanding of the eschaton is incomplete unless the cultural aspect is included. Admittedly, some early Pentecostals at the turn of the twentieth century thought that tongues were either expressions of glossolalia (angelic languages) or Xenolalia or Xenoglosa (foreign languages). I want to propose that the event of Pentecost must be interpreted as the instantiation of an eschatological *Polyglossa*. The polyglossic character of Pentecost makes cultural and linguistic plurality part of the body of Christ, part and parcel of the outworking of the Spirit, and an essential indication of the beginning of the fulfillment of the eschaton. In other words, our capacity to communicate with God with our own earthly languages is already a pneumatological event. Stated another way, the Spirit is already at work making it possible for us to engage the divine. It is no coincidence that the book of Revelation describes the church including every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (5:9), which to me proclaims a new way to conceive the work of the Spirit even in culture.

Seen this way, the multiplication of cultural groups in the context of Canada and their representation at every level of the fellowship can be yet another prophetic glimpse of the eschatological fulfillment of the divine outworking of the Spirit. So I ask what it will take for Canadian Pentecostalism to begin to reflect its plural-

ethnocultural constituency. Operating from the premise that not all Pentecostal movements are the same, I ask with Allan Anderson: "Why do we refuse to listen to the stories of Pentecostals outside of North America? Why can we not see the significant theological contribution they have made to the worldwide movement including North America?"[35]

In spring 2010, I spent three and a half months teaching at the Seminario Evangélico de Teología, in Matanzas, Cuba. In the most unlikely place, I became acutely aware of the necessity for Pentecostals to engage in serious in-depth analyses of the diverse movements and theological trends. I enjoyed lunch with three professors (a Cuban Presbyterian, a Dutch Reformed, and a member of the PCUSA) who among other things talked about the present state of the Protestant Church. As the conversation went on, they focused particularly on the Presbyterian Church in both the US and Cuba. I was rather surprised to hear them agree that while the future of the Presbyterian Church laid in its ability to engage the groups and cultures of the rest of the world, it was the Pentecostals they had to invite to the conversation table. One of them succinctly stated: "there is where the future lays."

Such an incident is suggestive of Pentecostalism's potential for true ecumenism. I am not referring to the specific conversations between denominational traditions, with the end of forming a "unified" Christian movement by way of looking at the elements of the Christian faith

[35] Wilkinson, "What's 'Global' About Global Pentecostalism?" 106.

they share in common. Some Pentecostal leaders have already been involved in these kinds of projects. This is a commendable venture, and I believe Pentecostals have much to contribute to such endeavour. My proposal is broader in scope. The inclusion of the histories, traditions, and cultures of the peoples of the world into Pentecostalism is already an ecumenical move. That is *ecumenism* signifying Pentecostalism's crossing of political borders, dismantling of social walls, offering hope to the disenfranchised, and creating spaces where peoples can preserve their cultural tradition. It is odd that Pentecostalism has remained in the periphery of ecumenical conversations while at the same time creating spaces for truly ecumenical expressions. The household of God (the *oikoumene*) is already present inside Pentecostalism in the world and in Canada. The event of Pentecost is the most ethnoculturally ecumenical event described in the biblical text. As the narrative tells us, the people could "glorify the Lord in their own language." Thus, the event of Pentecost points proleptically to the in-breaking of the divine Spirit, affirming the peoples of the world's capacity to celebrate the reality of the divine from their cultural tradition. It is largely because of its ability to mould itself to the cultures, languages, and practices of local groups that Pentecostalism continues to grow in some places. This is no triumphalism! In various places of the globe Pentecostalism has started to decline.[36] This

[36] Edward L. Cleary, "Shopping Around: Questions about Latin American Conversions," *International Bulletin of Missionary*

brings new challenges to our ideas of unfettered Pentecostal growth. At the same time, these are sobering reminders that Pentecostalism is at the cusp of a profound ethnocultural reconfiguration. Whether we want it or not, at least in the context of Canada, the very structures of Pentecostalism will have to reflect its ethnocultural diversity more intentionally. Such changes are long overdue. In the words of Walter Hollenweger:

> Pentecostal 'ecumenicity' is not based on a printed and well defined doctrine, but on a communitarian experience, and especially on a communitarian way of communication that overcomes all the barriers of education, colour of skin, every social class and nationality. Whoever takes this possibility seriously discovers within it a type of theologization in the form of *oral culture*, in which in the midst of communication–as in biblical times–is not the definition but the description, not the thesis but the dance, not the teaching but the song, not the book to study but the story and the comparison, not the *summa theologica* but the testimony. To doubt that in a true theology these categories may exist is like questioning the Bible as a theological book... *Most of the Pentecostal movement belongs to this oral and*

Research 28 (April 2004): 50–53; Burkinshaw, "Native Pentecostalism in British Columbia."

> *dialogical culture* (Translation mine, emphasis original).[37]

Conclusion

The present structures of Pentecostalism in Canada are no longer acceptable. They disallow the incorporation of the history, theology, and cultural practices of the other peoples of Canada who have embraced the Pentecostal experience. The very future of the PAOC depends on its ability to incorporate these and reflect them at every level of leadership, in the theological education curriculum, and in its perception of these peoples as *equal* partners. This challenges us to rethink the way we view the church, understand the historical Jesus, and allows us to see the work of the Spirit in the midst of our plural ethnocultural polyglossic context. This is a unique opportunity for the renewal of the PAOC by way of truly reflecting its constituency and by allowing the "winds of the Spirit" to blow in the direction of greater ethnocultural inclusivity. Although she is writing about the subaltern role of women among Pentecostals, I find Pamela Holmes befitting to bring across my proposal for greater ethnocultural inclusivity in the PAOC:

> The Spirit has oftentimes operated in a fashion directly counter to the prevailing modes of interaction of our enlightened

[37] Hollenweger as citted by López, *Pentecostalismo y transformación social*, 54.

> culture, with its assumptions of a multi-layered, hierarchical, and repressive domination as a norm for civilized humanity....it's time that Pentecostals, as people of the Spirit, start paying attention to what the Spirit has been saying and doing, rather than the cultural status quo.[38]

God has consistently empowered, called, and disclosed God's self among the peoples of the world. We are challenged to open the lines of conversation and create a cacophony of voices, tongues and languages from other cultural horizons that now are part of Canadian Pentecostalism. The Spirit is creatively challenging us toward building a church where there is room for all ethnocultural groups, and where these can contribute equally. This can only happen when we envision a community that includes all languages and nations. This, I propose, is the direction toward a truly intercultural Pentecostalism.

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[38] Pamela Holmes, "The Spirit, Nature, and Canadian Pentecostal Women: A Conversation with Critical Theory," in *Philip's Daughters: Women in Pentecostal-Charismatic Leadership*, ed. Estrelda Alexander and Amos Yong, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 201.

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