

RELEASING THE CAPTIVES FOR THE KINGDOM:  
THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPING A PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE  
NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT

By

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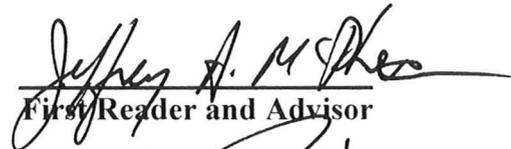
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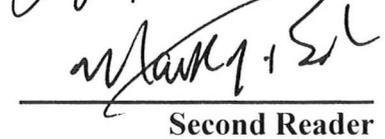
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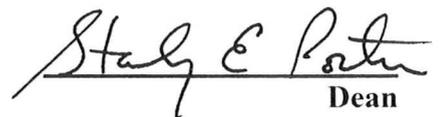
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## ABSTRACT

### Releasing the Captives for the Kingdom: The Challenge of Developing a Pentecostal Theology of Social Justice in the North American Context

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This thesis offers a contribution to the development of a North American Pentecostal theology of social justice. It examines the nature of the early Pentecostalism and its approach to social issues as well as the subsequent diminishment of attention given to them. This thesis argues that Pentecostalism abandoned its early social emphasis in part due to their self imposed submission to Fundamentalism and later to the new Evangelicalism. As a result, Pentecostals never developed on their early social impulses and failed to create a theology of social justice. This thesis responds to that lacuna by arguing for the holistic nature of the gospel which includes social action in the mission of the Church and is thus applicable to the Pentecostal theology of Spirit empowerment for service. The Kingdom of God is then presented as the necessary theological concept to understand meaningful social change within history. Through such an approach Pentecostals can develop a truly Pentecostal theology of social justice using their own history and theology as resources.

## Acknowledgements

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

### Introduction

Though Pentecostalism has reached its first centennial it is still a young movement whose theology is still developing. Some Pentecostal individuals and local churches are involved in social action to varying degrees. Yet despite this, Pentecostalism fails to have its own theology of social justice to guide and provide an imperative towards social justice activities within Pentecostal churches. The leading Pentecostal scholar responding to this issue, Douglas Petersen, says it well:

The time has come for Pentecostals to develop a coherent theological stance integrating biblical concepts with evangelistic and social practices. Unless our position, based upon biblical foundations, is stated explicitly, an authentic development of a theological ethic may be simply pragmatic, resulting in internal crisis characterized by ambiguity, confusion, and misunderstanding. The challenge before us is to provide an interpretive theological framework that would present ‘an essential connectedness’ between biblical principles and practices.<sup>1</sup>

The biblical demand for social justice as well as the need for such justice in the world today makes ambiguity or silence on the issue insufficient. This thesis will explore the potential for a Pentecostal theology of social justice.

This study will be limited to the North American context and, in a general sense, those fellowships and denominations involved in the ‘Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America’ (PCCNA). My primary attention will be given to “Classical Pentecostalism”<sup>2</sup> and though the criticism and suggestions may be applied elsewhere, it

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Petersen, “Missions in the Twenty-First Century,” *Transformation* 16 (2), p. 55

<sup>2</sup> ‘Classical Pentecostalism’ is the term used by Pentecostal scholarship to refer to the movements that have direct roots in the Azusa Street Revival, and place the doctrine of the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit at a premium. This term is used to contrast such Pentecostals from the younger ‘Charismatic Movement,’ which consists of Pentecostal-like churches outside of denominational Pentecostalism, and even within mainline denominations.

is most directly related to the 'Assemblies of God, USA' (AG) in the United States and the 'Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada' (PAOC).

Recognizing that the neglect of social justice and the lack of a theology of social justice are distinguishable, this thesis concerns the development of a theological framework to guide existing compassion. Though there are naturally many other influences, this thesis will work with the assumption that theology, insofar as it shapes fundamental worldviews, serves to motivate and encourage action. As Petersen suggested above, if 'social action' lacks what can be called a 'theological imperative' or the wrong foundation, that action is at risk of being neglected or improperly implemented. This appears to be the case with North American Pentecostalism. The former president of the *Society for Pentecostal Studies*, Cecil M. Robeck, wrote in 1987,

Pentecostals have typically overlooked those who are captive to the abuses of the unjust structures of society or ideology, and at times have turned their eyes away from the plight of those who are oppressed by their fellow human beings, whether by economic, political, social, military or even religious means. Until recent years, the tying of physical healing to one's own faith in the atoning work of Christ has led to little if any concern for physical healing other than by means of prayer.<sup>3</sup>

Pentecostalism has a poor record on social action that seeks a lasting social change; nevertheless, Pentecostals are not oblivious to social justice.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Pentecostalism has taken up the task of providing food for the hungry, and education and necessities for those in need. Petersen, the president of Latin American Child Care,<sup>5</sup> maintains that social justice, in recent years, has become important to Pentecostals. Petersen writes,

The explosive growth of the Assemblies of God among the destitute and vulnerable peoples has made the movement a force in addressing tragic physical needs facing millions of two-thirds world adherents. Without question, the

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<sup>3</sup> Cecil M. Robeck "Pentecostals and Social Ethics," *Pneuma* 9 (2), p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Are Pentecostals Oblivious to Social Justice? Theological and Ecumenical Perspectives," *Missiology* 29 (4).

<sup>5</sup> An Assemblies of God para-church organization that assists children to receive an education.

Assemblies of God has demonstrated their commitment to the poor and suffering.<sup>6</sup>

As quoted earlier, Petersen also argues, however, that what Pentecostals lack is an adequate biblical theology of social justice to consolidate and unify Pentecostals on why it is important. Currently, social justice related activities are mainly the result of individual and local church initiatives. Consequently they are limited in depth and are largely fragmented because current reflection on the issue is lacking.

Pentecostals are becoming increasingly aware of the pressing need for a unified church response to the many great needs in the world, especially with respect to the now recognised possibility that Christ may yet ‘tarry’ for a significant amount of time. Petersen notes that when asked to explain why they engage in social justice activities, Pentecostals only have vague responses such as, “‘desire to do good,’ ‘wanting to help,’ ‘seeing the need,’ or ‘being moved with compassion.’”<sup>7</sup> What is lacking, Petersen remarks, is an “adequate understanding of biblical foundations which must guide these actions.”<sup>8</sup> Pentecostals have illustrated that they have the willingness, compassion and energy to engage in the task of social action, yet do not have a theology that can give shape and meaning to such actions; they lack a theology of social justice.

Furthermore, without this theology, such work will lack ‘theological urgency’ that is afforded to other clear obligations of the Church. By way of anecdotal example, if a group of Pentecostals seek funding for evangelistic work that has been proven to be pragmatically successful, they will most likely have little difficulty gaining the necessary funding. On the contrary, if they wish to gain funding for their project which will seek to

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<sup>6</sup> Douglas Petersen, “Missions in the Twenty-First Century: Toward a methodology of Pentecostal Compassion,” *Transformation* 16 (2), p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Petersen, *Missions in the Twenty-First Century*, p.54.

<sup>8</sup> Petersen, *Missions in the Twenty-First Century*, p.54.

alleviate human rights violations in the two third's world (and without the explicit goal of conversion) their appeal would be met with suspicion. To Pentecostals, evangelism has a clear theological necessity; social action remains uncertain.

Since this study centers on the North American context, the issue of the changing social make-up of Pentecostals is relevant. They have, essentially, moved a long way from the storefront, revival meeting-houses packed with primarily the urban poor. Walter J. Hollenweger, a missiologist for the World Council of Churches and a renowned specialist on Pentecostalism, asks some key questions of the now affluent North American Pentecostals.

What happens when these poor become rich? Do they have enough strength to dig into their past in order to find the language and tools to dialogue with Pentecostals who are poor today? And what happens when these poor, largely of the Third World, disagree with North American and European Pentecostal theology, ethics and politics? Are we still listening, and do we realize that the Third World poor are the overwhelming majority, while Western Pentecostals and Christians generally seem to be a small and dwindling minority?<sup>9</sup>

North American Pentecostals can no longer assume a 'Home and Abroad' approach to world Pentecostalism.<sup>10</sup> They must also reconsider their submission to the smaller movement, Evangelicalism, which takes precedence over learning and dialoguing with their Pentecostal counterparts around the world.

A limitation of this thesis is that it focuses on an inward theological reflection and encourages Pentecostals to reflect on Pentecostal theology. Equally necessary in the area of social justice is for Pentecostals to outwardly examine the theologies of other movements and grow through constructive dialogue. Pentecostals have much to learn from churches that have poured time and energy into theological reflection on social

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<sup>9</sup> W. J. Hollenweger "The Pentecostal Elites and the Pentecostal Poor," *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*. ed. Karla Poewe, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 200-201.

<sup>10</sup> Allan Anderson, "Signs and Blunders: Pentecostal Mission Issues at 'Home and Abroad' in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Asian Mission* 2 (2), p. 193.

justice. The seven year Pentecostal-Catholic dialogue serves as an example of such positive dialogue.<sup>11</sup> This outward method of theological formation will be largely beyond the scope of this thesis as it will reflect on Pentecostal theology as a resource for social justice and also examine the dangers of theological submission to other movements.

In this thesis I will argue that Pentecostalism has the potential and theological resources to develop an exemplary theology of social justice that is currently lacking. However, in order to do so, Pentecostals must determine to create a truly *Pentecostal* theology of social justice and critically examine their history and relationship with Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism and how they affect Pentecostal social justice. It will be argued that Pentecostalism's prior contention with and subsequent submission to Fundamentalism caused Pentecostals to inherit a faulty theology of social justice. Later, as Pentecostals gained acceptance by the new evangelicals, who also share in the struggle with Fundamentalism, Pentecostals capitulated theological leadership to this new ecumenical group and began to develop theology from within evangelical boundaries and limited theological creativity towards social justice. The second section of this thesis will begin to examine a possible Pentecostal social justice theology freed from evangelical confines and centered on the motif of the Kingdom of God. This motif must govern the Pentecostal concept of Spirit empowerment, especially through the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Applying this theology to the Kingdom of God places social justice within the category of the mission of the Church and a subject, alongside evangelism, of Pentecostal Spirit empowerment theology.

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<sup>11</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Spirituality as a Resource for Social Justice: Reflections from the Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2 (1), pp. 83-96.

Chapter two will examine the early Pentecostal history tracing the capitulation of Pentecostalism to Fundamentalism and the subsequent ‘evangelicalization’ of Pentecostalism. We will also discuss how its relationship with Evangelicalism affects Pentecostalism’s theology of social justice.

Chapter three will examine the current state of Pentecostal social justice theology and activities. The Pentecostal approach to social justice and social welfare will be discussed as well as some examples of Pentecostal social action outside of North America that serve as a comparison, followed by an examination of an example of Canadian Pentecostal social welfare.

Chapter four will begin the creative task of building a Pentecostal theology of social justice beginning with the life and teaching of Jesus and the biblical theme of the Kingdom of God. The argument will be made for a transformational eschatology which maintains the preservation of current noble human effort within the eschaton. Some challenges that such a theology will face will then be discussed.

Chapter five provides a brief exploration of the Kingdom of God rubric and how it applies to Pentecostal missiology. The suggested approach will then be compared with the current missiology of the PAOC.

### **Definitions**

This section will briefly outline the definitions for some important terms related to the following study. Since we will be examining the need for the development of a theology of social justice, it is important to outline what is meant by that term. In addition, terms such as Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism can be nuanced so it is also beneficial to be clear on how they will be used throughout this thesis.

## Social Justice

*Social justice* itself is the end goal in the work for the wellbeing of humanity, the state in which human communities can live within the freedom to fulfill their individual and community potentials. In secular contexts this is often referred to in terms of the fulfillment of human rights, however, within the Christian community we understand it to be the fulfillment and respect of human dignity as created in the image of God. True social justice allows humans to be free of racism, sexism, exploitation, chauvinism, hunger, economic inequality, violence, coercion and religious or cultural oppression. A just social order also means that basic human needs are provided for: food, protection of life (health care and security), education and a stable and peaceful environment. At times I will use the much less nuanced phrase, *social concern* which simply refers to the larger category of concern related to social justice.

The noun social justice has three counterparts, social witness, social welfare, and social action. *Social witness* will be the term for the collective “testimony of a group of Christians engaged in a corporate act or lifestyle which reflects their faith and their convictions.”<sup>12</sup> This display of personal and communal ethics as a sign post to the greater society is an important aspect of a social justice theology, but this passive form of social concern will not be the subject of my primary attention. *Social welfare* (otherwise known as social service) involves works of mercy that seek to alleviate immediate suffering (such as providing food, shelter, clothing and medicine). *Social action* is the transformative work done to address the structural causation of the need and to seek preventative measures. Beyond meeting the immediate needs, social action seeks *social*

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<sup>12</sup> Vincent Leoh, “Toward Pentecostal Social Ethics,” *Journal of Asian Mission* 7:1(2005), p.41.

*change* to prevent continued and systemic suffering and oppression. Such actions include, but are not limited to, political action, “conscientizing” education, symbolic or literal protest and economic boycotts.<sup>13</sup>

This thesis will assume that Pentecostals currently have a sufficient theology of social witness and, to their credit, are increasingly more involved in social welfare. It will be the assumption of this thesis that social welfare is the result of ethical responsibility that does not necessarily require a complex theological system. Since social action is creative in that it is seeking to develop some kind of positive social change, a theology is required to determine the form and nature of the change, how that change is possible and how it relates to eschatological realities. This thesis will be aimed at the development of such a theology for North American Pentecostalism.

### Evangelicalism

The term ‘evangelical’ can have a wide variety of meanings, but for the purpose of this study it is important to distinguish two different types of Evangelicalism, one being the older and broader form of Evangelicalism, and the other the younger and smaller movement.

The British historian D. W. Bebbington provides an excellent example of a definition for the broader Evangelicalism. Though some historians prefer to use the term for any church that arose out of the Protestant Reformation, and there is cause to do so, Bebbington finds it helpful to view Evangelicalism as taking root in the 1730’s. Evangelicalism,” he states, “is not to be equated with any single Christian denomination, for it influenced the existing churches during the eighteenth century and generated many

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<sup>13</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

more subsequent in years.”<sup>14</sup> Evangelicalism, Bebbington observes, is somewhat nebulous and there are no straightforward factors that can be the absolute determining rule. Nevertheless, he provides an excellent sampling of some basic ‘characteristics’ of Evangelicalism and accurately frames each of them so they are wide enough to encompass all of Evangelicalism, yet are still useful for determining the identity of evangelicals. He lists four characteristics “that have been the special marks of the Evangelical religion.”<sup>15</sup> They are,

*Conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that by *activism* Bebbington is not referring to the modern idea of social activism, though it could be included under such a heading. Activism here refers to all the efforts, or work, that evangelical conversion requires, including evangelism, Bible study, prayer and following a rigorous moral code.<sup>17</sup>

Bebbington’s term *biblicism* refers to the high role the scriptures play in the life of all evangelical believers and the understanding that the Bible has spiritual significance that differentiates it from all other literary materials. Bebbington is careful not to limit this characteristic to the later developed ideas of inerrancy or infallibility, as some are apt to do. The accent here falls on the important role the Bible plays in the everyday life of believers, and not just in the development of theology and doctrine. In Evangelicalism, Bebbington suggests, the Bible is not the mere domain of religious scholars. It is,

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<sup>14</sup> D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 3. (emphasis his).

<sup>17</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 10.

however, considered the main or only source for doctrinal development, an even greater emphasis is placed on its devotional use for all believers.<sup>18</sup>

The fourth term, *crucicentrism*, is intentionally vague enough to include the possibility of differences in exactly how the atonement works, but is clear that the death of Christ is the focal point of the whole religion. This was a point of serious contention with other forms of Christianity. As other forms of Christianity explored the significance of Jesus' life, the evangelicals insisted that the death of Christ on the cross is the only means of salvation.<sup>19</sup>

*Conversionism* is certainly the most widely acknowledged characteristic of Evangelicalism; some even consider the two words synonymous. Bebbington quotes a mid-nineteenth century Baptist minister who insisted "that conversion was far above, and of greater importance than, any denominational differences of whatever kind."<sup>20</sup> Central to Evangelicalism is its call to repentance which involves a 'spiritual transformation' or 'regeneration,' and consequently the believer is understood to have gained access to eternal reward upon death. Inextricably related is a change of belief that aligns with evangelical doctrines.

My reason for outlining the greater evangelical movement in detail is to suggest that Pentecostalism can be considered a part of this greater Evangelicalism. Since the early evangelicals were ardently committed to social action and even challenged unjust

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<sup>18</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>19</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> G.W. McCree, *George Wilson McCree* (London, 1893), p. 20; quoted in D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, without complete documentation. p. 5

political and economic systems, it is clear that an emphasis on social justice is compatible with the broader Evangelicalism.<sup>21</sup>

This broader definition of Evangelicalism will not be the subject of concern for this study. It is our interest here to consider the smaller North American evangelical movement, which is on occasion called “neo-Evangelicalism.”<sup>22</sup> Though we will examine the history of this movement in greater detail below, it is important to note that neo-evangelicals are those with a direct lineage through Fundamentalism but who have tried to distance themselves from the excesses of that movement. It is, essentially, a post-Fundamentalist remodeling of the broader evangelical faith. Billy Graham played a prominent role in this reformation of Fundamentalism, and Carl F. H. Henry led its theological formation along with the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary which was created in order to assist the consolidation of the neo-evangelical movement. The periodical *Christianity Today* served as the movement’s voice to the Pastorate as well as the laity, offering an alternative to the liberal leaning *The Christian Century*.<sup>23</sup> The new Evangelicalism had tremendous popularity in North America and thousands of churches either unsatisfied with Fundamentalist militancy, or uneasy with theological Liberalism, flocked to Evangelicalism. The movement expanded faster than the original drafters had

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<sup>21</sup> George M. Marsden, , *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, p. 62; Understanding some important differences between the wider evangelicals and the movement Harold Ockenga and his fellow Fuller faculty were assisting in the creation of, coined the term, “new-evangelical,” which was later modified to ‘neo-evangelical.’ As time progressed and perhaps as an attempt to suggest that they are the standard bearers of the older Evangelicalism, they became know as simply evangelicals. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, p. 73.

<sup>23</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, p. 62.

imagined and quickly went beyond the control of any organization or individual and also became a wide and diverse movement.<sup>24</sup>

The important difference between the greater Evangelicalism and the smaller North American neo-Evangelicalism is that new evangelicals did not entirely wash their hands of the Fundamentalist movement and remained heavily influenced by their progenitors. This group is largely represented (though not defined) by participation in the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and its sister organization in Canada, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). More on this will follow as we trace the history of the two groups to determine how that history impacted the development of Pentecostal theology, especially as it relates to the development of a theology of social justice. It is important to keep in mind that for the remainder of this thesis, when using the term ‘evangelical,’ I will be referring to neo-Evangelicalism in North America unless otherwise noted.

### Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is another movement within the wider and historic Evangelicalism yet is distinct from the new Evangelicalism. It began in North America as a conservative reaction against the liberal-modernist directions the church was heading in throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In response to what they perceived to be an attack on orthodox faith by the liberal Christians, the Fundamentalists were those who ‘took up arms’ against the new liberal theology. Sponsored by an American oil tycoon in the 1910’s, a series of nearly one hundred articles were bound and distributed to over three

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<sup>24</sup> Timothy L. Smith, “The Evangelical Kaleidoscope and the Call to Christian Unity,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 15 (2), p. 125-140.

million pastors, evangelists, students and lay people. Entitled *The Fundamentals*, this text became the rallying flag of the new reactionary movement and also gave them their name.<sup>25</sup> This publication laid out the defense for what this group understood to be traditional orthodoxy.<sup>26</sup> The original five fundamentals were: the inerrancy of the scriptures, the virgin birth (deity of Christ), the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection of Christ, and the authenticity of Jesus' miracles. Others were later added, such as the literal second coming of Christ.

Much of this theology was developed at Princeton Seminary which rejected new European developments of higher criticism. Figures such as B.B. Warfield and Charles Hodge were practically celebrated as saviors of the faith and, as Mark Noll states, they were "hailed as [...] virtually the last word on the subject."<sup>27</sup> Developed within the Reformed tradition, this movement was influenced by Scottish 'Common Sense Realism' philosophy and arose principally as a protest against modernism.<sup>28</sup> George Marsden writes, "Fundamentalism arose out of the decline in influence of traditional revivalist Evangelicalism in America during the first half of the twentieth century."<sup>29</sup> Feeling that they were losing their grip on American society, these conservative Christians

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<sup>25</sup> R.A. Torrey and others, eds. *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth* ed. (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980).

<sup>26</sup> As Noll explains in *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* this defense included a great deal of innovations that the Fundamentalists were not willing to admit were new. The Christian faith had never approached epistemology in the same fashion as they had begun to and thus were, ironically, a younger theological movement than the modernists. See Noll for his comments on dispensationalism and premillennialism. Noll includes Pentecostalism in this category, which indeed was a new development, but does not belong in this category of rigid dogmatic distinctions.

<sup>27</sup> Mark Noll, *The Princeton Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), p.11. Noll also mentions that, ironically, these figures had significant disagreements with each other.

<sup>28</sup> C. Mark Schinkel, "The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada: The Influence of Fundamentalism on Articles Appearing in the *Pentecostal Testimony*" (M.A. diss., Wycliffe College, Toronto, 1990), p.18; By "reformed" I refer to theologically conservative monergism.

<sup>29</sup> George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p.4.

aggressively began to fight back. As Curtis Lee Laws exclaimed, they were prepared “to do battle-royal for the fundamentals.”<sup>30</sup>

Beyond the theological definitions of Fundamentalism, there is what perhaps can only be described as a Fundamentalist impulse: the feelings, attitudes and ideas that make up Fundamentalism and from which flows the development of doctrinal Fundamentalism. What we are concerned with here is the culture of Fundamentalism, its militancy, dogmatism, exclusionism, exaltation of objectivity, fear of modernism and stalwart defense of their doctrines.<sup>31</sup> As we shall see, this culture and temperament was vastly different from the early Pentecostals.

### Liberalism

Since chapter two will focus on the historical influences the Fundamentalist – Modernist debate on early Pentecostalism and its subsequent development of a theology of social justice, our definition of Liberalism will be primarily interested in the historical development of Liberalism rather than defining what it is today.

Similar to Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism, Liberalism is a broad movement in Christian churches that spans many denominations. The history and definition of liberal Christianity is incredibly complex, yet for the purpose of this thesis I will use a simplified definition. From roughly 1865 to 1917 a deep rift in Protestantism was developing over how to appropriate the new advances the ‘modern’ world was developing.<sup>32</sup> The church was fading from cultural dominance in the western world and Christians were, in the words of George Marsden, “faced with the most profound

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<sup>30</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.123.

<sup>32</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 101.

challenges to their faith.”<sup>33</sup> Many new scientific developments were challenging the traditional religious interpretation of reality and initiating a rapid secularization of western culture.

There were many who uncritically accepted the new spirit of the age and rejected the Christian faith, or reduced it to a simple moral philosophy. There were others, however, who wished to preserve the Christian faith. Generally speaking, two groups attempted this in vastly different ways. Fundamentalism tried to safeguard Christianity by protecting the essential Christian doctrines from the modern debate while the liberals were those who used a method of theological formation that was in dialogue with, or at least included, modern cultural and the scientific developments rather than rejecting them. Many of these modernists, as they were labeled, came from within broader Evangelicalism.<sup>34</sup> In liberal thought, Marsden writes, “the Bible was a record of the religious experience of an ancient people. It was not an encyclopedia of dogma but rather an ancient model of religious experience.”<sup>35</sup> The idea in Liberalism that all of theology was ‘up for discussion’ was not simply a capitulation to secular modernism, but an expression of their open and optimistic worldview.

Though at the turn of the last century liberals were willing to dialogue with science and adapt their faith and theology accordingly, they also preferred to view the ultimate religious authority as something untouchable by science.<sup>36</sup> Liberals, as Alister

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<sup>33</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, p. 32.

<sup>34</sup> This is not an exhaustive definition of the word modernism and its uses. Philosophically, it means far more than its use within the Fundamentalist Modernist debate. As we will examine later, the Fundamentalists were equally using philosophical ‘modernist’ assumptions of reality. Nancy Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), pp. 1-35; Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, p. 31; The liberals came out of almost all denominations including ones in the broader Evangelicalism such as Baptists and Methodists. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 203.

<sup>35</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, p. 34.

<sup>36</sup> Bernard Meland, “Liberal Theological,” *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1968) 13: pp. 1020-1021.

McGrath writes, were “committed to bridging the gap between Christian faith and modern knowledge.”<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, at the same time, they wished to place internal, subjective religion in a category that transcended science, where the modern criticisms could not ‘touch it.’ Thus, in order to further protect the faith, they placed the ‘core’ of the religion outside the realm of scientific criticism. Consequently they stressed the ethical dimension of the faith and the life of the believer over doctrine. In order to preserve the spiritual element of the faith, they emphasized ‘religious feelings’ and personal subjective experience.<sup>38</sup>

### Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is notoriously difficult to define. Though it is a recognizable tradition, it is difficult to establish clear validation criteria for being Pentecostal. Douglas Petersen writes,

It must be recognized that an interpretive consensus on the nature of North American Pentecostalism still does not exist. Because of limited scholarly treatment to date, and, the movement’s inherent pragmatism and, as well, its deep regional and ethnic and theological divisions, a cohesive articulation of Pentecostalism is uneven at best.<sup>39</sup>

Some are determined to define Pentecostalism according to the single doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with its ‘initial evidence’ of ‘speaking in tongues.’ In the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and the Assemblies of God (US), for instance, this is the self-defining doctrine, and its acceptance is a requirement for Pentecostal pastoral credentials. Despite North American Pentecostal tendency to define themselves by this truly unique doctrine, it fails to be the defining factor of Pentecostalism because not all

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<sup>37</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 101.

<sup>38</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, p. 35.

<sup>39</sup> Douglas Petersen, *Not by Might, Nor by Power* (Oxford: Regnum, 1996), p. 4.

Pentecostals, official and otherwise, maintain this position. Moreover, some historians of Pentecostalism posit that the doctrine of initial evidence did not take its current form until at least six years after the movement began.<sup>40</sup> It is also a poor defining factor since a large amount, perhaps even the majority, of Pentecostals do not speak in tongues but rather simply belong to the tradition.<sup>41</sup>

So what is a Pentecostal? Douglas Jacobsen, in his book, *Thinking in the Spirit*, which examines early Pentecostal theologies, states:

There is no meta-model of Pentecostalism – no essence of Pentecostalism or normative archetype – that can provide an infallible rule against which to judge all the various particular renditions of the pentecostal faith and theology to determine precisely which is the most pentecostal and/or the least pentecostal.<sup>42</sup>

Since Pentecostals are not in agreement with themselves over significant theological issues, even the nature of the Godhead, it is difficult to provide an adequate theological definition of Pentecostalism.<sup>43</sup> Robert Mapes Anderson's definition in his sociological examination of Pentecostalism is helpful and I will use his definition for this thesis.

Pentecostalism is a movement that emerged on the world scene in 1906 during a Los Angeles revival in which speaking in tongues was regarded as a sign of the baptism in the spirit for the individual, a sign of the Second Pentecost for the Church, and a sign of the imminent Second Coming of Christ. I have designated as "Pentecostal" all groups, by whatever name they may use, whose origins can be traced to that revival.<sup>44</sup>

I find this a useful definition since it seeks to include all historical Pentecostal movements and not eliminate through theological definitions those groups that do not fit one's theological preference. It also recognizes the significance of tongues to the

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.4.

<sup>41</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, "Pentecostalism" available from <http://www.epcra.ch/papers/articles/Pentecostalism.PDF>; Internet accessed 17 October 1997, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 12; See also Dayton, *Theological Roots*, p.16.

<sup>43</sup> A large portion of Pentecostalism has rejected the theology of the Trinity and maintain a 'Oneness' approach to all of theology. For example, the United Pentecostal Church International.

<sup>44</sup> Anderson, *Vision*, p. 4.

movement, but does not appeal to a rigid theological formula of tongues to define it. Most importantly, all forms of Pentecostalism have a theology of the baptism in the Holy Spirit that is separate and subsequent to salvation, though Pentecostals differ in how they develop this theology.<sup>45</sup> In a general sense, through the baptism and also throughout daily life, the Holy Spirit is the ‘empowerer’ for the work of the gospel. Additionally, the roles of the Spirit are greatly expanded in Pentecostal circles and they function with a pneumatologically governed hermeneutic.<sup>46</sup>

Not all Pentecostals begin the history of Pentecostalism at 1906, many prefer 1900 when Charles Fox Parham ran a small Bible School in Topeka, Kansas. Here, Agnes Ozman is famed to have been the first to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit according to initial evidence tongues formula. William Joseph Seymour, an African American whom Parham permitted to listen to his lectures from either in the hallway, or from outside, took the new Pentecostal message to Los Angeles founding the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission.

In my view Parham can be considered an important theologian of the Pentecostal movement who formulated a doctrine that some Pentecostals would later endorse; he is not, however, the founder of the movement. For the most part, Pentecostalism lacks an individual founder as many charismatic leaders soon rose up and took leadership (often

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<sup>45</sup> The separate and subsequent experience was primarily the distinctive Pentecostal doctrine until the Charismatic Movement (1970’s) when people from other denominations, (especially mainline) began to experience and celebrate a subsequent Spirit Baptism. Pentecostals that valued distinction, emphasized that the only legitimate form of the Spirit Baptism is evidenced by tongues, thus invalidating all Pentecostal experiences outside Pentecostalism. However, this was particularly a North American phenomenon. Pentecostal groups from other regions, such as Latin America, did not press the tongues issue in order to separate themselves from other groups participating in Pentecostal style spiritual experiences. The Charismatic Movement caused an identity crisis among North American Pentecostals who felt it was important to have a theological distinctive to separate themselves from those who were closest to them.

<sup>46</sup> Despite many Pentecostals appealing to the rigid dogmatism of Fundamentalism’s inerrancy, in practice (or when it suits them pragmatically) they place an interpretive emphasis on what the Holy Spirit is communicating through the text, over a flat historical critical approach.

trying to pull the movement in different directions). Nevertheless, the closet person to a founder is William Seymour. Some are suspicious as to why an almost exclusively white Pentecostal organization, the Assemblies of God, would bypass Seymour and make the white southern preacher, Parham, the founder of the movement.<sup>47</sup>

Using Anderson's broader definition, there are currently over 500 million Pentecostals in the world. The movement is still growing rapidly mostly in the two thirds world and is predicted to over-take Catholicism within a generation.<sup>48</sup> Walter Hollenweger states, "The fact that Christianity grows faster than the world population is almost entirely due to the two Third's World Pentecostalism."<sup>49</sup> Pentecostal growth in North America, on the other hand, has largely subsided since the 1980's.

The AG and the PAOC currently define themselves under the new evangelical umbrella which consequently separates them from Pentecostals in other parts of the world whose theology is more flexible. The North American Pentecostal's openness to Evangelicalism results in an exclusivism at the expense of early Pentecostal distinctives as we will explore in chapter two. Essentially, within these two Pentecostal fellowships it could be argued that the doctrine of the initial evidence formula is a token theological distinctive to identify Pentecostalism within Evangelicalism.

### ***Two Conflicting Impulses within Pentecostalism***

There are currently two conflicting paths which Pentecostalism can follow. D. William Faupel brilliantly outlines these directions in his Presidential address to the

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<sup>47</sup> See Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995); James R. Goff presents the most thorough case for Parham as founder in his ironically titled book, *Fields White Unto Harvest* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1988).

<sup>48</sup> D.B. Barrett, "Statistics, Global," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* Eds. Stanley Burgess and Gary E. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 810-829.

<sup>49</sup> Hollenweger, "Pentecostals," p. 2.

Society for Pentecostal Studies in 1992 entitled, “Whither Pentecostalism?”<sup>50</sup> The first path classifies Pentecostalism as a subgroup of Evangelicalism, “sharing its assumptions, its agenda and its mission.”<sup>51</sup> Within this option, Pentecostalism is reduced (or advanced, depending on the point of view) to Evangelicalism ‘plus tongues.’ But as Faupel notes, “this view can only be sustained through a selective reading of Pentecostal history and through an abandonment of many of the initial Pentecostal assumptions.”<sup>52</sup>

Some Pentecostal leaders today are quite content to see Pentecostalism tied to Evangelicalism’s destiny. Assemblies of God (US) scholar Robert P. Menzies writes, “I see the assimilation of the modern Pentecostal movement into the broader evangelical world as an exciting and positive event.”<sup>53</sup> We will be analyzing this path more extensively in the next section, but it is important to note that some Pentecostal distinctives are toned down or erased in favour of one primary distinctive for the purpose of identification, that is, the doctrine of ‘initial evidence.’ Pentecostalism’s own hermeneutic, pneumatology and even ecclesiology are denied as Pentecostal theology is, using Menzies’ term, “assimilated.” As will become clear, this involves a capitulation to the primary antagonists of the early Pentecostal movement and a reduction of the movement’s potential, especially with regards to social justice.

The other option has a different vision for Pentecostalism, and as Faupel notes, “is still emerging; its shape is not yet clear,” which still holds true fourteen years after his Presidential address.<sup>54</sup> This vision maintains that though Pentecostalism has much in common with Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism is an “authentic expression of Christian

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<sup>50</sup> D. William Faupel, “Whither Pentecostalism?” *Pneuma* 15 (1): 9-27. Faupel is a former Pentecostal and currently affiliated with the Episcopal Church.

<sup>51</sup> Faupel, “Whither Pentecostalism,” p.26.

<sup>52</sup> Faupel, “Whither Pentecostalism,” p.26.

<sup>53</sup> Robert P. Menzies, “Jumping Off the Postmodern Bandwagon,” *Pneuma* 16 (1), p.119.

<sup>54</sup> Faupel, “Whither Pentecostalism,” p.26.

faith in its own right and not a subgroup of Evangelicalism. They conclude that the Movement has its own mission, its own hermeneutic and its own agenda.”<sup>55</sup> From this point of view Pentecostal scholars are free to create Pentecostal theology without worrying about being acceptable to Evangelicalism and to avoid inheriting its flaws. As Faupel gave his address in 1992 many in the audience were visibly uneasy with the suggestion that “Pentecostals had their own history and a particular message of their own for the world and should not be subsumed under an evangelical or Fundamentalist umbrella.”<sup>56</sup> Pentecostalism remains divided on this issue.

When we ask the question, ‘what is a Pentecostal theology of social justice?’ we must first understand what it means to be Pentecostal. Does it mean a person who speaks in tongues or attends a church where this is practiced by some? Or does it mean more? The question of creating a Pentecostal theology of social justice is also a question of Pentecostal identity. The development of this theology depends on which of these two visions Pentecostalism follows. If it is the former, then the theological formation of Evangelicalism and its approach to social justice is synonymous with a Pentecostal approach. However, if Pentecostalism decides upon the latter vision, which will be the approach taken in this thesis, then it is up to Pentecostal scholars and believers to determine a specifically Pentecostal approach to these issues and ask, “If Pentecostals ‘dip into their own wells,’ what does a Pentecostal theology of social justice look like?” The challenge for current Pentecostal scholars is to use the dynamic yet ambiguous history of early Pentecostalism as a resource to forge their own theology and chart a

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<sup>55</sup> Faupel, “Whither Pentecostalism,” p.26.

<sup>56</sup> Cox, *Fire From Heaven*, p. 311. Cox made this observation when he attended the SPS meeting. He also notes the suspicions some Pentecostals at the conference had towards ecumenism with the mainline churches and other non-evangelical themes.

Pentecostal course. It is the task of this thesis to seek a theology of social justice that reflects both the biblical mandate as well as Pentecostal history and theology.

### *Sociological Implications*

This thesis will not critically examine the many sociological implications of the rise and expansion of global Pentecostalism. Nevertheless, a brief comment on some of the key issues will be helpful. Until recently it has been common within non-pentecostal circles to explain the global phenomenon of Pentecostalism, both its growth and existence, using the ‘social deprivation theory.’<sup>57</sup> Proponents of this theory argued that Pentecostalism fills a void experienced by those who do not receive the benefits of industrialization and find themselves victimized by social change and urbanization.<sup>58</sup> Pentecostalism provides spiritual comfort to the physically afflicted and materially dispossessed. It supplies a way of escape from oppressive situations and provides spiritual experiences which give meaning to otherwise mundane, impoverished lives.<sup>59</sup>

Though sociological influences are naturally involved, scholars from inside and outside of Pentecostalism are seeking to understand the movement without simply accepting a flat sociological theory that is, on the whole, pejoratively dismissive. Since Pentecostalism has grown amongst all socio-economic classes and geo-political regions, the social deprivation theory fails to explain the appeal that Pentecostalism still has

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<sup>57</sup> Augustus Cerillo, “Beginnings of American Pentecostalism: A Historiographical Overview” *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism*. Eds. Edith L. Blumhofer, Russell P. Spitzer and Grant A. Wacker. (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1999), p. 234.

<sup>58</sup> Ronald Kydd. "A Socio-Cultural Hypothesis Related to the Global Expansion of Pentecostalism" presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 1994.

<sup>59</sup> Sociologists Liston Pope and John Holt argued for this view in the 1940's. John Holt, "Holiness Religion: Cultural Shock and Social Reorganization," *American Sociological Review* 5 (5), pp. 740-741; Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), pp. 84-91, 126-140.

amongst the affluent west as well as every other region.<sup>60</sup> Though this thesis does not seek to create a theory of the origins of Pentecostalism, it is important to note that they are plentiful. Nevertheless, Pentecostalism did arise primarily, but not exclusively, from the economically disadvantaged. The movement, as any early Pentecostal would proclaim, did fill a void felt by its adherents. Though it may not be an exhaustive causation of Pentecostalism as a movement, the social deprivation theory is important to understanding Pentecostalism. As Robert M. Anderson writes, “Adjustment to new environments and occupations, even when it brought material benefits, levied its toll on the spiritual resources of modern man.”<sup>61</sup> It developed, in a sense, as a protest against the status quo within Christianity and against the increasingly secular society as well. The social deprivation theory is helpful, however, for the purpose of this thesis, it is my assumption that it is not an exhaustive theory of the origins of Pentecostalism. A question that will be important here is whether or not the fulfillment of the disinherited proved to be a sedating force, or an empowering one. We shall see that Pentecostalism has the potential for either option.

The deprivation theory does point us to an important fact that applies to our social justice issue at hand. Early Pentecostals generally did not understand themselves as a ‘church *for* the poor,’ because they were largely ‘churches *of* the poor.’ Since its inception, Pentecostalism has routinely attracted the disinherited economically or mentally. The early Pentecostals did not develop many social programs for the poor,

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<sup>60</sup> Robert M. Anderson present the thesis that industrialization, and now globalization creates social deprivation of meaning and identity among the affluent as well as the poor, who then find fulfillment in the emotionally charged Pentecostal communities. Most Pentecostals would agree with Anderson on this variation of social deprivation and similar interpretations are offered in popular Pentecostal preaching. The social deprivation theory does little to help in the end since the decision to join any organization can be attributed to a felt need within the individuals lives which that organization fulfills; Petersen, *Not by Might*, p. 32 ; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Mission, Spirit and Eschatology: An Outline of a Pentecostal-Charismatic Theology of Mission,” *Mission Studies* 16 (1), p. 73.

<sup>61</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 223.

largely because their entire movement was geared for and attracted them already and even collected the ‘rejected’ from other denominations. On this, Anderson is right; Pentecostalism did provide a level of dignity to those rejected by society. He writes, “The Pentecostals were most often found among those who suffered, both materially and spiritually, from the effects of modernity.”<sup>62</sup> This can be interpreted negatively (as Anderson does) concluding that Pentecostalism was simply an opiate that sedated them from the pain of rejection and meaninglessness in modern society. Conversely, it could be interpreted positively as a force of liberation that gave meaning and dignity to the dehumanized in a hostile society. Karen C. Mundy writes, “Mainline denominations petitioned their societies for social justice, while Pentecostals found justice in their daily relationships with the dispossessed of society.”<sup>63</sup>

Pentecostalism continues to be this liberating force throughout the Two Third’s World; a religion of the poor that is free and adaptable to all cultures and races. It serves to be an alternative community that upholds individual value and embraces the un-embraced. In his landmark paper, “The Materiality of Salvation,” Miroslav Volf argues that Pentecostals have much in common with Liberation Theology. Though their systematic theologies are extremely different they both have a ‘this world’ orientation that will become clear later in this paper.<sup>64</sup> The important question here, however, is whether or not the Pentecostal church in North America continues to be a liberating force. Pentecostal history in North America had plenty of influences that moved it away from

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<sup>62</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 226.

<sup>63</sup> Murl O. Dirkson and Karen Carroll Mundy, “Social Justice and Evangelism: A Pentecostal Perspective” A Pentecostal position paper presented at the International Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue, Paris, France. Unpublished typescript. Quoted in Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Are Pentecostals Oblivious to Social Justice? Theological and Ecumenical Perspectives,” *Missiology* 29 (4), p. 417.

<sup>64</sup> Miroslav Volf, “The Materiality of Salvation: An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (3), p. 448.

its early impulses. We will now examine Pentecostal history in North American and some factors that heavily influenced the development of Pentecostalism and consequently effected Pentecostal social justice theology.

### **Conclusion**

Having defined the terms social justice, Evangelicalism, Liberalism, Fundamentalism as well as explored in greater depth relevant issues within Pentecostalism, we can now move on to the argument of this thesis. Using the terms as described above, we will examine how the modernist-Fundamentalist controversy and the subsequent appearance of Evangelicalism influenced the development of a Pentecostal theology of social justice. It will also become clear how the question of Pentecostal identity, as discussed, weighs heavily on our issue.

## **CHAPTER 2 THE HISTORY OF THE CAPITULATION OF PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will provide a relevant history of the Pentecostal movement beginning with an explanation of why I appeal to its history. I will outline the reasons why the early Pentecostal movement did not find it imperative to develop a theology of social justice and how their early conflicts with the Fundamentalists helped form and alter their theology. The following section will then outline how the ‘neo-evangelical’ movement offered fellowship to the rejected Pentecostals. The argument will be presented that this offer of acceptance shifted the way Pentecostal leaders thought about Pentecostal identity, consequently causing Pentecostals to define themselves within the confines of Evangelicalism and limit their theological development to a reflection of evangelical theology. The important consequence relevant to this thesis is that such a capitulation resulted in the borrowing of a flawed theology of social justice (one that was created in the heat of the conflict between modernists and Fundamentalists) and the stifling of further Pentecostal reflection on the issue of social justice. Through using such a historical approach it becomes clear that the linkage of Pentecostalism with Evangelicalism caused the dilution of important early Pentecostal distinctives, some of which are invaluable for social justice.

### **Why Pentecostal History?**

Through the reflective study of Pentecostal history, Pentecostals can find a valuable resource to determine how to continue the process that the early Pentecostals began. If Pentecostals choose a vision of a Pentecostalism with a distinct theology to offer, Pentecostal history can guide that path. It can help determine what is congruent with the original Pentecostal vision, what is a further development or a maturing of the original vision and what is a divergence from the movement itself. My purpose for appealing to Pentecostal history is not to cast a restorationist vision of the past and glorify the early leaders. The early Pentecostal movement was messy, rife with internal strife, conflict and even some absurdity. There are many areas in which Pentecostals have evolved away from their primitive beginnings and rightly so. Nevertheless, within that early movement, there was a Pentecostal spirit that was innovative, experiential and dynamic. That same spirit is useful for today's context. Though the identity of a movement is not exhausted by its history, it can be a valuable resource for information and influence on how to make decisions today. It would be a mistake to reject historical developments and entirely return to the primitive theology of the early movement, but equally a mistake to forget them. The goal, it could be said, is not to return to the place of origins, but to stay on the same road.

Also, with an eye on one's own history, one can resist the temptation to dissolve one's own theological development by flatly following another's theology. As we shall see, Pentecostalism has borrowed too much and as a result has unfortunately felt that it is unnecessary for North American Pentecostals to create a theology that adequately responds to the pressing needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the biblical injunction to seek

justice. This thesis aims towards encouraging Pentecostals to develop Pentecostal theology and respond to the pressing needs of today's world.

Within Pentecostal history we can see the story of the development of a religious movement with great potential as a protest against an economically oppressive society and a dynamic understanding of religion that resisted the hegemony of modernity. As common to many dynamic movements, its later consolidation served to stifle the original emphasis of the movement and began a process of assimilation to the subject of their original protest. This has created some unfortunate consequences for Pentecostal theology including the prevention of the development of a theology of social justice. However, there remains in North American Pentecostalism a movement that desires to resist the 'evangelicalization' of Pentecostalism and it can be inspired by examples from Pentecostal history. Moreover, there is much potential to continue the task of the early Pentecostals in developing a truly Pentecostal theology of social justice.

### **Early Pentecostal History**

Pentecostalism did not begin with a strong conscience for social concern as the liberals of their time had. Though there was some participation in social welfare, early Pentecostals were not known for their soup kitchens or fund raising for the urban poor. What they did have was a different vision of the world, what Robert Mapes Anderson calls, 'the vision of the disinherited.'<sup>1</sup> They did not have a strong social outreach mission to the poor, primarily, because they were the poor. In contrast to the largely white and well-to-do participants in the Social Gospel of the turn of the last century who sought to share their wealth with the needy, the Pentecostals had no paternalistic challenges as they

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 240.

merely shared their new vision of reality to those in need who were generally their peers. It was this vision itself that had such remarkably wide sweeping social implications.

What is most remarkable about this vision is that it came without a great deal of theological or doctrinal governance. Persuasive personalities were involved as well as other social dynamics, but overall the participants were energized over their shared vision. Without strong theological leadership, critical exegesis methods, or dialogue in academic journals, the early Pentecostals developed a theology that was, able to link the positive hope of postmillennialism with the premillennial expectation of the return of Christ; they simply sped up the clock. They believed that Christ's return was imminent, but as we will explore later, this was not understood in the same world-disparaging ways as the Fundamentalists of their day. They did not believe that the time before Christ's return was the downward spiral of a world crusted over with original sin, but rather, they saw the last days as the 'latter rain,' that is, the final and glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit before Christ's return. The wake of this latter rain caused a wide cancellation of 'the old ways' of the society and world in which they lived.

Early Pentecostal history reveals a theology of social justice that was at the core of their faith yet it was not in the common language of religious based social justice. The latter rain, as early Pentecostals understood it, cancelled the old ways of xenophobia and racial discord. Unlike most Christian movements, Pentecostalism started in a multicultural context.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting those at Pentecost in the book of Acts, the Los Angeles

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<sup>2</sup> Pentecostal roots are also wide and varied. Since the movement began outside the boundaries of any given church and was not a protest against any particular denomination, its adherents came from many different ends of the Christian spectrum. The two most populous strands were from the Holiness Movement and from the various Baptist traditions. Theology was imported from each group and early Pentecostalism was wrought with conflict over how to sort out these differences. Donald Dayton and Vinson Synan trace Pentecostals from the Holiness movement, and thus imported Methodist and Pietist influences. Others, such as Edith Blumhoeffter, argue that the Baptist or reformed influence, which came

Azusa Street revival included many ethnicities as Los Angeles had a significantly diverse population, including, most notably, large Hispanic and African American populations.<sup>3</sup> Considering the historical context, a multi-ethnic church was unfathomable. The early leaders, namely William Seymour, son of two former American slaves, understood the multicultural nature of the Azusa revival to be a sign that this was a miraculous revival from God.<sup>4</sup> He wrote in the Azusa periodical, *The Apostolic Faith*, that at the Azusa revival “all classes and nationalities meet on a common ground. If a Mexican or German cannot speak English, he gets up and speaks his own tongue and feels quite at home for the Spirit interprets through the face and people say amen.”<sup>5</sup> We must recall the animosity between American Christians and Germans at the time as they were exporting their ‘Higher Criticism,’ as well as the increasing political tensions with the Germany. The historic tensions between the races in North American made Azusa a significant social miracle. Seymour went on to write that God was “melting all races and nations together [...] into one common family in the Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

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through influential leaders such as William H. Durham, who became the progenitor of the American ‘Assemblies of God,’ is at least as significant source for theology as the Holiness movement was. R. M. Riss, “William H. Durham” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Eds. Stanley Burgess and Gary E. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 255-256; I am more inclined to agree with Synan that the Holiness theological influences were greater than the Reformed in the early days. However, from the perspective of today’s Pentecostals from within Evangelicalism, it becomes more of interest to tie their theology and roots to Reformed theology which helps to solidify their relationship with evangelicals and their reformed theology emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p.85; Robert M. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Owens, “The Azusa Street Revival: The Pentecostal Movement Begins in America” *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal*, ed. Vinson Synan (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Robeck, Cecil, Jr. “The Past: Historical Roots of Racial Unity and Division.” Pentecostal Partners: A Reconciliation Strategy for 21st Century Ministry Conf. Cook Convention Center, Memphis, TN. 18 October, 1994; See also, Ian MacRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (New York: St.Martin’s Press, 1988); William Seymour, “Bible Pentecost” *The Apostolic Faith* 1 (3).

<sup>6</sup> William Seymour, Untitled, *The Apostolic Faith* 1 (6).

To adherents of the revival, it was not just a remarkable display of charity and reconciliation, but a sign that the end was near as God was beginning to heal the discord between the races.<sup>7</sup> The old order of things was beginning to fade away as the new one was approaching. Frank Bartleman's famous statement, "the colour line was washed away in the blood" captured Seymour's interpretation of the event.<sup>8</sup> The leadership of the mission included various ethnicities and their monthly periodical continued to praise the interracial nature of the movement. It was considered an important link to the first Pentecost where Luke states that people from "every nation under heaven" heard Peter's proclamation that the Spirit has come.<sup>9</sup> The outpouring of the Spirit in the final days before the return of Christ was understood by Pentecostals to mean the restoration of the human community as brothers and sisters.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, the Azusa mission also breached economic class divisions. Though the movement began among the poor of Los Angeles, people of other economic classes also began to arrive and experience the Pentecostal revival shoulder-to-shoulder with the poor of Los Angeles. Some of the affluent seekers travelled extreme distances to experience the Azusa revival. The craving for the Pentecostal experience spread to all classes.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Vincent Leoh "Toward Pentecostal Social Ethics," *Journal of Asian Mission* 7 (91), p. 55.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Frank Bartleman, 1925), 54; Cecil M. Robeck. "The Past: Historical Roots of Racial Unity and Division in American Pentecostalism" *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal Charismatic Research* 14. n.p.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 2:5. NIV.

<sup>10</sup> "It is the Blood of Jesus that brings fellowship among the Christian family. The Blood of Jesus Christ is the strongest in the world. It makes all races and nations into one common family in the Lord and makes them satisfied to be one. The Holy Ghost is the leader and He makes all one as Jesus prayed, "that they all may be one;" unsigned and untitled article, *The Apostolic Faith*, Los Angeles, 1:7 (April, 1907), 3. From the black point of view, the racial initial racial harmony was the highlight of the entire movement, rather than any specific doctrine or experience; Hollenweger, "Pentecostals," p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> The Azusa street mission also appeared during a time of renewed interest in religious experience, especially among liberal Christians. The appearance of William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* may have also contributed to the interest in the Azusa revival among the more affluent and educated.

In an age of rampant racism and economic inequality, the early Pentecostals understood their own movement as a sign that the end was near, but it was not a dismal view of destruction and decay. Instead they celebrated that soon all racial sin, hatred and class divisions would be ended.<sup>12</sup> As God poured out his Spirit, the revivalists claimed, a taste of the future was spilling into the present; the end was not expected to be a terrible time of destruction and decay as believed in some other North American religious movements.<sup>13</sup> Early on, Azusa minister, William Seymour understood this remarkable racial and economic unity to be evidence of the revival's authenticity. Pentecostal historian Iain MacRobert argues that,

at its root, [...] the Pentecostal movement, [and] the vision of the disinherited was not some pie-in-the-sky socially irrelevant religious worldview [...] but a restoration of a New Testament-modeled social revolution that radically challenged the racist and unjust social structures of the nation.<sup>14</sup>

Pentecostals were clear that the 'new earth' was not going to come through the development of better government and economic systems as some of their liberal brothers and sisters in America maintained. They rejected the hope for change through secular or political means. Rather, they believed it was the Holy Spirit, working through those he empowers, who would make that change during the glorious final book-end of history of which they felt they were a part. The final chapter of history, that is, the latter

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<sup>12</sup> The early Pentecostal movement has direct roots with Black American oral history which, as Lap-yan Kung describes, serves as a public voice for an oppressed community. Others describe that early Pentecostalism was itself a social protest movement against a racist and class discriminating society. Lap-yan Kung, "Globalization and Ecumenism" *Cyber Journal for Charismatic Research* 12 [on-line]. Available from <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj12/kung.html>; Internet; accessed 30 November, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> In his preface Grant Wacker quotes an unsigned December 1906 *Apostolic Faith* article that described the Azusa Mission as "Heaven Below." *Heaven Below* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Cerillo, "Beginnings," p. 238. Cerillo is summarizing Iain MacRobert's view on early Pentecostal racial unity. (Iain MacRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* .(New York: St Martin's, 1988).

rain, was a time of the pouring out of the Spirit and ‘Spirit filled’ believers were believed to be agents in the last renewal before the return of Christ.

The cancellation of the old order also included the rejection of discrimination against women. Pentecostals became one of the very few Christian movements to not only allow but have a large amount of women in leadership. The leaders of the Azusa mission believed that gender roles had been “washed away by the Spirit.”<sup>15</sup> Early Pentecostals welcomed women into leadership and the *Apostolic Faith* declared that it was “contrary to Scriptures that woman should not have her part in the salvation work to which God has called her.”<sup>16</sup> In 1908, Seymour wrote “We have no right even to lay a straw in her way [...] it is the same Holy Spirit in the woman as in the man.”<sup>17</sup> Pentecostals even unequivocally stated that because of the coming of the Spirit, there is no place for a man to have dominance over a woman, a radical statement for their times.<sup>18</sup> Women founded several Pentecostal denominations such as the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (Aimee Semple McPherson).

Initially, the Azusa revival showed no preference for education, nationality, societal status and even overcame discrimination against age.<sup>19</sup> Young people were invited to testify and even preach. Accounts of the revival tell of children boldly prophesying and praying over adults.<sup>20</sup> For a short time the Azusa revival was a social miracle. The shanty building with its straw covered floor and hard wooden planks for

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<sup>15</sup> Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> “Who May Prophesy?” *The Apostolic Faith* 1, (12).

<sup>17</sup> “To the Married,” *The Apostolic Faith* 1 (7), p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Cheryl Jeanne Sanders, “History of Women in the Pentecostal Movement,” *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 12 (1997). N.p. [on-line] available from <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj2/sanders.html>; internet; accessed 26 January, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Owens, “The Azusa Revival: The Pentecostal Movement Begins in America,” *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal* ed. Vinson Synan. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), p. 58.

pews, drew people from extreme distances, both physically and socially. Though an extremely unusual gathering, those standing on the straw celebrated their mutuality under the Spirit and rejoiced in the social change that announced the coming of their savior.

Unfortunately, this radical social solidarity did not survive and racial and social animosities crept back. Within a decade of the Azusa movement, Pentecostalism had splintered off along racial lines, largely due to the lack of interest of white American Pentecostals in the black Pentecostal's racial-unifying interpretation of the revival. Bitterness between the two groups would last for decades. Those that separated from Seymour, such as William Durham, whose movement later became the AG/PAOC (and the subject of this thesis), began to emphasize their distinctiveness through doctrinal claims rather than through social or experiential distinctives and began to lose the vision of the latter rain.

The celebration of the latter rain continued, to a degree, for a while longer and despite the failure to maintain racial unity, they still expected a radical outpouring of the Spirit to prepare for the return of Christ. But over time other theological influences were hard to ignore. As the white Pentecostals removed themselves from their brothers and sisters of other ethnicities, they became attracted to the message of another white American religious movement, Fundamentalism.

Pentecostalism began as a revival movement and offered its adherents a spiritual experience and a dynamic hermeneutic that other churches lacked. Pentecostals, as Grant Wacker writes, "yearned physically to enter the apostolic world, to breathe its air, feel its life, see its signs and wonders with their own eyes."<sup>21</sup> Originally, there was no official need for people to leave their respective denominations and churches, but the Pentecostal

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<sup>21</sup> Wacker, *Heaven Below*, p. 72.

revival centres, such as the Azusa Street Apostolic Mission, offered those who were already Christians something more. Early Pentecostals would have preferred their established churches to joined in with their revivalist movement rather than having to leave and create their own denomination. They craved a revival of the 'dead' churches rather than the creation of one more ecclesial option. Pentecostalism went beyond the classical confines of Protestantism and its understanding of the gospel and its provision of salvation; Pentecostals yearned for the 'more' that involved this life and the Spirit. As it turned out, that 'more' was more than the established churches could tolerate and those who embraced the movement and tried to pass it on to their fellow parishioners, found themselves unwelcome and dismissed from their churches. The established churches had little patience for this new Pentecostal experience.

Though it was not their intention, Pentecostals eventually were forced to create their own organizations, despite their repulsion for 'spirit-dampening' organization; their expulsion from the established churches left them little choice. Most original Pentecostal organizations were informal relations of independent churches linked with the purpose of sharing missionary resources.<sup>22</sup> Too much organization was thought to interrupt the reception of what the Holy Spirit was saying to the Church, but additionally, it was considered practically unnecessary since they did not expect to be around much longer.<sup>23</sup>

Though it was not their direct intention, Pentecostals entered the world stage as a symbolic protest against an unjust world and created an alternate community of the disinherited. Yet in the early stages, the movement did not need an agenda of social

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas W. Miller. *Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada* (Mississauga: Full Gospel Publishing House, 1994), p. 114.

<sup>23</sup> The premillennialism of Pentecostals routinely caused scepticism towards the development of anything that seemed permanent or long term. Since their movement itself was understood to be evidence that the end is near, any organization and settlement was in conflict with their reason for being.

concern, it simply was one.<sup>24</sup> Racial and economic class unity was considered the evidence of the Spirit's work. In 1907 Seymour wrote in *The Apostolic Faith*, Tongues are one of the signs that go with every baptized person, but it is not the real evidence of baptism in everyday life [...] The secret is: one accord, one place, one heart, one prayer, one soul believing in this great power. Pentecost [...] brings us all into one common family.<sup>25</sup> From this vision of solidarity where the old ways are cancelled, we can see an incredible potential for a Pentecostal social justice theology today which we will examine in a later section of this thesis. Despite such potentials for social action from such a vision, one aspect of early Pentecostals theology made the development of a social justice theology pragmatically unnecessary; they expected history to end at any moment.

### Early Pentecostal Premillennial Expectation

The theology of early Pentecostals cannot be understood without reference to the premillennial expectation they felt for the second coming of Christ. William Faupel and Robert Anderson are correct to assert that premillennialism is at the core of the Pentecostal message.<sup>26</sup> For early Pentecostals, not only was it a key belief, but it was also their 'raison d'être'. We must be clear, however, that this did not necessarily mean that they shared the same interpretations of premillennialism as the Fundamentalists did. Understanding themselves as the Latter Rain, Pentecostals believed that their movement

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<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Gos, "Confessing the Apostolic Faith from the Perspective of the Pentecostal Churches," *Pneuma* 9 (1), p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Seymour, *The Apostolic Faith, 1907*; quoted without complete documentation in Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, p. 297.

<sup>26</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, ch.5; Byron Klaus, "The Holy Spirit and Mission in Eschatological Perspective: A Pentecostal Viewpoint," *Pneuma* 27 (2), p. 327.

was the end of history, the final and unique outpouring of the Spirit before Christ's return. Wacker rightly suggests that the charge that Pentecostals were indolent with regards to theological formation or education miss the point. It was not lack of a desire, but simply impatience.<sup>27</sup> Feeling prompted by the Spirit to evangelize the world in one last cosmic spiritual battle before the end, Pentecostals felt little need for articulate theological systems, organizational structures and building projects.

Early Pentecostals did not have a poor theology of social action, they simply did not have one. Most early Pentecostals would never have dreamt that history would have lasted long enough to necessitate theological thinking about social change since it was happening around them, and was expected to reach its completion momentarily. Gary McGee writes, "So intensely did they expect the Second Coming of Christ that envisioning an additional decade – or even another century – [...] would have been inconceivable."<sup>28</sup> Long term work was simply outside of their field of consciousness. When it comes to the task of asking what early Pentecostals would have thought about social action, we cannot refer to their written theology on the matter or turn to the appropriate section of their theological volumes; they simply do not exist. Early Pentecostals did not write a theology of social justice, in the light of the imminent coming of Christ, it was unnecessary since the world was about to be perfected with the return of Christ. From the current point of view, Pentecostals have learned the lesson that history could last another hundred years, perhaps more, yet could still end tomorrow.

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<sup>27</sup> Wacker, *Heaven Below*, p.31; Early Pentecostals may not have written very much books simply because of the long term nature of the medium. They did, however, create a significant amount of periodicals revealing they were adept at literary communication.

<sup>28</sup> Gary B. McGee, "Pentecostal and Charismatic Missions." *Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Mission*, eds. J.M. Phillips and R.T. Coote (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 41-45

The extreme nature of Pentecostal imminent premillennialism has calmed as we now see North American Pentecostals building large churches and developing minister's pension plans.<sup>29</sup> From the current historical perspective, reflection on long term related social issues is necessary in order to create a Pentecostal theology of social justice within history that could either end tomorrow or could continue on for a considerable time. As mentioned above, I do not suggest that this can be done by simply exegeting the past to find a message from mythically enhanced 'founders.' Rather, Pentecostal history and origins are valuable resources in the development of a Pentecostal theology of social justice which will also keep the thinking within the movement, and as Ralph Del Colle once said, it is appropriate to 'drink from our own wells.'<sup>30</sup> What will also become clear in this thesis is the importance of developing a Pentecostal theology rather than simply accepting a theology from the outside, especially from groups hostile to Pentecostalism.

### Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism

The early Fundamentalists were adamant antagonists to the early Pentecostals. Though early Pentecostals were not Fundamentalists, their histories are entwined and the development of early Pentecostalism cannot be understood without understanding their relationship with Fundamentalism. This section will argue that Pentecostalism arose partly as a protest against Fundamentalism and its use of the philosophical assumptions of modernity, yet as North American Pentecostalism consolidated and developed (in spite of itself) into denominations, they began to accept Fundamentalist theology.

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<sup>29</sup> Hollenweger, "Pentecostals," p. 33.

<sup>30</sup> Ralph Del Colle, "Spirituality in Light of Spirit Christology" *Drinking From Our Own Wells: Defining a Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality*, ed. by Cheryl Bridges Johns (Springfield: Society For Pentecostal Studies, 1992).

Before examining this relationship further, it is important to note that there are beneficial qualities within Fundamentalism and, in some ways, it did help to preserve some doctrines of the Christian faith that were under attack and thus it is inappropriate to demonize the movement as a whole. It is, however, in the interest of this thesis to consider the negative influences of Fundamentalism on Pentecostal theology, especially with regards to social justice. Another, equally beneficial work could be done to examine the positive benefits that Fundamentalism had on Pentecostalism such as providing them with the necessary tools and incentive to articulate themselves and perhaps preventing them from disappearing into theological obscurity. We will now examine the uneasy relationship between Pentecostalism and Fundamentalism revealing a progressive assimilation of the former into the latter.

It can be asked, are Pentecostals influenced negatively by Fundamentalism, or are they simply Fundamentalists? If they shared some of the same roots as the Fundamentalists, could not what seems to be a capitulation to Fundamentalism be, rather, a development alongside Fundamentalism due to the same influences? There is no single answer to this question. In some cases, early Pentecostals were of Fundamentalist attitude and impulse with the same fears and aggression. However, there are important theological differences between the two movements and how they understood the world.

The strife between Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism is more than just internal conflicts within the same movement. The Pentecostals had a markedly different way of seeing the world which was adamantly rejected by the Fundamentalists. Early Pentecostals functioned with a very different set of assumptions about scripture, history, experience and the cosmos and God's working within it. Generally, it can be summarized

that Pentecostalism functions with a dynamic view of a world of opposing powers and possibilities. This is extremely different from the static nature of Fundamentalist theology. These differences will come to light as we take a closer look at early Fundamentalism and their response to early Pentecostalism.<sup>31</sup>

Pentecostals and Fundamentalists differed in their response to the rapidly changing western world. Fundamentalism responded, not by creating alternative communities of protest that filled the void left by modernism, but by directly fighting back. Fundamentalism, as Harvey Cox writes, “was a desperate attempt to fend off modernity using modernity’s weapons.”<sup>32</sup> Fundamentalists envision themselves in a desperate situation, even a war against Liberalism.

Fundamentalism came about as American life, especially among the intellectuals, was heading in a new liberal-secularist direction at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, making conservative Christians uneasy.<sup>33</sup> As this was happening, liberal theologians were concerned that religion was becoming obsolete and sought to save the faith through attempting to understand it within the light of new scientific discoveries that questioned the Bible’s simplistic accuracy. “Many leaders of protestant denominations,” George Marsden writes, “attempted to tone down the offenses to modern sensibilities of a Bible filled with miracles and a gospel that proclaimed human salvation from eternal damnation only through Christ’s atoning works on the cross.”<sup>34</sup> Yet some conservative ministers, scholars and lay people were concerned that the liberals were selling out the faith. In response, they banded together in order to declare war on liberal modernism.

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<sup>31</sup> Russell P. Spittler “Are Pentecostals and Charismatics Fundamentalists?” *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*. ed. Karla Poewe (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 103-116.

<sup>32</sup> Cox, *Fire From Heaven*, p. 303.

<sup>33</sup> George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p.4.

<sup>34</sup> Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, p. 4.

Though in some ways they attempted to maintain orthodox faith, they were also just as much of a new theological innovation as Liberalism was, a fact that they were and are unwilling to admit. Martin E. Marty writes, “Fundamentalists do not simply reaffirm the old doctrines; they subtly lift them from their original context, embellish and institutionalize them, and employ them as ideological weapons against a hostile world.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, Fundamentalism is not simply preservation of orthodoxy, it too, is a creation of the modern world.

Fundamentalism also arose in the context of extreme fear of social change. Marsden writes, “the fact of the matter was that the age was over when the United States was in any significant sense a bastion of Christendom.”<sup>36</sup> The romantic idea of a ‘Christian America’ was quickly fading away. Though obviously never in literal control, the Church had previously enjoyed a large measure of cultural influence. The Fundamentalists were those who felt they were losing their status and cultural authority in a society that they felt was becoming increasingly sinful.<sup>37</sup> Their theological development can only be understood in terms of ‘reactionary protectionism.’ As Mark Noll notes, this approach stifled or stopped any further creative theological developments.<sup>38</sup> Rather than putting forth a scholarly criticism of the new liberal theological developments and formulating an alternative theology for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they ‘circled the wagons’ and consolidated their 19<sup>th</sup> century conservative theology, including all its problems, as the final and complete canon. They affectively shut down the theological program turning all energies to the defense of a now ‘flawless system.’

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<sup>35</sup> Martin E. Marty and Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalism Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), quoted in Cox, *Fire From Heaven*, p. 303.

<sup>36</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, p. 51.

<sup>37</sup> Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp.123-139.

Early Pentecostals, however, were different. While Fundamentalists were appealing to a rational, objective and essentially ‘finished’ theology, the Pentecostals reveled in hearing new words (and theologies) from God through personal pneumatically driven interpretation and spiritual experience. To illustrate this, we will now contrast some key differences between early Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism.

### *Differences Between Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism*

The culture of Fundamentalism preferred to seek certainty through appealing to absolutes, while early Pentecostals gained certainty through their religious experience. Fundamentalist arguments were based on, essentially, the same assumptions as their liberal counterparts: foundationalism.<sup>39</sup> Fundamentalists stamped the Bible, and their interpretation of it, inerrant and ended the discussion. Yet to the Pentecostal the nature of the Bible was dynamic, though they still felt it was infallible. In a sense, they did not consider the discussion over, because they felt that the author was still talking.<sup>40</sup> Nor did they think in terms of complete rational consistency and scientific data, but they felt they could trust the Bible because they could ask the author to clarify things.

The role the early Pentecostals gave to the Holy Spirit, especially through individual experience separated them from the Fundamentalists who preferred their own version of a rational, historical-critical method. To the Pentecostals the Holy Spirit was thought to be the ultimate persuader of scriptural truth, not rational arguments.<sup>41</sup> They

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<sup>39</sup> Nancey Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1996), pp. 11-35.

<sup>40</sup> French Arrington, “Hermeneutics Historical Perspectives on Pentecostal and Charismatic” in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 376-389.

<sup>41</sup> Early Pentecostals were also fascinated by extra canonical sources of inspiration, such as dreams and visions. They often had spiritual interpretations of seemingly mundane occurrences.

may have come to similar conclusions about the Bible, and were perhaps just as arrogantly certain as the Fundamentalists as Wacker notes, yet they arrived at this certainty from completely different angles.<sup>42</sup> Pentecostals had a Spirit driven hermeneutic that involved a dynamic interaction between the reader, author and Spirit; it was trust in the Spirit which made them believe that they could not go wrong in their interpretations of the Bible, despite their plethora of differing interpretations.<sup>43</sup>

Fundamentalist theology was driven by a fear of change, whereas the Pentecostals were content that something completely new in history was occurring.<sup>44</sup> Pentecostals believed their movement to be the last outpouring of the Spirit before the return of Christ. Though understood to be the book-end of the first Pentecost, the second Pentecost event was to be even bigger. Believing their movement was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy regarding the last days, they unashamedly began new practices and ideas justified by this latter rain self understanding.<sup>45</sup> Pentecostals felt little compulsion to follow the same standards of church liturgy and were suspicious of almost all traditions. They developed new and innovative ideas with respect to speaking in tongues and the Spirit's involvement in the world, healing and evangelism. If anything, it was a highly creative movement, starkly different from the staunchly steadfast Fundamentalism.

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<sup>42</sup> Wacker, *Heaven Below*, p.23-25.

<sup>43</sup> From a psychological point of view, Margaret Poloma argues that Pentecostals place more importance on the experience of religion over the ritual of religion which stems from a dynamic cosmology. (*The Charismatic Movement: Is There a New Pentecost?* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p.68-69.

<sup>44</sup> Norman Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954) ch. 2.

<sup>45</sup> This metaphor refers to the two rain seasons in Palestine. The first in spring during the planting season, and the second in the fall just before harvest. Early Pentecostals defended the apparent newness of their movement using this concept; they understood their movement as the final great outpouring of God before the 'harvest.' Dayton, *Theological Roots*, p. 26.

Early Pentecostal theology, though in rough form and in developmental stages, offered a viable third alternative from Fundamentalism and Liberalism.<sup>46</sup> Yet, as we shall examine shortly, Pentecostal history took an unfortunate turn. At least in the early stages, it would be an error to equate Pentecostalism with Fundamentalism. The most significant evidence for the distinction of the two is the early response of Fundamentalism to Pentecostalism: Fundamentalists ardently rejected Pentecostalism as not only error, but as demonic, indeed as “the last vomit of Satan” and spent the same degree of fury against Pentecostalism as they did against Liberalism.<sup>47</sup>

While under constant attacks from the Fundamentalists, early Pentecostals eventually had another problem: Jesus did not come back. The initial energy of their revival movement was waning, the latter rain sputtered out, yet Christ did not come down from the clouds. Locked in an ugly battle with the Fundamentalists, it is here that Pentecostals began to make some unfortunate decisions which lead the movement away from the vision of the early leaders and surrendered leadership and relinquished key Pentecostal distinctives as the price of acceptance.

#### Submission to the Antagonist

We will now examine the process of what can be described as a submission to the theological antagonist as Pentecostalism largely came under the control of those who had

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<sup>46</sup> Even Noll considers Pentecostalism “A New Departure” amidst a two sided battle. Nevertheless, favouring a baser interpretation of Pentecostalism, he still lumps the movement into Fundamentalism ignoring the implications of the Pentecostal Theology and its contrast with Fundamentalism. (Noll, *A History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1992), p. 386.

<sup>47</sup> G. Campbell Morgan, one of the authors *The Fundamentals* described Pentecostalism as “the last vomit of Satan.” Quoted without primary documentation in Synan *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, p. 146.

condemned it.<sup>48</sup> Some aspects were conscious decisions while others were trends that can be seen from our present historical perspective.

Pentecostalism was birthed into the world amidst bitter religious conflict. Liberal Christianity desperately sought to find a way to hang on to the faith, yet without abandoning the contemporary sciences and philosophies. The liberals were, in their own way, defending the faith.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the Fundamentalists were vehemently protesting such accommodations to the secular world and militantly drew their theological lines and stood their ground. Furthermore, the world was a rapidly changing place. New forms of technology were swiftly changing commerce, transportation, industry, culture and politics. With the development of steamships, trains, telegraphs and telephones the world was becoming an increasingly global community. Pentecostalism came into this situation not with a better argument or a new line to draw, but with a testimony of an experience. The third option they provided was appealing to many people who felt left out or lost amongst the Fundamentalist – liberal controversy.

The Fundamentalists largely copied the foundational assumptions of their liberal adversaries.<sup>50</sup> As the liberals began to expose inconsistencies in the Bible, the Fundamentalists followed their steps explaining and rescuing the Bible and faith from such charges with their own attempts at rational discourse.<sup>51</sup> The liberals went as far as

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<sup>48</sup> Hollenweger, "Pentecostalism," n.p.

<sup>49</sup> Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, p.44.

<sup>50</sup> Nancy Murphy outlines how the Liberals and the Fundamentalists shared epistemological assumptions yet differed on where the 'starting point' of theology is placed. *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1996).

<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, the Fundamentalists never developed the same level of scholastic skill as the liberals did and though appealed to rational scrutiny, in truth, they merely ended the discussion by declaring God was on their side. Noll outlines how this fostered a culture of anti-intellectualism. Fundamentalist logic determined that if Liberalism is the result of education, then education must be a negative influence. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p. 123) Incidentally, the Pentecostals also had a similar certitude yet

saying that the Bible is an inspiring, humanly written and flawed text, while the Fundamentalists went as far as declaring that every word within the Bible was infallible and logically incapable of error. What is important to note is that they used the same modernist, propositional approach to truth.

When Pentecostalism entered the stage they had a third approach to the whole question of religion itself: personal and communal spiritual experience. Pentecostals had the same level of arrogant certainty that the other two possessed, but to the Pentecostals, this was not the result of rational scrutiny. The early growth of the Pentecostal movement was primarily due to the spreading news and ‘testimony,’ rather than the articulation of a consistent doctrine.<sup>52</sup> Pentecostals placed a tremendous value on experience related to the Holy Spirit. Such experiences provided confidence in spite of charges of absurdity or worse. This experientialism meant that each participant’s views were ‘in their own hands.’ Though many earlier Pentecostal leaders were prolific writers and composed many books, a group of elite scholars did not control the movement.

Though the Fundamentalists rejoiced in their attempts to make all lay people Bible-in-hand scholars, they rejected the Pentecostal experiential approach to religion. In the beginning, the Pentecostals stood their ground against the attacks from the Fundamentalists. As Faupel articulates, the Pentecostal defense of their experience and Pentecostalism itself, was not directed against liberal attacks, for they had long sought

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did not find it necessary to feign that they had arrived at the truth through rational investigation, rather, they were convinced through their experience that they were right.

<sup>52</sup> Early Pentecostals published several periodicals that helped advertise for the movement. *The Apostolic Faith* was Azusa’s periodical that served less to propagate doctrine and more to share the news of what was happening and report miracles (such as healings), baptisms in the Holy Spirit and conversions. One did not find in these early publications a systematic defense of Pentecostal doctrine.

individual spiritual experience, rather, it was against attacks from the Fundamentalists.<sup>53</sup>

He writes,

Theological Liberalism was not even in the consciousness of the adherents of the initial Pentecostal revival. Certainly, it was not the subject of their critique. Rather, I have come to believe that Pentecostalism arose, in large part, as a critique directed at an emerging Fundamentalism which was attaching itself to the Old Princeton Theology.<sup>54</sup>

The ‘dead theology’ and ‘man-made religious creeds’ that Pentecostals decried were of the Fundamentalists, especially regarding their belief in cessationism. Pentecostalism was not a protest against Liberalism alongside Fundamentalism. To the liberals, Pentecostals were perhaps creatively irrational, deserving of a smile and a pat on the head, but to the Fundamentalists, Pentecostals were demonically apostate.<sup>55</sup> To the Pentecostals, the Fundamentalists had fallen prey to the lifeless creeds of men.

Decades before the emergence of postmodernism, the Pentecostals were already appealing to personal stories and non-rational experiences and were rejecting a modernist, rational system of totality; it was an escape from the doomed epistemology of modernity.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the Fundamentalists, entwined with secular philosophy, rejected the Pentecostal appeal to experience and testimony and ridiculed the young movement.

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<sup>53</sup> William Menzies observes that liberals largely ignored Pentecostals. *Anointed To Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1971), pp.170-181; The writings of Fredreich Schleiermacher were popular at the time which praised individual spiritual experience. Additionally, the psychologist William James also brought spiritual experience to the interest of mainstream liberals in his “The Varieties of Religious Experience.” Though the liberals did not, in large numbers, become active participants, they did not share the aggressive reaction to Pentecostalism characteristic of Fundamentalism.

<sup>54</sup> Faupel, “Whither Pentecostalism?” p.21; see also, George Fry, “Pentecostalism in Historical Perspective,” *The Springfielder* 39 (March 1976), pp. 182-192.

<sup>55</sup> William Menzies notes that liberals largely ignored Pentecostals. *Anointed to Serve*, pp. 179-181.

<sup>56</sup> Timothy B. Cargal, “Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and Hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age,” *Pneuma* 15 (2), pp. 163-187.

Despite the initial conflict, or perhaps because of it, Pentecostalism grew rapidly and within a year was speckled across the entire globe. The premillennial expectation of Pentecostalism prevented them from building much of a church infrastructure and they resisted organization as a potential tool for the devil. This, coupled with Pentecostalism's adaptability to various cultures and ethnicities, caused many 'home grown' forms of Pentecostalism to develop in many parts of the globe and in different ways.<sup>57</sup> In the North American context, it was only with apologetic reluctance that Pentecostals began to organize.<sup>58</sup> By 1910, Christ still had not returned and the revival had passed its plateau and was settling down. When the founders of the Assemblies of God gathered together in Hot Springs, Arkansas, they were clear that they were not starting a new denomination. According to Faupel, "they defined the new organization as a voluntary fellowship of ministers who joined together for a common cause. Under the charter, local churches were to retain complete autonomy, and no creed was adopted."<sup>59</sup> Yet as the movement grew larger the need for the practical benefits of organization became more pressing. The specific reasons why Pentecostals chose to organize varied from access to cheap train fare, to the creation of overseas missions organizations, to the development of Sunday School materials, but the biggest issue that pushed Pentecostals into organization and demand of some kind of uniformity was a theological one.

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<sup>57</sup> This view is argued by Harvey Cox in *Fire From Heaven*, pp. 185-298.

<sup>58</sup> Holleweger, *The Pentecostals*, p. 29. Chapter three is entitled, "A Church in spite of itself: The Organization of the Assemblies of God into a Church."

<sup>59</sup> William Faupel, "The Restorationist Vision" *Christian Century* 107 (29), p. 939; Randall Holm, "Organizational Blues: The Struggle of One Pentecostal Denomination With the Bugbear of Institutionalism." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 1994.

## Theology Formed in Conflict

The insistence by many early Pentecostal leaders that the development of doctrinal organization would stifle the movement of the Spirit and create a human-made organization could not last for long. It was soon realized that such an approach meant that all of theology was up for discussion. As some groups within Pentecostalism began to question some of the basic doctrines of Christian orthodoxy, Pentecostals were forced to reconsider their aversion to doctrine. In reaction to some key theological conflicts, namely the nature of the Godhead, Pentecostal leaders in North America decided to curb the freedom of theological creativity. Within a religion that was sharply divided between Fundamentalist and liberal approaches to religious authority, Pentecostal leadership chose to default to a Fundamentalist approach than risk stepping outside the binary limitations of the theological spectrum at the time. This section will outline how Pentecostals began to feel the need to embrace the apparent security of Fundamentalist style beliefs, yet still try to retain some form of Pentecostal identity. On the Fundamentalist side, there was to be no compromise. If Pentecostalism retained any of its theological creativity and distinctiveness, it was to be considered a cult. Pentecostalism existed and developed its theology within the context of this tension for forty years.

Contrary to the Fundamentalist style, it became popular within the early Pentecostal movement for preachers to create an entirely new slant on a theology, allegedly provided through some form of a religious experience. The movement thrived on these preachers until some serious and inevitable organizational problems developed. John G. Scheppe, an early Pentecostal preacher, declared a revelation from God: 'God is one and his name is Jesus,' beginning a large non-trinitarian movement within the

Assemblies of God.<sup>60</sup> Those who rejected this innovation suddenly found the Church Father's pragmatically useful and accused this new 'Oneness Pentecostalism' of modalism. At the 1916 general council meeting of the AG in St. Louis, of 585 members, 156 walked out, taking their churches with them.<sup>61</sup> Despite their early attempts to create a church without creeds, the Pentecostals rushed to create one to prevent further theological tragedies. They promptly drafted their first "Statement of Fundamental Truths" and began to adopt aggressive Fundamentalist language to avoid more internal theological conflicts.<sup>62</sup>

It is here, in their decision to become a more theologically driven movement that a problem occurred. Pentecostals did not have the scholarly resources and seminaries to create a systematic religious creed; up until then they considered creeds a negative influence. Also, Pentecostals were becoming increasingly concerned with the liberal views of religion. Ideas such as the acceptance of evolution, religious pluralism and the rejection of the divinity of Christ deeply disturbed Pentecostals. Though they received fewer attacks from the liberals, they found that they had more in common with their biggest enemy, the Fundamentalists.

Despite their epistemological differences, the Pentecostals did agree with the Fundamentalists on many doctrinal issues. In fact, if not pressed on the details, Pentecostals could agree with all the five fundamental doctrines listed in *The Fundamentals*. Lacking their own scholarship, Pentecostals began to turn to the

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<sup>60</sup> This Oneness group eventually formed today's 'United Pentecostal Church International' and 'Pentecostal Assemblies of the World.'

<sup>61</sup> Faupel, *Restoration*, p. 939; Faupel also notes that some important figures, such as the first General Superintendent, E.N. Bell, left with the Oneness faction; Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 176-187.

<sup>62</sup> Incidentally, the original Statement of Fundamental Truths did not include the inerrancy doctrine as it does today. It was later attached the 1960's; After the Oneness fallout the AG began a process of creating a much stronger executive board. Faupel, *Restoration*, p. 940.

Fundamentalist's defense of these doctrines. This began a slow capitulation to Fundamentalist impulses and methods of thinking which would prove devastating for the development of a Pentecostal theology of social justice. Also, as Pentecostals began to found Bible Institutes and Schools all across North America, they turned to Fundamentalist texts, skipping over chapters which declared Pentecostalism a heresy. The next generation of Pentecostals leaders were groomed in these institutions and brought the Fundamentalism from their textbooks into their movement.

This began a tension within North American Pentecostalism that exists to this day. Pentecostals hold on to the experiential, Spirit-illuminated hermeneutic, yet commonly appeal to the Fundamentalist's propositionally based hermeneutic and its 'inerrancy' doctrine. Pentecostals routinely struggle with the conflict between Spirit illumination while at the same time trying to maintain a Fundamentalist method of scriptural interpretation. The result is a rampant pragmatism that allows Pentecostal leaders and individuals to appeal to whichever approach supports a position they wish to take.<sup>63</sup>

As the conflict between the Fundamentalists and the Pentecostals raged on, the younger and lesser organized Pentecostalism found itself being socially conditioned to reflect Fundamentalism. Essentially, since the Pentecostals had to continually defend their beliefs to the Fundamentalists, they began to use their language and in time moved from an apologetic that explained their movement, to an apologetic that sought ecclesiastical unity. It could be said that they developed an intellectual insecurity that sought acceptance of those who condemned them.

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<sup>63</sup> Randal Holm, "A Paradigmatic Analysis of Authority Within Pentecostalism," (Ph.D diss., University of Laval, 1995).

For the first half of the twentieth century most Fundamentalist organizations stood their ground against Pentecostalism. The 1928 convention of the World's Christian Fundamentalist Association declared,

WHEREAS, The present wave of Modern Pentecostalism, often referred to as the "tongues movement," and the present wave of fanatical and unscriptural healing which is sweeping over the country today, has become a menace in many churches and a real injury to the sane testimony of Fundamentalist Christians.

BE IT RESOLVED, That this convention go on to record as unreservedly opposed to Modern Pentecostalism.<sup>64</sup>

Pentecostals found that they could not simply condemn them in return, though there is evidence that some early Pentecostals were extremely sectarian, they felt that they had too much in common with Fundamentalists to respond in kind.<sup>65</sup>

Fundamentalist theology was a temptation for Pentecostals. They knew that Fundamentalists outright rejected them, yet they appreciated their protection of the supernatural nature of the Bible, the divinity of Christ and the miraculous in the Bible, issues which were all important to the Pentecostals. As they grew to appreciate the Fundamentalist defense of the Bible, they began to be influenced by their impulses and ideas. As the Fundamentalist – Modernist bitter conflict raged on, Pentecostals increasingly fell in line with a view of Christianity with only two options; the right and the left. Unfortunately, the Fundamentalists were entirely uninterested in dialogue with the Pentecostals, yet the Pentecostals, undertaking their new task at developing a

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<sup>64</sup> "Report of the Tenth Annual Convention of the World's Christian Fundamentalist Association" 1928:9.

<sup>65</sup> Russell P. Spitzer, "Are Pentecostals and Charismatics Fundamentalists?" *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* ed. Karla Poewe, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994) p. 109.

systematic theology, found their options limited and turned to the Fundamentalists for help.<sup>66</sup>

After the initial burst onto the world scene at the beginning of the twentieth century, Pentecostals began to lose the attention that it once received and, as Robert M. Anderson notes, “passed into relative obscurity.”<sup>67</sup> The early revival had abated and Pentecostals began to isolate themselves into communities that largely rejected mainstream culture and created their own subculture with anticipation of the coming of Christ. The secular society, in turn, rejected the Pentecostals. To their continued surprise, Christ still had not returned leaving them with the challenge of creating long-term church infrastructures that they so deplored. Since using theological Liberalism as a resource was not an option, they became dependent on their Fundamentalist adversaries in spite of their inhospitality. Pentecostals thus disappeared from popular attention until they were accepted by a movement that arose out of Fundamentalism and offered fellowship with the Pentecostal outcasts.<sup>68</sup>

### **Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism**

In the 1940's, moderates within the Fundamentalist movement stepped outside of its confines and created a ‘new-Evangelicalism.’ This section will trace the history of the acceptance of Pentecostalism into the new Evangelicalism. Despite some signs that Pentecostals were developing their own theology, the offer of acceptance towards Pentecostals, who had known only rejection from other churches for so long, caused

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<sup>66</sup> Paul W. Lewis, “Reflections of a Hundred Years of Pentecostalism” *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal Charismatic Research* 12. n.p. [on-line] available from <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj12/lewis.html>; Internet; accessed 6 January 2006.

<sup>67</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p.137; Faupel, *Restoration*, p. 939.

<sup>68</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 137.

Pentecostals to lose interest in ‘their own wells.’ We will examine the Pentecostal acceptance into the ‘National Association of Evangelicals’ and the subsequent creation of the ‘Pentecostal Fellowship of North America.’

The inclusion of Pentecostalism into this Evangelicalism must be understood with the previous three decades in mind. Pentecostalism had long been relegated to the ‘cult’ section of local libraries. Not only did early Pentecostals take the brunt of racism, sexism and disdain for the low economic class, a misunderstanding of Pentecostal spirituality led many to accuse them of the most heinous of charges.<sup>69</sup> Though extreme forms included that Pentecostals were murderous, Satan worshipping, orgy practicing, cultists, Pentecostalism was generally dismissed as a heretical, dangerous and fanatical religion of the poor. Such a poor reputation held strong until the 1940’s when Pentecostalism rose in economic standing and was still rapidly growing.

#### The Evangelicalization of Pentecostalism

A ray of ecumenical hope was presented to the Pentecostals after years of isolation and rejection. Throughout the 1940’s a group of conservative Christians, unsatisfied with American Fundamentalism, banded together to create a ‘neo-evangelical’ movement in an attempt to maintain the orthodox Christian faith without the militancy and historical baggage of Fundamentalism. Remarkably, they welcomed Pentecostals into their ranks. In 1943 the new evangelicals created the National

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<sup>69</sup> Grant A. Wacker, “Travail of a Broken Family: Radical Evangelical Responses to the Emergence of Pentecostalism in America, 1906-16” *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism*. ed. Edith L. Blumhofer (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), pp. 23-49.

Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and the Pentecostals were invited to join.<sup>70</sup> This group wished to hold firm to orthodoxy yet took steps to separate themselves from their Fundamentalist heritage. It is important to note that at the beginning, the evangelicals maintained that they did not separate from the Fundamentalists due to doctrinal issues, but separated due to differences in style, methodology and attitude.<sup>71</sup>

The Pentecostal acceptance into the NAE reinvigorated the assimilation process as Pentecostals, in some very literal ways, capitulated theological leadership to this emerging group that they were delighted to belong. Yet in retrospect, it appears that by doing so, Pentecostals again missed the opportunity to develop their own systematic theology, including their own theology of social justice. Pentecostals began to ‘outsource’ much of their theological development and borrowed an inadequate theology of social justice from these new evangelicals.

Noll describes the creation of this organization as, “a signpost to mark a transition from the age of Fundamentalism to an era of new beginnings.”<sup>72</sup> Pentecostals became very interested in being a part of the emerging Evangelicalism. From that moment on Pentecostalism came out of its world-renouncing isolation and returned to the world stage with a new zeal.<sup>73</sup> A highlight in the evangelicalization of Pentecostalism was the appointment of Assemblies of God superintendent, Thomas Zimmerman, to the position

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<sup>70</sup> See George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* on the development of the new Evangelicalism created in 1948, especially regarding the role of Fuller Theological Seminary. The Canadian counterpart to the NAE is the ‘Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.’

<sup>71</sup> David W. Bebbington, “British and American Evangelicalism Since 1940” *Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 372. Bebbington notes that some early NAE leaders were able to maintain dual memberships with Fundamentalist Conventions as well as the NAE. He writes, “George L. Ford, general director of the NAE, was still insisting in 1963 that its supporters disagreed only with the methods, not the theology, of the American Council of Christian Churches. (The Fundamentalist equivalent of the NAE), p. 372.

<sup>72</sup> Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p. 170.

<sup>73</sup> David E. Harnell Jr. “Healers and Televangelists After World War II” *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, ed. Vinson Synan, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), p. 325.

of president of the NAE in 1959.<sup>74</sup> They had come a long way from being the laughingstock of the Christian community.

As noted earlier, Evangelicalism can at times be even more difficult to define than Pentecostalism. The word can be used of any denomination or sect to describe any church or believer that believes in and announces the *euangellion*, the good news of Christ. Even more refined it can refer to any movement that finds ‘missions’ or the proclamation and conversion of others to Christianity as evangelical as well. In this sense, Pentecostals are certainly evangelical. We recall that the term evangelical as I will be using it in this thesis is a further refined definition referring to the movement that largely began as a toning down of the Fundamentalist extremism and centered around the NAE as noted above. Some of their theological roots come from the ‘greater’ evangelical movement of the revivals of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Yet they share these roots with their liberal cousins who went in a very different direction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The evangelicals arising out of (but certainly not synonymous with) Fundamentalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century retained some of Fundamentalism’s theological modifications, such as the belief in inerrancy and cessationism, and a premillennial eschatology. They left behind, however, some of the extreme right wing political views and ardent militancy.

The highly respected evangelical scholar Donald Bloesch provides a concentrated list of evangelical essentials in his appropriately named work, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*.<sup>75</sup> He names a few evangelical doctrines that will be important as we contrast it with Pentecostalism. Among them is, as Bloesch writes, “the eschatological and

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<sup>74</sup> Hollenweger, “Pentecostals,” p. 42; Spittler, “Are Pentecostals Fundamentalists?” p. 112.

<sup>75</sup> Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology Vol. 1* (Peabody: Prince Press, 1988).

superhistorical character of the kingdom of God.”<sup>76</sup> In addition, he also states that to evangelicals, “evangelization [is] the primary dimension of the Christian mission.”<sup>77</sup> He goes on to write that in Evangelicalism conversion is a crisis experience rather than a process.<sup>78</sup>

Evangelicalism rightly asserts the metaphysical side of salvation against the diminishment of theology to the material only. Nevertheless, such a necessary defensive assertion has come at the expense of the holistic elements of soteriology. An under-emphasis on the material aspects of salvation is problematic for social action. In their justifiable insistence on the importance of the spiritual need for regeneration, it is not normative for the evangelical proclamation of the gospel to include elements of hope, restoration and healing here on earth. Rather, evangelicals generally prefer a substitutionary atonement gospel and first proclaim the ‘good news’ that humans are condemned to eternal torment because sin, as John Stott writes, “arouses the wrath of God.”<sup>79</sup> Such news is followed up by an equally metaphysical solution. Putting one’s faith in Christ allows for the substitutionary atonement to be affective in one’s life gaining access to the Kingdom of God, otherwise known as heaven in the next life. Until then, one’s vocation is to both wait for the coming Kingdom, as well as proclaim the good news to others allowing them the chance to enjoy this same salvation. That is, at least, how it looks from the synergistic side of Evangelicalism. The monergistic side of Evangelicalism which dominates the seminaries (but not necessarily the pews) adds to the equation a God who has pre-chosen some for salvation and others for suffering. Such

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<sup>76</sup> Bloesch, *Essentials*, p. 14.

<sup>77</sup> Bloesch, *Essentials*, p. 14

<sup>78</sup> Bloesch, *Essentials*, p. 14

<sup>79</sup> John R.W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1986), p. 173.

thinking has disastrous consequences on social action. The earth and the context of physical existence is the mere theatre for a pre-planned cosmic drama and thus consideration for the material is limited.

Early Pentecostals appear to have been intentionally vague on many of the doctrinal details of theology that allowed for more holistic implications.<sup>80</sup> Such ambiguity was eventually removed as Pentecostals began to assimilate Fundamentalist theology into their own systematic theology and the progressive possibilities and potential for social action were diminished as the next world became paramount. Early Pentecostals certainly longed for heaven, but they had a keen understanding of how some of that heaven is spilling over into the present world, especially through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and healing as we shall examine later.

The Pentecostal scholar Douglas Jacobsen, presents a convincing case that there were many second generation Pentecostals who were interested in developing Pentecostal theology independently. In a paper entitled, "Knowing the Doctrines of the Pentecostals: The Scholastic Theology of the Assemblies of God," he argues that some Pentecostals were already on their way towards developing a Pentecostal systematic theology that was neither Fundamentalist, liberal nor evangelical.<sup>81</sup> The second generation Pentecostals, Jacobsen argues, tried to understand their place "in the longer, larger and broader "catholic" Christian tradition."<sup>82</sup> Toning down the internal rivalries, some Pentecostals began to develop a theology that was not driven by a fear of

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<sup>80</sup> Douglas Jacobsen, "Knowing the Doctrines of Pentecostals: The Scholastic Theology of the Assemblies of God, 1930-55" *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism* eds. Edith L. Blumhofer, Russell P. Spittler, Grant A. Wacker (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 92.

<sup>81</sup> Douglas Jacobsen, "Knowing the Doctrines of the Pentecostals: The Scholastic Theology of the Assemblies of God 1930-55" *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism* eds. Edith Blumhofer, Russell P. Spittler, Grant A. Wacker (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1999), pp. 90-107.

<sup>82</sup> Jacobsen, "Knowing the Doctrines," p. 92.

modernism, but sought to understand all of Christian theology from a Pentecostal point of view.

Jacobsen cites Ernest Williams and Myer Pearlman as early exceptional Pentecostal theologians who, in a very non-Fundamentalist style, dialogued with other points of view in their works and appealed to figures such as Karl Barth and even some of the liberal scholars more than they did the Fundamentalist scholars.<sup>83</sup> These scholastic Pentecostals had no interest in tying Pentecostalism to another movement, nor did they consider theology a “weapon for interreligious warfare.”<sup>84</sup> Pearlman explained his position on apologetics with a physiological analogy. “As a good backbone is an essential part of a man’s body, so a definite system of belief is an essential part of a man’s religion. It has been well said that ‘a man does not need to wear his backbone in front of him, but he must have a backbone and a straight one or he will be a flexible if not humpbacked Christian.’”<sup>85</sup> Pearlman and Williams shared an approach that explored theology and biblical studies in dialogue with other churches, rather than employing theology as a defense against a perceived attack.

Other Pentecostals, such as David duPlessis, sought diligently for a place for Pentecostals at the World Council of Churches, an organization that was rejected by Fundamentalists and evangelicals alike. He was even invited to be an unofficial Pentecostal representative at Vatican II. His desire for ecumenism eventually resulted in his expulsion from the AG. It is clear that from the early 1930’s through the 40’s there was a stream of Pentecostal thought that was uninterested in assimilating Pentecostalism

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<sup>83</sup> Jacobsen, “Knowing the Doctrines,” p. 99.

<sup>84</sup> Jacobsen, “Knowing the Doctrines,” p. 99.

<sup>85</sup> Myer Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1937), pp. 9-10; quoted in Jacobsen, *Knowing the Doctrines of Pentecostals*, p. 94.

to Fundamentalism or the new Evangelicalism, but felt that they could be, as Henry P. Van Dusen's famous 1958 *Life* magazine article suggested, "a third force in Christendom."<sup>86</sup>

Unfortunately most North Americans had no conceptual basis for a third approach. Nancey Murphy writes, "the options for theologians in the modern period seem to have come down to two."<sup>87</sup> In an increasingly dualistically divided religion and culture, attempts to move in a third direction were met with suspicion in what was thought to be a one dimensional plane. This scholastic movement within the AG was rejected by numerous Pentecostals (perhaps weary of rejection themselves); to them, the NAE was much more enticing. Jacobsen writes, "the motto of the NAE was, after all, "cooperation without compromise," but this formal rule of association could not protect Pentecostals from being overwhelmed by the homogenizing influence of the more organized and articulate mainstream evangelical movement."<sup>88</sup> The "culturally weaker" Pentecostals became "colonized by the stronger" and the new Evangelicalism overshadowed the emerging Pentecostal scholasticism.<sup>89</sup> Pentecostal scholars then began to write and act like evangelicals, beginning a strict 'Bible only' method of interpretation, the belief in 'inerrancy' and a rejection of non-evangelical scholars and organizations and a toning down of the spiritual illumination rhetoric. Paul W. Lewis outlines the various accommodations the North American Pentecostals made to the new evangelicals. They included,

such areas as a shift in theological methodology, the move from pacifism, the rejection of ecumenical concerns, the move from the Holiness background and an

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<sup>86</sup> Jacobsen, "Knowing the Doctrines," p. 100.

<sup>87</sup> Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism*, p. 35.

<sup>88</sup> Jacobsen, "Knowing the Doctrines," p. 100.

<sup>89</sup> Jacobsen, "Knowing the Doctrines," p. 100.

implied ethics, an Evangelical instigated revision of the doctrine of scripture, the reversal of the role of women in ministry and the demise of the belief of the Spirit's presence and work in the present age.<sup>90</sup>

Additionally, Pentecostals began to reflect Fundamentalist approaches to atonement, the primacy of the Bible, and "the importance of the supernatural gospel over the social gospel."<sup>91</sup> By 1955 the Pentecostal scholastic movement, and perhaps the third force understanding itself, passed into obscurity.

The evangelicalization of Pentecostalism in North American was pervasive and to those who favoured a distinct Pentecostal identity, it was a crippling blow. It is also clear that in several areas the early Pentecostals were socially progressive and challenged the status quo, yet these impulses gave way to the evangelicalization.<sup>92</sup> To those who favoured this 'assimilation,' it was an opportunity.

Through the late 40's and through the 50's the Pentecostal impulse to align themselves with Evangelicalism was alive and well. Shortly after the creation of the NAE, in 1948 several Pentecostal fellowships in North American gathered together to form the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA). This organization confined itself to those Pentecostal groups whose theology was acceptable to the new Evangelicalism. It is notable that the Black Pentecostal churches of North America never joined the PFNA

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<sup>90</sup> Paul W. Lewis, "Reflections of a Hundred Years of Pentecostal Theology" *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal Charismatic Research* 12 [on-line] available from <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj12/lewis.html>; Internet; accessed 30 November, 2005. n.p.

<sup>91</sup> Peter Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), p. 43.

<sup>92</sup> This point is especially highlighted by the reversal of the roles of women in ministry. Though the exact statistics of early Pentecostal leadership are difficult to acquire, it is highly likely that early Pentecostal women were far more involved in ministry than Pentecostal women today are. Fortunately, most North American Pentecostal fellowships have now lifted the ban on women Pastors, however, the cultural influences of Fundamentalism are difficult to shake. Women mainly are limited to leadership roles in music or children's ministry. This was hardly the case in early Pentecostalism which had many prominent women leaders which stood in stark 'prophetic' contrast with the world in which they preached. Nils-Olov Nilsson, "The Debate on Women's Ministry: Summary and Analysis" *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 6 (1999), n.p.; Cheryl Jeanne Sanders, "History of Women in the Pentecostal Movement," *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 2 (1997), n.p.

and it remained a racially segregated organization until it was disbanded in 1994. Additionally, ‘embarrassing relatives’ were restricted; thus Oneness Pentecostals and other Pentecostal groups that were too liberal in theology were uninvited.<sup>93</sup> Synan summarizes, “in essence, the PFNA represented the mainstream of respectable, white, orthodox Pentecostalism in North America.”<sup>94</sup>

Intent on proving themselves to their new evangelical friends, the PFNA copied verbatim the Statement of Faith from the NAE, only adding article five which mentions physical healing, holiness living and the initial evidence formula.<sup>95</sup> This decision did not lack dissent. There were many who considered this trend “a step backward, not forward – a betrayal of the original aims of the denomination and as such a signal of accommodation with the world.”<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, a new generation of Pentecostals took leadership and was content with linking Pentecostal identity with Evangelicalism with the addition of tongues. With their history of rejection from other churches, Pentecostal scholarship enjoyed this new acceptance and walked a narrow line holding together two impulses: remaining true to Pentecostal origins and beliefs, and keeping the movement within Evangelicalism. Some lay Pentecostals, however, were uncomfortable with this uneasy balance.

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<sup>93</sup> Synan, *Holiness Pentecostal Tradition*, p.163. Synan notes that though the Oneness Pentecostals were never invited to any ecumenical organizations, Pentecostals always included the Oneness Pentecostals when they cited statistics to illustrate the size and growth of the Pentecostal movement. The PFNA was later disbanded and replaced by the “Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America” (PCCNA) in 1994. The black Pentecostal churches were invited and joined this new interracial Pentecostal organization. Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, p. 211-212..

<sup>94</sup> Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, p. 211; Sadly, it does not seem clear that Synan is saying this ‘tongue in cheek.’

<sup>95</sup> John T. Nichol, *Pentecostalism* (Plainfield: Logos International, 1966), pp. 4-5; Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, p.18.

<sup>96</sup> Faupel, *Restoration*, p. 939.

### *'The New Order of the Latter Rain'*

Perhaps the best example of the North American Pentecostals capitulation to evangelical leadership was the denominational reaction to another Pentecostal revivalist movement in the 1940's. Beginning in the Canadian prairies, 'The New Order of the Latter Rain' served as a test for denominational Pentecostalism: Originating among the students and faculty of a PAOC Bible college in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan named, Bethel Bible Institute, this movement quickly gained the attention of North American Pentecostals.<sup>97</sup> According to Faupel, the leaders of this movement were disconcerted over the accommodations the Pentecostal denominations had made to Evangelicalism and to the 'sinful world.'<sup>98</sup> Since the original Azusa street mission understood itself as the 'Latter Rain,' calling themselves '*The New Order of the Latter Rain*' was certainly a theological jab towards denominational Pentecostalism and an appeal to return to the Azusa roots.

This new revival movement revived an emphasis on Azusa style activities and placed a heavy emphasis on the spiritual realm. It spread among individuals and churches throughout North America that were longing to return to the revivalist nature of the early Pentecostals; the restorationist impulse had returned. By 1950 this movement had become a considerable issue for all North American Pentecostal denominations.<sup>99</sup> For the most part, the New Order's theology was unsystematic, driven by tremendous passion

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<sup>97</sup> Thomas Holdcraft, "The New Order of the Latter Rain," *Pneuma* 2(2), p. 46-60. In this paper, as a first hand witness of the event, Holdcraft examines what Pentecostals should learn from the Latter Rain movement. Though far too late, it is an important part of Pentecostal history that deserves re-consideration.

<sup>98</sup> Faupel, *Restoration*, p. 939

<sup>99</sup> Thomas W. Miller in his *Canadian Pentecostals*, states that for Canadian Pentecostalism, "the fellowship faced a doctrinal threat so serious that its very existence was in question" (p. 259). He also remarks that the PAOC leaders at the time felt that the Latter Rain movement placed, "an undue and exaggerated importance to the gifts of the Spirit" (p. 261). Miller is right in stating that the beliefs and practices of the New Order of the Latter Rain were exaggerations, yet the aggressive nature of the rejection is particularly telling.

and charismatic leaders, and reflected the same atmosphere as the Azusa street Mission, especially an unwillingness to organize. Upon this reminder of their origins, the reaction of the 'classical' Pentecostals is telling.

Much was at stake. Pentecostals had made significant strides to remove themselves from the backwards revivalist movement they had come from and were now sitting at the same table alongside major evangelical denominations. Perhaps feeling a bit red faced, it was the denominational Pentecostals themselves that reacted most harshly against The New Order of the Latter Rain and swiftly condemned it as heresy.<sup>100</sup> The AG led the way in the vehement disparagement of the new movement, and the other Pentecostal denominations soon followed.<sup>101</sup> Eerily reminiscent of the Fundamentalist treatment of early Pentecostalism, "the revival's message was firmly rejected as heresy." Faupel notes that, "Ministers and local churches who embraced the revival were forced to withdraw from fellowship."<sup>102</sup> Reflecting the old Fundamentalism, the Pentecostal denominational leaders had no patience to dialogue with the movement in order to understand and perhaps provide guidance. They had no tolerance for this revival that they considered to be a 'serious threat.'<sup>103</sup>

Unlike the initial Pentecostal movement, The New Order movement maintained their refusal to organize beyond the local church and though there are still churches

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<sup>100</sup> Faupel, *Restoration*, p. 939.

<sup>101</sup> In 1947 The faculty of the PAOC's Bethel Institute all resigned in symbolic protest of the PAOC administration's denunciation of their revival. However, the PAOC accepted all their resignations and promptly replaced them all, effectively firing the entire staff. In loyalty to their teachers, the student body left as well moving to North Battleford, Saskatchewan; together they began 'Sharon Children's Homes and Schools,' involving an orphanage, high school, technical institute and a Bible School (Holdcroft, *The Latter Rain*, p. 47).

<sup>102</sup> Faupel, *Restoration*, p. 940.

<sup>103</sup> Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals*, p. 259.

connected to this movement today, it largely petered out of history in the late 1950's.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, the Pentecostal reaction to this movement signified their new priorities. Respectability among the evangelicals was not to be risked by permitting such zealous revivalism and theological experimentation, the very 'stuff' of early Pentecostalism. By this time Pentecostals had developed their own liturgy, denominational structures and executive management and as their evangelical status grew so did their economic class status. As AG scholar Vinson Synan boasts:

Pentecostals were increasingly seen in leadership positions in industry, business, finance, and education. A number of them were becoming millionaires. They began to show up in places where they had not been seen before. There were even Pentecostals in the professions; for the first time, there were Pentecostal lawyers, medical doctors, and university professors.<sup>105</sup>

After the second World War, Pentecostal churches began moving in large numbers to the suburbs and began the construction of many large churches.<sup>106</sup> From this point on, the history of Pentecostalism in North America becomes increasingly intertwined with 'respectable' conservative Evangelicalism. It appears that the progress they had gained was not to be risked over resurgence of revivalism.

The New Order of the Latter Rain schism had the unfortunate effect of causing Pentecostals to dismiss their own latter rain eschatology altogether. Slightly embarrassed by such theology, Pentecostals began to abandon the theology that the last days were God's glorious outpouring of the Spirit and intimate presence among his people through the Spirit before Christ's return.<sup>107</sup> Preference was then given to the evangelical eschatology which was still heavily influenced by dispensationalism. As time went on

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<sup>104</sup> Faupel, *Restoration*, p. 940.

<sup>105</sup> Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, p. 222.

<sup>106</sup> This is largely referring to the AG. Other Pentecostal denominations, such as the Church of God in Christ, remained in the inner city.

<sup>107</sup> Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, p. 60.

Pentecostals began to share the dystopic view that the end of the world will come about, not through a glorious presence of the Spirit, but through inevitable violence, suffering and tribulation, followed by the destruction of the present earth. As we will examine later, it is the earlier Pentecostal latter rain view which has great potential for social justice while the dispensationalist view serves to stifle it.

### Pentecostalism's Current Relationship to Evangelicalism

Returning to the question of Pentecostal identity, it can be stated that if Pentecostalism is content with submitting itself to be a subcategory of Evangelicalism, then there is no tension involved and the question of Pentecostal social concern is merely an evangelical one. However, if Pentecostalism explores their identity as a 'third force,' which is closely associated to but not a subcategory of Evangelicalism, then Pentecostals are free to develop theology from a truly Pentecostal point of view. They will also then have the responsibility to critically re-examine their current borrowed theological assumptions to determine if they are congruent with Pentecostal theology.

Having outlined the uneasy relationship between Pentecostals and the evangelical movement, it is not my intention to demonize one party to the glorification of the other. It should be noted that I have seen no record of the evangelical movement deliberately effecting such a capitulation upon Pentecostalism. They are not villains that caused Pentecostalism to lose its grip on its original identity and should be considered ecumenical partners with Pentecostalism. Evangelicals have their own theological challenges, especially with regards to social justice, which they are currently reflecting upon and are seeking solutions. The emergence of Ronald Sider's organization,

‘Evangelicals for Social Action’ reveals a stream of Evangelicalism that is seeking to reverse the ‘great reversal’ of evangelical social justice. Yet as Charles Malik and Mark Noll have argued, Evangelicalism has a troubled history that developed from its Fundamentalist roots and its relationship with modernity. Pentecostalism can be at an advantage because they did not develop out of the same roots, rather, as discussed above, the early Pentecostals were not Fundamentalists.<sup>108</sup>

Pentecostalism is something different. Pentecostal theology has no need to weigh itself down with the problems of a history in which it was not involved. As evangelicals struggle to work out their relationship with Fundamentalism they make for an unsuitable role model in the work towards social justice. Playing off of Noll’s *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Sider scolds Evangelicalism about its record on social justice in his book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*.<sup>109</sup> Yet beyond having a scandalous conscience, there are flaws in the evangelical theology of social justice.

My concern then, is not to set Pentecostal theology in conflict with evangelical theology, but rather, to encourage Pentecostals at this crucial point in their history, to explore theology from a Pentecostal point of view, without submitting to already developed evangelical theology. Both movements must respond to the lacuna of social justice within their fellowships. It is my belief that a better theology of social justice can be developed if Pentecostals turn to their own sources and roots and can then bring that theology to an ecumenical table to dialogue with the evangelicals as equals. The

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<sup>108</sup> Noll makes the erroneous charge that Pentecostalism had a negative influence on Evangelicalism alongside Fundamentalism. I have many of the same concerns, but considering the early antagonism between the Fundamentalists and Pentecostals, it is more accurate to say that both Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism were negatively influenced by Fundamentalism. *Scandal*, p. 115; See also, James K. A. Smith “Scandalizing Theology: A Pentecostal Response to Noll’s *Scandal*,” *Pneuma* 19 (2), pp. 225-238.

<sup>109</sup> Ronald Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005).

development of a social justice theology from within the confines of Evangelicalism lacks the same degree of potential. Pentecostals must pursue a theology of social justice without concerns of submission to Evangelicalism.

The current linkage of Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism not only stifles distinctly Pentecostal creativity and theological development, but moves Pentecostalism away from its historical roots and requires a selective reading of Pentecostal history.<sup>110</sup> The resources of a Pentecostal pneumatic hermeneutic, the belief in Spiritual empowerment for service and Pentecostalism's 'materiality' are diminished when placed within Evangelicalism's theological categories. Outside of the North American context, Pentecostals have explored these potentials with rigor, resulting in theologies unacceptable to evangelicals. Hollenweger argues that the "Pentecostal elites" (his term for denominationally supported Pentecostal scholarship), have sided with their respectable and scholarly evangelical friends over their Pentecostal Brethren in the Two Third's World. "Pentecostalism," Hollenweger aptly states, "needs to be delivered from its Babylonian bourgeois captivity."<sup>111</sup>

On a global scale the Pentecostals far outnumber the evangelicals and are even set to outnumber the Catholics within a decade.<sup>112</sup> It can be argued that the evangelicals played an important role in the development and maturing of Pentecostalism which has now 'come of age.' It is vital that Pentecostals now turn to their own resources without the crutches of evangelical theology. It is beneficial to categorically separate

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<sup>110</sup> Faupel, "Whither Pentecostalism?" p. 26.

<sup>111</sup> W. J. Hollenweger, "The Pentecostal Elites" *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, ed. Karla Poewe (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994) p. 206.

<sup>112</sup> D.B. Barrett, "Statistics, Global," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* Eds. Stanley Burgess and Gary E. McGee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 810-829.

Pentecostalism from North American Evangelicalism for the purpose of developing Pentecostal theology in its own right.<sup>113</sup>

### Evangelical Theology and Social Justice

We will now explore why this history is relevant to the issue of social justice. It will be argued that within evangelical theology it is difficult to develop a holistic understanding of the mission of the church as evangelical theology struggles with a strong dualism which excludes the material matters from the concern of the gospel.

As we mentioned above, the evangelical gospel message risks limiting the scope of the gospel to the realm of the metaphysical, as well as maintaining what appears to be a gospel based on a cosmological transaction. The extreme consequence for not taking part in the transaction before one's death makes for a strong imperative to proclaim the news of salvation to others. Physical suffering and oppression within earthly reality pale in comparison to the pending suffering that evangelicals believe awaits the unredeemed. Thus, in comparison, social action which relieves physical suffering receives much less attention than evangelism which addresses what is understood to be their most urgent need. This is not necessarily distinctly evangelical theology, but rather the theology that was developed throughout the Protestant Reformation, with the added element of premillennialism. Though it is beyond the scope of this study, the older mainline churches have sought various ways to move beyond the impasse of a strictly metaphysical focus and have incorporated a progressive earthly restoration into their theological package,

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<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, in my own experience I have found that evangelicals are more willing to grant Pentecostalism its own status outside of Evangelicalism than Pentecostals are.

something difficult to do with the current accepted form of eschatology in mainstream Evangelicalism.

Yale scholar, Miroslav Volf argues that the stem of this problem reaches back to Luther and beyond. Luther himself articulated a theology of the ‘inner man’ and ‘outward man’ and the benefits of Christ’s atoning work on the cross was to benefit the ‘inner man.’ “The point Luther wanted to make,” Volf writes, “is not that salvation has *nothing* to do with the bodily and earthly realm but that *no change for the better in that realm can be understood as an aspect of salvation itself.*”<sup>114</sup> Luther applied the Pauline concept of the ‘new man’ to the inward man only, leaving the outward man to remain the old man until the resurrection. “It follows,” Volf writes, “that the ‘anthropological place’ where the salvation of human beings occurs is in the ‘inner man.’ In the present life, the ‘outward man’ remains outside the sphere of the salvific activity of God.”<sup>115</sup> Such an approach governs how Jesus, his teaching and actions are interpreted. His miracles, for instance, are not meant to address physical suffering, but to “illustrate salvation and animate faith.”<sup>116</sup> Consequently Luther rejected the material and political application of his ideas in the Peasants revolt. He insisted that “Christ made us all free,” but as Volf summarizes, “Christians have experienced liberation with respect to the ‘inner man’ only; with respect to their ‘outward man’ they have to suffer evil now and thus be ‘goaded’ to ‘hope for the [eschatological] redemption of their bodies.’”<sup>117</sup> Such a categorical separation precludes the identifying of social action with the mission of the Church.

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<sup>114</sup> Miroslav Volf, “Materiality of Salvation,” *Ecumenical Studies* 26 (3), p. 453 (emphasis his).

<sup>115</sup> Volf, “Materiality,” p. 451.

<sup>116</sup> Volf, “Materiality,” p. 452.

<sup>117</sup> Volf, “Materiality,” p. 452.

Evangelical theology has been heavily influenced by this dualistic anthropology.<sup>118</sup> John Howard Yoder writes:

The qualitative priority of the transformation of the heart left the wider human agenda for another realm. When people move from the realm of the experience of inward piety to that of getting along with their neighbours, they are assumed to be entering a realm where Christ is less in charge, where what one can do is a matter of reason and politics, but not redemption.<sup>119</sup>

What is needed is a holistic biblical theology of the Church's mission that relates to both the 'inner' and the 'outer man' and to understand them as one.

### **A Necessary Theological Revision**

Pentecostal theology, as it relates to ontology and missiology, is in need of revision. The holistic focus of the New Testament and early Pentecostalism must be recaptured. It is not my intention here to condemn the entire substitutionary atonement theological package, but to encourage Pentecostals to expand their understanding of the gospel story to include holistic elements. A metaphysical atonement must not be considered the whole story. The gospel, as Christ illustrated with much of his life, has an earthly dimension and one can reflect on the holistic nature of salvation without exiting the orthodox faith. What Christianity needs, as the early Pentecostals said, is a 'full gospel.'

From the earliest beginnings, Pentecostalism had a sense for something more that the Fundamentalists of their time could not see. Early Pentecostals rallied around what they described as the 'full gospel.' Though expressed in a variety of ways, it generally stated as a form of a 'four fold' gospel; Christ is the Savior, Healer, Baptizer, and

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<sup>118</sup> John Howard Yoder, "The Experiential Etiology of Evangelical Dualism," *Missiology* 11 (1983), pp. 449-459.

<sup>119</sup> Yoder, "The Experiential," p. 453.

Coming King.<sup>120</sup> They did not reject the substitutionary atonement theology of Evangelicalism, yet it was less rigid and expanded to include an earthly dimension. They recognized that Christ will return in authority, but they also included two other elements that meant more to the present reality than the Fundamentalists had to offer. Jesus not only saved them, but empowered them through the Baptism to do the work of the gospel and to seek holiness. They understood Christ to be concerned about their present earthly existence as Christ was celebrated as the ‘healer,’ a term they did not spiritualize as the Fundamentalists preferred to. They did not believe in a Christ that would save them from their metaphysical sickness yet ignore their physical ones. Many went as far as ardently insisting that bodily healing itself was in the atonement.<sup>121</sup>

“By his stripes we are healed” was an oft quoted passage by many early Pentecostal leaders.<sup>122</sup> They understood the healing of Jesus to be about more than problem of sin alone; it is also about present physical sufferings. Likewise they read Jesus’ miracles literally and not as illustrations of the problem and solution to sin, nor did they relegate it to a different dispensation. Humans now, they believed, could experience that same healing. Early Pentecostals went beyond understanding healing as simply a side benefit to a relationship with Christ, but were willing to modify their theology of the atonement to include the material. As Canadian Pentecostal L. Thomas Holdcroft stated unequivocally, “Healing is in the atonement.”<sup>123</sup> Most Pentecostals are not naive enough to believe that all sickness will be cured and do not create a cause-and-effect theology

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<sup>120</sup> Some added a fifth, “Sanctifier.” This theological package came through the early Holiness movement influences.

<sup>121</sup> Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), pp. 173-260, 412-413.

<sup>122</sup> Isaiah 53:5.

<sup>123</sup> L. Thomas Holdcroft, *Divine Healing: A Comparative Study* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1967), p.48.

like that of repentance equaling salvation. They do, however, believe that healing is a partial realization of the complete-healing in the eschatological Kingdom of God.

Here we find ground to build on a theology of social justice, since this concept of healing was no small matter to early Pentecostals, nor is it to many current Pentecostals. Their mass healing services worldwide testify to the fact that they believe that the earthly and the material does matter, and without that understanding, one does not have the 'full' gospel. The theological foundation for a theology of social justice was there from the beginning, yet, as Cecil Robeck laments in the excerpt quoted at the beginning of this thesis, "the tying of physical healing to one's own faith in the atoning work of Christ has led to little if any concern for physical healing other than by means of prayer."<sup>124</sup> Pentecostals have largely failed to bridge the gap between supernatural healing and physical social action which also brings healing. Prayer for supernatural healing is laudable and an earmark of the Pentecostal movement. Nevertheless, when one waits for supernatural healing while healing through medicine, political change and social action can equally bring about wholeness, one has an overemphasis on the titillating miraculous at the expense of those in need. Pentecostals would be wise to consider feeding the hungry whether the bread is multiplied miraculously or not.

Surprisingly, Pentecostals have much in common with Liberationists as Miroslav Volf argues, they both have an important 'materiality' about their faith systems.<sup>125</sup> Liberationists prefer to understand the earthly elements in the atonement in socio-economic terms (and perhaps limit it to them). Pentecostals apply it to the supernatural and the personal. Volf is correct to state that the two movements need each other; they

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<sup>124</sup> Cecil M. Robeck "Pentecostals and Social Ethics," *Pneuma* 9 (2), p. 104.

<sup>125</sup> Miroslav Volf, "Materiality of Salvation: An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (3), pp. 447-467.

each have the missing puzzle piece of the other.<sup>126</sup> The danger of liberation theology is the possible reduction of theology to political terms and the individual and metaphysical meaning of salvation is diminished. Yet the Pentecostal emphasis on the physical, healing and blessings can degrade into ‘health and wealth’ theologies, causing more harm than assistance.

Additionally, the material emphasis in Pentecostalism fails to have a necessary communal element. Personal healing and salvation of an individual believer from suffering is understood and emphasized, but most Pentecostals fail to have any comprehension of applying that same line of thought to larger community settings. Volf writes, “Whereas Pentecostals are eager to help individuals in need, they are virtually blind to the need for changing the structures of their societal life.”<sup>127</sup> What Pentecostals need is a better theology that articulates their already established connection of the material or earthly to salvation and recognizes the New Testament demand for social action and incorporates it into the mission of the Church to ‘beings in community.’ In order to do so, a willingness to depart from evangelical assumptions is necessary, though the groundwork for such a departure existed before modern Evangelicalism existed. The next section will examine in greater detail how Pentecostals currently understand and practice social action and how they are affected by Evangelicalism.

### **Conclusion**

Though there are many benefits to Pentecostals aligning themselves with today’s evangelicals, there are some significant negative influences. As described above, the

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<sup>126</sup> Volf, “Materiality,” p. 464.

<sup>127</sup> Volf, “Materiality,” p. 461.

evangelical movement places a priority on salvation from a metaphysical dilemma and spiritual conversion that is, unfortunately, to the detriment of other important aspects of the gospel. It is impossible to know, and fruitless to hypothesize how Pentecostal theology would have developed into the 21<sup>st</sup> century had they not aligned themselves with the evangelicals. It is not the case that the evangelicals hijacked the Pentecostal movement and replaced its adequate social justice theology with its own; rather, the young movement submitted to the evangelicals and thus relinquished the responsibility to critically examine such issues as Pentecostals. As Pentecostals are now, proverbially, 'coming of age,' and greatly outnumbering the evangelicals, it is imperative that they now critically reflect on the theology of social justice inherited from the evangelicals.

In the first section of this chapter we examined the nature of early Pentecostal theology which was later altered through a submission of Pentecostalism to Fundamentalism. Despite initial Pentecostal rejection of Fundamentalism, as theological conflicts developed within Pentecostalism, they became increasingly dependent on Fundamentalist theology. The Fundamentalists remained adamant in their rejection of Pentecostalism keeping Pentecostalism in isolation until the arrival of the new Evangelicalism which wished to distance themselves from the Fundamentalists and embraced Pentecostalism. We then examined how Pentecostal theology developed to reflect Evangelicalism evidenced by the response of North American Pentecostals to the New Order of the Latter Rain, a movement which criticized the new established and 'respectable' Pentecostalism. We reviewed the nature of Pentecostal theological submission to evangelical theology, and its impact on social justice theology followed by a call for Pentecostal theology to develop freely and without this submission. It was

argued that this can be affected by exploring the holistic themes inherent within the Pentecostal movement and to apply them to incorporate them into their theology of the mission of the Church.

## **CHAPTER 3 THE CURRENT STATE OF PENTECOSTAL SOCIAL JUSTICE THEOLOGY AND ACTIVITIES**

### **Introduction**

Having established a link between the development of Pentecostal and evangelical theology, this chapter will turn our attention towards how Pentecostals currently understand social justice. We will first examine how Pentecostals prefer individual over structural change followed by a look at Pentecostal social welfare which rightly seeks to alleviate suffering, yet fails to have social change as a focus. For comparison, we will then examine Pentecostal approaches to social action in South Africa and Latin America, followed by an examination of the North American Pentecostal resistance to social action. This section will end with an example of Pentecostal social welfare in Canada which illustrates that North American Pentecostals are interested in social welfare, but, as a result of their lack of a theology of social justice, Pentecostal social action is limited.

Pentecostalism in North America currently limits social concern to individual social ethics and restricts it from the category of the mission of the Church. Due to various theological influences, Pentecostals have developed a dualistic cosmology which informs their social justice theology. Essentially, the mission of the Christian Church is understood almost exclusively to be proclaiming the salvation formula to those who have not experienced a crisis conversion to Christianity. Physical needs are often considered important as potential converts are attracted through the offering of fulfillment of 'felt needs.' The old missionary saying, "empty stomachs have no ears," illustrates the idea

that relieving of poverty and the feeding of the hungry is a utilitarian method of gaining potential listeners to one's real goal, which is religious conversion.<sup>1</sup>

### **Individual Over Structural Change**

Pentecostals are naturally interested in some form of social welfare and social change, but this is largely limited to a desire to see a multiplication of individuals having a 'born again' conversion experience. This is expected to result in regenerate believers who follow God's laws and thus results in a change of the social sphere. Pentecostals have little hope for such social change outside of the confines of the community of God's people and thus take little action towards that end. To be clear, Pentecostals have an interest in compassionate response to need, what we have termed 'social welfare,' but any work towards social change is usually limited to encourage conversion. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen notes that, "two traditions have shaped the Pentecostal view of mission: an inherited Evangelical-Conservative agenda and the ethos of Holiness movements and other revival movements of the earlier century."<sup>2</sup> Pentecostalism's self understanding of its relationship to the world, which was influenced by its Holiness roots, was one of a pilgrim in a lost and sinful world.<sup>3</sup> This does result in less direct social action, but it does place a significant emphasis on being a social witness. Along with such Holiness churches, the Pentecostals expect extreme social-lifestyle changes of their converts. Their relationship to their communities, families and workplaces is expected to undergo a

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<sup>1</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Pentecostal Missiology in Ecumenical Perspective: Contributions, Challenges, Controversies," *International Review of Mission* 88 (350), p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Mission, Spirit and Eschatology," *Mission Studies* 16 (1), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Kärkkäinen, "Are Pentecostals Oblivious," p. 422.

significant transformation; a multiplicity of which is hoped to transform the social order to a limited degree before Christ returns.

Thus, it can be concluded that Pentecostalism focuses on individual over structural change. According to most Pentecostals, as Kärkkäinen writes, “social justice is not a cause but a consequence of successful evangelistic efforts.”<sup>4</sup> Rather than directly changing the social order, they are in fact offering an alternative community of protest against the “oppressive structures of society.”<sup>5</sup> In the development of a theology of social justice, it is important that this emphasis of Pentecostal missions not be dismantled. Social change through conversion is a biblical and worthy endeavour in which Pentecostals have participated in throughout the last century. However, there is a tremendous lacuna if this is left to be the only method of social change. As it will be argued in the next chapter, a biblical theology of social justice understands that it is inextricably connected to evangelism, but not necessarily just as an enticement towards conversion. Thus restricting social justice to a tool for evangelism or to an expected side benefit of mass conversion is insufficient. Scripture, as we will see in the next chapter, places a heavy demand on justice, especially for the poor, oppressed and disinherited. Christians have a responsibility to confront social structures that oppress humans and many Pentecostals may already understand this and are doing what they can, but they lack a theology to understand why it is necessary and how to go about seeking change in this world.

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<sup>4</sup> Kärkkäinen, “Are Pentecostals Oblivious,” p. 422.

<sup>5</sup> Kärkkäinen, “Are Pentecostals Oblivious,” p. 424.

### **Reactionary Social Welfare**

Social action without a controlling theology has little to prevent actions from being merely reactionary. Pentecostals are not negligent to economic and material needs of the disenfranchised. As situations arise, Pentecostals are moved to intervene and provide social welfare to those in unjust situations, such as those with economic struggles within the church, or those with whom Pentecostal missionaries have direct contact. In addition, Pentecostal groups are keenly interested in disaster response initiatives.<sup>6</sup> Working alongside other Churches, the Pentecostals provide their services to alleviate pressing, though usually sensational, needs such as victims of hurricanes and floods. Pentecostals, just as members of many other denominations, respond with compassion when confronted with pressing needs. However, because they lack a mandate to 'seek out' the socially, economically and politically 'lost' in the same way they do the spiritually lost, Pentecostal social action remains reactionary and limited to those with whom they have direct contact. Providing for the needs within the community is certainly required biblically and serves as a credible social witness, yet such an inward focus must be complimented with an outward focus.

### **Social Action Outside of North America**

In other parts of the world Pentecostals have demonstrated that such suspicions of social action are not necessarily synonymous with Pentecostalism. It is interesting to note that, generally, Pentecostals outside of North America have a greater willingness to embrace social justice as a part of the mission of the church. As this thesis suggests that

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<sup>6</sup> The 'Emergency Disaster Relief Organization' (ERDO) of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada is an example. It is much easier for Pentecostals to acknowledge the need for emergency assistance, yet they are less in agreement on how to go about long term social improvement, or whether it is needed at all.

Pentecostals turn to Pentecostal resources in their theological development, fellow Pentecostals around the globe are a vital resource, especially those places that have had little direct influence from the Fundamentalist movement.

### South Africa

One example that illustrates adverse influences of North American conservative Evangelicalism on Pentecostal social action is the case of South Africa throughout the 1990's. Allan Anderson's paper, "Pentecostals and Apartheid in South Africa During Ninety Years 1908-1998" illustrates the racial divide within South African Pentecostalism and the consequences for social action. South Africa serves as a good example because Pentecostalism reached its shores at a very early time in Pentecostal history. This allowed for the development of an indigenous South African Pentecostalism, mainly populated by the indigenous Africans and was maintained without control, funding or leadership of North American churches. Anderson notes that, "Many forms of African Pentecostalism have liberated Christianity from the foreignness of European cultural forms"; they found within Pentecostalism the freedom to develop their own independent and indigenous form of Christianity.<sup>7</sup>

The white South African Pentecostals, however, maintained close connections with North American Pentecostalism. Allan Anderson writes:

The political responses of most White Pentecostals have been considerably influenced by the 'Religious Right' in the United States, but for Black Pentecostals, this influence is minimal. Prominent North American 'televangelists' Jimmy Swaggart, Pat Robertson and Kenneth Copeland visited

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<sup>7</sup> Allan Anderson, "Pentecostals and Apartheid in South Africa during Ninety Years 1908-1998" *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* [on-line] available from <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj9/anderson.html>; Internet; accessed 5 January, 2006, n.p.

the country in the 1980s and were among those who seemed to add their support to the beleaguered White government.<sup>8</sup>

Using the rhetoric of non-involvement in politics, the white Pentecostals supported the Apartheid government, or at least were content to enjoy the racial benefits of the regime and put forth little or no condemnation of it. Black South African Pentecostals, however, placed a much stronger emphasis on liberation and condemnation of the Apartheid government. Though they were largely restricted from a role in the political realm, the Black Pentecostals were not content with hoping for heaven and leaving the social order as it was. They denounced Apartheid, some of them participated in unions and, according to Anderson's study, the black South African Pentecostals were concerned with more issues than the North American style Pentecostalism typically involved itself. Beyond denouncing the unjust government, they gave their voice and support for low income housing, education, unemployment and most especially, the reintegration of the racial separation.<sup>9</sup> Anderson writes, "Because of the intense involvement of Pentecostals in their church communities, this is potentially one of the most dynamic forces for the mobilization of the political imagination."<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the North American Pentecostal donors, throughout the last century, overwhelmingly preferred to support the missionary established churches, which in most part, were the white South African churches. Though there were many exceptions, overall, the black indigenous Pentecostalism shared in the struggle for liberation, while the white, North American style Pentecostalism ardently supported the status quo, which became embarrassingly obvious after Nelson Mandela was released in 1990. Frank

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<sup>8</sup> Anderson, "Pentecostals and Apartheid," n.p.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, "Pentecostals and Apartheid," n.p.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, "Pentecostals and Apartheid," n.p.

Chikane, the former General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, serves as a marvelous example of a politically engaged black South African who struggled for liberation yet remained faithfully Pentecostal, even as he was a member of the African National Congress. Though many of his fellow black Pentecostals were wary of seeking change through a racist political system in which they played no part, Chikane reflected the desires and efforts of his people for literal, earthly healing and justice.<sup>11</sup>

Black South African Pentecostals now serve as an example of a socially active Christian community. Many of their churches have created strong social welfare programs, bursary funds, “Burial Assistance Funds,” and volunteer societies. They also pursue avenues of social action which seek to make lasting change such as adult education, that assist with issues such as unemployment and personal crisis. These black South African Churches have become, “new bases for social organization.”<sup>12</sup>

### Latin America

Everett A. Wilson and Douglas Petersen have written at length about the indigenous efforts towards social justice in Latin America.<sup>13</sup> Here again we find an indigenous Pentecostalism without direct control from North America. Though the indigenous Pentecostals resisted the often violent means of the Communists, and the aggressive political means of the Catholic Liberationists, the Pentecostals among the poor (almost all of them) have rejected the status quo and put their energies into social

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<sup>11</sup> Hollenweger also describes the progressive social ethics of Nicholas B. H. Bhengu, the ‘father’ of South African Pentecostalism which encouraged the blacks in their struggle against white oppression. *The Pentecostals*, p. 126.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson, “Pentecostals and Apartheid,” n.p.

<sup>13</sup> Everett A. Wilson, “Latin American Pentecostalism: Challenging the Stereotypes of Pentecostal Passivity” *Transformation* 11 Jn-Mr, p. 19-24; Petersen, *Not by Might*.

action. Rather than any immediate reactionary uprisings, the Pentecostals, beginning in El Salvador, one of the most oppressive Latin American nations, chose educating the poor as their means of creating social change (conscientization).<sup>14</sup> This might have been considered a more passive method if it were not for the more recent work of Latin American scholars such as Paulo Freire, who have written extensively on the subversive and political nature of educating the poor.

Rather than only providing the poor with a gospel that fulfils spiritual and other-worldly needs, the Latin American Pentecostals seek to change the social order itself through educating the poor. Far from being a tool for conversion, the Pentecostals provide a basic 'liberal arts' education to the disinherited who are left out of meaningful participation in a society that lacks public education. As Wilson and Petersen explain, Latin American Pentecostals understand this to be the work of God and their own mission in a fallen and hostile world. Such schools serve to fulfill the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' which resisted the dominant worldview of the oppressive elite, and mainly white, minority.<sup>15</sup> Latin American indigenous Pentecostals understand social action as a religious responsibility and choose to confront the "paralyzing indifference, frustration and cynicism in the region."<sup>16</sup>

Though not all of Latin American Pentecostals have caught the vision for Pentecostal social action, there is a large movement that understands the religious significance of social action and they have, for the most part, chosen to act through the education of the poor. Latin American Pentecostals are seeking to reassert the dignity and

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<sup>14</sup> Wilson, "Latin American," p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1996); Wilson, "Latin American," p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, "Latin American," p. 24.

humanity of those “dehumanized” by oppressive political structures.<sup>17</sup> This context serves as an excellent example of social action that is ‘of’ the poor and sees far more to the Christian mission than the simple conversion of non-believers.

### **North American Pentecostal Resistance to Social Action**

Pentecostalism in North America has not developed the same social focus as the above two examples. Any social action or welfare that does not include an evangelistic element is often met with suspicion.<sup>18</sup> Although such historical influences on the attitudes of mass movements are difficult to prove, it is possible that this suspicion is borrowed from Fundamentalism’s ardent rejection of the Social Gospel. In what has become known as ‘The Great Reversal,’ the Revivalist evangelicals moved out of the work of social action when they observed the liberals doing such actions with the idea that such work itself is the message of the gospel.<sup>19</sup> For the most part, this is a historical conflict that the early Pentecostals were not directly involved. As noted above, Pentecostalism did not develop as a protest against liberal theological assertions.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately later Pentecostals sided with the Fundamentalists and their rejection of the social gospel. However, there is hope that present younger generations of Pentecostals

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<sup>17</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy*, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> Assemblies of God Missiologist Melvin L. Hodges maintained that too much social welfare would blur the “true mission of the church.” *A Theology of Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1977), p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Frank E. Gaebelien, “Evangelicals and Social Concern,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1), p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Are Pentecostals Oblivious,” p. 422; The Pentecostals, for instance, did not play an active part in the evolution controversy and the ‘Scopes Monkey Trial.’ Early Pentecostals distanced themselves from the outspoken Fundamentalist leaders who condemned the Social Gospel such as Williams Jennings Bryan, Gerald Winrod and Bob Jones (who were strict Calvinists; Pentecostals were ardently Arminian). Synan *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, p. 207.

can reverse this trend and reject the suspicions of social action as being the slippery slope to Liberalism and are free to explore the social implications of Pentecostal theology.

Additionally, without such a guiding theology of social justice, Pentecostals will continue to remain silent on pressing issues in this present context, such as the negative side of globalization, world trade, two thirds world development, racism, sexism and ecological issues. Pentecostals previously fumbled opportunities in the fight against racism and for women's liberation and are currently noticeably silent on many social issues as social action groups of the 'sinful world,' that Pentecostals condemn, reveal a greater concern about social and economic imbalances in the world.<sup>21</sup> Though the political implications are far beyond the scope of this thesis, it would be wise for Pentecostals to deeply reflect on where they give their political support, and how it supports the cause for social justice. Even if there are other benefits, it may be wise to be hesitant before putting electoral weight behind political candidates with harsh or negligent approaches to environmental protection, social programs and protections and economic aid. As Pentecostals have become increasingly involved in politics throughout the last twenty years, they must deeply consider all the holistic implications of their involvement.

Without a theology to guide Pentecostal social thought, social action is left to individual compassionate (and often reactionary) responses and sometimes neglected altogether. Though individual social action is always laudable, relying on it alone risks

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<sup>21</sup> On both the issues of racism and woman's rights, Pentecostals were early revolutionaries allowing both leadership positions and a free intermingling of all races and sexes. As Pentecostals 'matured' they lost their early progressive thinking and returned to segregation and discrimination until they were practically forced out of their regression by secular society who began to become intolerant of such views. In places such as Latin American and South Africa, the poor Pentecostals easily align themselves with dissent movements that challenge that status quo and seek change in the social order. In North America, however, Pentecostals tend to reflect Anderson's change that they support the status quo. See. Robeck, Jr., "THE PAST: Historical Roots of Racial Unity."

an undue emphasis on services that provide the most immediate, visible and perhaps gratifying results. Thus Pentecostals have become adept at the most literal forms of social welfare such as providing clothing and food, especially in emergency situations. Yet it appears little reflection is done on why such needs exist and how systemic evils can be countered. Though immediate-response social welfare is greatly needed, on its own it can also serve to support existing oppressive social structures. Pentecostals, as Petersen argues, have revealed that they are concerned about social issues, yet they lack scholarly leadership to direct that energy into effective, biblical social action that seeks positive social change.<sup>22</sup>

### **ERDO – An Example of Pentecostal Compassion but Lack of Social Action**

The PAOC's 'Emergency Relief and Development Organization' (ERDO) serves as a good example of current Pentecostal social welfare. I must begin by praising this organization that began in the early 1990's and the services they provide for victims of disaster. What is of concern, however, is since ERDO is the "humanitarian arm of the PAOC" it constitutes the majority of what Canadian Pentecostals are doing towards social justice as a whole.<sup>23</sup> ERDO has three "avenues of response to help those in need."<sup>24</sup> ChildCARE Plus, (the PAOC's own child sponsorship program), ERDO collection centres, which collect and distribute items such as used clothing, and participation in the Canadian Food Grains Bank.<sup>25</sup> All of these efforts are highly laudable

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<sup>22</sup> Douglas Petersen, "Missions in the Twenty-First Century" *Transformation* 16 (2), p. 55.

<sup>23</sup> "Relief and Development" PAOC website. [on-line] available from <http://www.paoc.ca>; Internet; accessed 17 November, 2006. Naturally, many Pentecostal churches are involved in social action as individual churches which may go beyond the mission and scope of ERDO.

<sup>24</sup> "Relief and Development."

<sup>25</sup> David Hatton, "Sowing Seeds for the Kingdom" *The Testimony* 86 (9), pp. 5-7

and worthwhile towards meeting immediate needs, yet they reveal that the PAOC lacks participation in social 'action' despite the inclusion of the word "development" in the name of the organization. On the positive side, it also reveals that Canadian Pentecostals are interested in meeting the physical needs of the suffering and are compassionate and generous in their giving. A theology of social justice, however, would provide the grounding for serious critical thinking needed to determine if they are doing enough on the "development" end of ERDO.

For instance, the issue of world hunger is a complex issue. While it is obvious that hungry people need food and giving them food is part of the gospel, nevertheless, sometimes such provision can also work against one's compassionate intentions and support the status quo. The promotional materials released by ERDO itself reveal no consciousness of the demand of the two thirds world for an end to first world farm subsidies and importation of cheap or free grain which destroys their local agricultural economies.<sup>26</sup> Naturally, no economists believe that suddenly cutting off the two third's world from economic aid is the answer, but other steps must be taken to alleviate them from this crippling aid that ends up costing more than it helps. ERDO is rightly

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<sup>26</sup> Kevin Watkins, head research for Oxfam and writing for the World Bank, writes, "Industrial country agricultural support is destroying the livelihoods of poor farmers across the developing world, reinforcing an unequal pattern of globalization in the process." Due to massive subsidies, the West is producing a massive surplus to export. A great deal of which is given to, or sold to African for pittance. This may feed people, but it also destroys any chance of independence and sustainability as they become dependent on Western subsidized handouts. Western governments spend \$300 billion in agricultural subsidies, six times what they spend on economic aid. The result is always a net loss for Africa. "Farm Fallacies that Hurt the Poor" *The World Bank Institute*[on-line] available from <http://www1.worldbank.org/devoutreach/july03/article.asp?id=206>; Internet; accessed 17 November,2005); See also, Frances Moore Lappé, *World Hunger: Twelve Myths* (New York: Grove Press, 1986); John Vidal, "Hunger still stalks a world of plenty" *Guardian Weekly* (Aug, 2002); Nick Mathiason, "Handouts and tariffs still lock out the developing world" *The Guardian- Trade Justice* (Sept 24-30 2004); "Food: Potent US Weapon," *US News and World Report*. (Feb 19, 1976); Stephen Devereux, *Theories of Famine* (New York: Harvester, 1993), p. 22.

responding to the “Emergency” needs of those in the two third’s world, but the “Development” part of the name appears to be less emphasized or altogether non-existent.

The Canadian Food Grains Bank (CFGB) program that the in which ERDO participates is an interdenominational organization that has developed a network to supply donated grain to those in emergency malnourishment situations. This is a rare occasion where the PAOC is working alongside churches such as the United Church of Canada. Participating churches rent land tended by volunteer farmers for the production of grain for the CFGB, or individual farmers donate portions of their harvest into the program. All grain put into the program is matched four to one by the Canadian International Development Agency. Despite the obvious need to do more than simply provide food to those suffering from unjust situations, it is highly laudable that the PAOC participates in this worthwhile program.<sup>27</sup>

The CFGB is well aware of the systemic causes of hungry and poverty and urge member organizations to participate in many other active ways. The CFGB periodical *Breaking Bread* notes that member churches “support their neighbours overseas by getting involved in letter writing campaigns, urging their governments to consider more and better aid, trade justice, and canceling debt.”<sup>28</sup> Here is where the PAOC appears to lack participation in the development of lasting social change and long term development strategies. Despite the CFGB providing excellent materials outlining the myths of hunger and the systemic (essentially Western) causes of hunger, the PAOC continues to make its appeal based on the sad and unfortunate situations suffering people experience and their need for a crisis conversion to Christianity. Overall they appear to avoid the issue of the

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<sup>27</sup> “Relief and Development.”

<sup>28</sup> Jim Cornelius, *Breaking Bread* (Winnepeg: Canadian Food Grains Bank, 2005), p. 3.

political causation of the suffering. The current work of ERDO is a wonderful avenue of social *welfare*, but despite being connected to the CFGB, which reveals a deep concern for social *action*, the Canadian Pentecostals prefer not to involve themselves in those areas.

Thomas Miller, writing in his official history of the PAOC, reflected the PAOC position regarding programs of social concern and takes steps to assure his readers that the Pentecostal focus is still on evangelism. He writes, “the practical result of the ERDO program in relation to the gospel was that through the demonstration of concern for the people the missionaries earned ‘the right to be heard.’”<sup>29</sup> Miller wished for there to be no misunderstanding and prevent any suspicions that the PAOC might be meddling with liberal activities. He stated, “while the ERDO projects reflected very favorably the awareness of educational, physical, and social needs in the Third World, the primary purpose of the PAOC to present the gospel remained its top priority.”<sup>30</sup>

Fortunately, through ERDO there is a strong impetus towards social welfare though participation in social action is limited. Even ERDO’s ‘Child Care Plus’ program is advertised on the basis of feeding hungry mouths rather than creating a sustainable difference. The PAOC is more than willing to take the initiative and provide material needs and fight the evils of hunger and malnutrition, but is silent against the real culprits of the global poverty problem which is often close to home. Pentecostals do not engage the issue on a level that can craft a prophetic condemnation of, for example, unjust

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas W. Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada* (Mississauga: Full Gospel Publishing House, 1994), p. 379.

<sup>30</sup> Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals...* p. 379; though merely anecdotal evidence, I have attended various Pentecostal churches over the last 20 years and have never heard ERDO mentioned in a service.

Western economic policies that cripple the two thirds world.<sup>31</sup> Though many denominations are taking strong stands against such abuses, most notably through the World Council of Churches, the PAOC missions department shows no consciousness of these issues.

The Canadian Pentecostals have no voice against these sorts of systemic social injustices because they do not have a theology that informs them that these are issues of theological and moral concern. Basic human decency compels people to feed the hungry. On its own this will not, however, resist and push back economic and social injustices in the world. Despite certain deficiencies in Canadian Pentecostal social action, Bob White, the administrator of ERDO's collection and distribution centre is thinking at least in the right direction. He and his staff give theological significance to the work they do through a policy that "everything that is sent from the centre is a gift from God."<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately the best his church fellowship has to give him to ship overseas is mainly used clothing and other household items. The unfortunate fact is, immediate social welfare responses, if done alone only serve to support the unjust social structures that create the need; as Robert M. Anderson argues, they support the status quo.<sup>33</sup> Social welfare is needed, but it is not enough for social justice. The reasons for including social action in the mission of the church will be presented in the next chapter.

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<sup>31</sup> *Myths About Hunger* Brochure, Canadian Food Grains Bank.

<sup>32</sup> Bob White, "ERDO Collection and Distribution" *The Testimony* 87 (6). n.p. (Cited Jan. 5, 2006) Online: <http://www.paoc.org/testimony/article.cfm?ArticleID=62>.

<sup>33</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited...* p. 240.

### **Fundamental and Essential Truths**

The PAOC's "Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths" (using language certainly borrowed from the Fundamentalists) includes no statements about the responsibility of the church with regards to any form of social justice. The entire section on the purpose and nature of the Church reads,

The local church is a body of believers in Christ who have joined together to function as a part of the universal church. The local church is ordained by God and provides a context in which believers corporately worship God, observe the ordinances of the church, are instructed in the faith and are equipped for the evangelization of the world.<sup>34</sup>

One cannot find fault with simply having a short and vague description in a statement of faith, however, the next section includes a lengthy and detailed list of the PAOC's eschatological beliefs. The subsections include, "Present State of the Dead," "The Rapture," "The Tribulation," "The Second Coming of Christ," "Final Judgement," "Eternal State of the Righteous."<sup>35</sup> The next section is even more substantial and outlines the PAOC's conservative positions on several social issues revealing that this belief statement is not simply uninterested in the social plane. None of the issues, however, are related to social justice.

The final "Positions and Practices" section of the "Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths" includes the subcategories, "Marriage and Family," "Divorce," "Remarriage," and "Tithing." This last one makes an interesting statement. The only reference to the Christian responsibility to give is in reference to what they believe to be the scriptural demand for a calculated and systematic giving to one's local church. Since

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<sup>34</sup> "Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths" (2006, Jan.) *The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Website* [on-line] available from <http://www.paoc.org/pdf/StmtofFaith%20doc.pdf>; Internet; accessed 10 January 2006.

<sup>35</sup> "Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths" p. 4.

this is included as a “fundamental and essential truth” while responsibility towards social action is not included, it is clear that social justice is not a priority of the PAOC. Yet as their statement of “truths” reveals, they are not altogether uninterested in social issues. The PAOC took aggressive steps against the passing of Bill C-38, the Civil Marriage Act, the legislation to permit same-sex marriages. During church services members were urged to write their Members of Parliament and were provided with ample materials and information in the fight against Bill C-38. Though ultimately unsuccessful, the rhetoric described the conflict as a defense of righteousness and standing up for biblical faith.<sup>36</sup> Despite the exhortations of organizations such as the CFGB, the PAOC takes no such political action on issues of social justice. Political action is certainly not the only form of social action, yet the contrast with the PAOC political action on other social issues is glaring. The PAOC’s national leadership reveals more interest in issues of personal piety and morality than systemic injustice. Pentecostals are not short on developed theologies of personal morality and their actions follow, the same cannot be said of social justice.

### **Conclusion**

Having established that Pentecostalism prefers individual change through personal conversion and generally limits their social concern to social welfare, it is clear that to North American Pentecostals, social action is beyond the confines of the mission of the Church. Since Pentecostalism focuses on the spiritual and metaphysical aspects of the gospel, we recall the charge that Pentecostalism is a sedative religion. Robert M. Anderson, for instance, levies a hefty charge against Pentecostal social justice.

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<sup>36</sup> William D. Morrow, A Letter to PAOC Constituents, (July 5, 2005). [on-line] available from <http://www.paoc.org/about/pdf/Bill%20C38%20Fellowship%20Letter%20from%20Wm.%20Morrow%20%20July%202005.pdf>; Internet; accessed 10 January 2006.

“Deploing all political and economic activism, Pentecostalism deflected social protest from effective expression, and channeled it into the harmless backwaters of religious ideology.”<sup>37</sup>

What Anderson and other’s maintain is that Pentecostalism is not just hesitant in participating in social action, but can actually serve to hinder it by deflecting the potential energy of social protest inherent within Pentecostalism into avenues that create no lasting difference. Anderson remarks, “Pentecostalism has been a conservative bulwark of the status quo.”<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, in North America, Anderson is correct. Yet it is not inevitable and it is not indicative of Pentecostalism itself as we have seen through the examples of Pentecostalism in other parts of the globe.

Fortunately, Pentecostals do not lack a concern for or desire to do social welfare. However, what is notably due to the borrowing of Fundamentalist assumptions, and capitulating to current evangelical social thought, Pentecostals lack the theology that can give significance and a theological imperative towards social justice. There still may be plenty of legitimate social actions taking place by Pentecostals, but they are adrift in personal action and individual compassionate reactions and are not present on an official fellowship level. Though Pentecostals participate in social welfare through organizations such as ERDO, the lack of critical reflection on social justice and their silence on critical issues inadvertently causes them to support the status quo that causes the suffering that individual Pentecostals wish to alleviate. What is clearly needed is a theology of social justice that can be embraced by Pentecostals and endorsed on an official level that can

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<sup>37</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 239.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 239.

classify social action within the category of the Church and thus create a significant theological imperative for social action that evangelism now enjoys.

## **CHAPTER 4 TOWARDS A PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents an argument for the inclusion of social action into the definition of the mission of the Christian Church. We will first touch on several passages of scripture that illustrate the principle in question. It will be argued that social justice was within the mission of Jesus and that mission was transferred to the Church. Using Roger Stronstad's charismatic understanding of Spirit Baptism, it will be shown how in order to be consistent with such a Pentecostal theology, social action must be included in the mission for which believers receive spiritual empowerment. Having established the need for social action as mission, we will then examine the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God as the rubric necessary to understand the significance of social justice and how it relates to eschatological realities. The second section will examine the eschatological implications and argue for a transformative premillennial eschatological model over an annihilational model. The third section will look at how Pentecostalism did not initially develop with Fundamentalist dispensational eschatology and had potential for a transformative model in early Pentecostal eschatology, in particular, the concept of the 'latter rain.' The fourth section examines some of the challenges in the creation of such a missiology including popular forms of Fundamentalist eschatology.

First, it should be noted that this is only one approach of many in understanding the biblical notion of social justice. A few Pentecostal scholars have been exploring other avenues of understanding God's requirements in this respect. From the point of view of

biblical studies, some have explored the Old Testament's demand for justice.<sup>1</sup> Others in various traditions have explored a variety of approaches to social justice such as the theology of humans made in the image of God and the ethical requirements of Christian love as well as the Holy Spirit's role in the restoration of the earth. These are excellent approaches to the subject matter, but for this thesis I will confine my approach to two biblical themes: the mission of Christ and the Kingdom of God. Such an approach can reveal that a consistent Pentecostal theology requires an emphasis on social justice.

### **Biblical Foundations for Social Justice**

#### From the Point of View of the Gospels

Jesus understood that social justice was a part of his mission on earth. The implications of such a proposition are far reaching and have many implications for how missions are currently done in Pentecostalism. We will begin this study by noting some presuppositions that are akin to Pentecostalism and will be helpful in understanding social justice from the Gospels' perspective. First, we resist the idea that the Gospels and the book of Acts are merely church history and thus theology should not be created from such narrative works. Nor will we use them to bolster or illustrate preconceived interpretation from the didactic material. The gospels contain theology. Since all of the key Pentecostal distinctive theologies come from the narrative material in the New Testament, Pentecostalism can be fertile ground for social justice theology rooted in the New Testament narratives. Some non-pentecostal scholars prefer to view the narrative writers as historians and not theologians. John R. W. Stott writes, "the revelation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Dempster, "Evangelism, Social Concern," pp. 22-43; "Pentecostal Social Concern and the Biblical Mandate of Social Justice," *Pneuma* 9 (2), pp. 129-154.

purpose of God in Scripture should be sought in its *didactic*, rather than its *historical* parts.”<sup>2</sup> Stott still recognizes the significance of Jesus’ preaching, others however, usually in the Fundamentalist circles, maintain that such teaching simply does not apply to us today since he was living and teaching in a completely different dispensation. The unfortunate result is that everything Jesus himself taught loses its significance to the present. Due to the emergence of redaction and narrative criticism, many biblical exegetes are coming to understand that the Pentecostal approach, that is understanding the gospel writers as primarily theologians writing history, as the more accurate.

Though this is merely speculative, Pentecostals may have the potential to hear parts of the narrative a little ‘clearer’ than some in other church traditions that have long established and highly regarded theological structures. Pentecostal theology has been a great deal more flexible and pragmatic throughout its history. Pentecostal theology is not yet written in stone. Grand metaphysically based doctrinal stances such as ‘substitutionary atonement,’ can still, to some degree, be up for discussion within Pentecostalism and can be modified as required by their biblical exegesis. Essentially, Pentecostals have a great deal less riding on the historic nature of such church doctrines. This is not to say that Pentecostals are reckless or cavalier with theology, but that their tradition is theologically flexible and adaptable, especially regarding theologies that their movement played no part in creating.

The Mennonite scholar John Howard Yoder brought ample attention to the political dimension of Jesus’ teaching that had long been understood as a

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<sup>2</sup> John R.W. Stott, *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1964), p. 23; As quoted in Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology*, p. 6.

misinterpretation.<sup>3</sup> By political, Yoder is not referring to the modern dimensions of government and geopolitical physics, but rather the plane of human relationships in the material and the historical, where power structures function and cause alienation and suffering and where human material actions have significance. According to Yoder, the real story of the incarnation and the mission of Jesus, was not a cosmic drama, but in the plane of political reality, yet he does not arrive at such a conclusion by denying the deity of Christ, but insisting that God in Jesus became human in order to be ‘normative man.’<sup>4</sup> The social ethic that Jesus lived and preached is not then a side item which he offered ‘free of charge’ while his real mission was to be born to die a substitutionary death. To Yoder, Jesus’ social ethic is why he came.

The implications for the theology of the atonement are far beyond the scope of this thesis, though it is an area where Pentecostals also need to explore. Nevertheless, Yoder rightly brings our attention to the problem in much of Protestant theology to prefer the didactic descriptions of the cosmic significance of Christ over the implications of what Jesus actually did and taught. Yoder does not prefer the historical Jesus over the cosmic Christ, as many are apt to do, and point to the teachings of a wandering desert preacher as having significance today. Rather, Yoder is suggesting that the cosmic Christ is the one in the same with the historical Jesus, and cannot be understood from outside of his political reality, life and teaching. Yoder’s message is one that Pentecostals would greatly benefit from hearing. It is not the case that Jesus acted in the political realm, preached and taught while he was on his way to the cross to provide for humanity the

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<sup>3</sup> John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, p. 22.

cosmic gospel. Those actions, sermons and lessons were the gospel and they have cosmic significance. Yoder writes,

Jesus was not just a moralist whose teachings had some political implications; he was not primarily a teacher of spirituality whose public ministry unfortunately was seen in a political light; he was not just a sacrificial lamb preparing for his immolation, or a God-Man whose divine status calls us to disregard his humanity. Jesus was in his divinely mandated (i.e. promised, anointed, messianic) prophethood, priesthood and kingship, the bearer of a new possibility of human, social and therefore political relationships.<sup>5</sup>

Though I am not suggesting a complete revision of Pentecostal theology into Anabaptist categories, the prophetic call of Yoder to return Jesus' teaching and actions to the center of the faith is a much needed one. Yoder is helpful in that he redirects attention from the metaphysical to a holistic understanding of Christ which has important implications for how one develops theology. Since both Yoder and Pentecostal tradition are fond of using the Gospel of Luke, Yoder will be helpful in the articulation of the biblical demand for social justice in an approach not common to North American Pentecostals.

If Jesus is considered to be the normative human, then our theology must give a significant amount of attention to the life of Jesus. Yoder brings our attention to one of the earliest descriptions of Jesus in the New Testament, Mary's 'song' of Jesus. Written in starkly physical terms, the song is clear that her unborn child will be "an agent of radical social change."<sup>6</sup> Luke 1:52-54 reads, "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty."<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in the same chapter Zacharias rejoices in the coming salvation of Israel and the role his son will play in announcing it, yet refrains from using

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<sup>5</sup> Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* p. 62-63.

<sup>6</sup> Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> NRSV.

metaphysical language about salvation from condemnation due to cosmic trespasses.

Rather, salvation is “from the hands of our enemies.”<sup>8</sup>

The details of the baptism are not a great concern for Luke, but he makes the point that will become clear later. The Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, came “upon him” (ἐπ’ αὐτόν) (Jesus). The sonship of Jesus and the Spirit’s seal of approval on Jesus’ work is proclaimed by God, but the details of the significance of the Spirit coming upon him appear in the following chapter.

After his baptism Jesus remained in the desert forty days and endured the temptation, which Yoder interprets as temptations towards alternative methods of becoming King.<sup>9</sup> Having resisted the temptation, Jesus exits the wilderness and begins his public ministry. His first public words can be understood as Jesus’ own declaration of how his Kingship will function and what his mission will be.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.<sup>10</sup>

Luke makes an explicit connection between the baptism of Jesus, and his reading of Isaiah 6:10 at the synagogue. He is clearly explaining why he was sent. The social implications of Jesus’ inaugural statement are far reaching, unless the interpretation is severely altered by spiritualizing of these overtly material proclamations. “He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, [...] release to the captives, [...] sight to the

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 1:71. NRSV.

<sup>9</sup> Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 4:18,19. NRSV.

blind, [freedom for] the oppressed.”<sup>11</sup> If we accept that these are profoundly social and material statements that Jesus is making, with further examination it is possible to suggest that they fall on the side of social action, rather than social welfare. Much like the complete chapter in Isaiah that he is quoting, Jesus is speaking of a coming, vast, social change. The good news, sight and freedom suggest a change of state for those suffering. Jesus certainly teaches social welfare throughout the rest of Luke as well, but social welfare itself does not ‘let the oppressed’ free. In Luke 4, Jesus announces a coming overhaul of the social order.

Jesus appeals to the Old Testament tradition of the Year of the Jubilee, a time of a radical social restoration of in Israel; debts would be forgiven, land returned to its original owner and wealth redistributed.<sup>12</sup> There are possible allusions here to the metaphysical problem of sin, but the material implications are unavoidable. It would be a misunderstanding of the text to argue that Jesus is speaking metaphorically or in spiritual terms. Only an *a priori* spiritualized interpretation of Jesus could suggest that this list of material terms of social action and welfare are mere metaphors for metaphysical salvation.

If Jesus is taken to be the normative human and his actions and teaching are considered a valuable source in creating an ethical system, then again social justice becomes a matter of high concern. Carrying out the very actions for which Jesus claimed he had been sent, he brought good news to the poor in the form of healing, food as well as the forgiveness of sins. Throughout his whole ministry Jesus consistently focussed on the poor and oppressed. His sermon on the mount in Matthew and the sermon on the

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<sup>11</sup> Luke 4:18,19. NRSV.

<sup>12</sup> Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, p. 76.

plain in Luke reveal Jesus' special appreciation of the poor and the human responsibility towards them. He routinely warned the rich against hoarding money and demanded they do justice for the poor, outcasts and lame.<sup>13</sup> The parables of the 'Sheep and the Goats' and 'The Good Samaritan' clearly reveal the absolute imperative of social responsibility to those in need.

When the disciples of John wished to know if Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus appealed only to the physical salvations in his wake to justify his identity.<sup>14</sup> Luke 7:21-22 reads:

Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind. And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them."<sup>15</sup>

Jesus clearly lived out the commission for which the Holy Spirit had been given to him at his baptism and it served as his self identification of his Messianic status. The mission of the Messiah is to bring wholeness to people including both the metaphysical and the material.

Roger Stronstad of Summit Pacific College in British Columbia, argues in his monumental work, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, for a basic continuity of mission between Jesus and the Church due to the mutual baptism in the Holy Spirit. Jesus received his commission to begin his ministry and service to the world at his water baptism. But rather than a coronation, Stronstad views this as Luke articulating a

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<sup>13</sup> Mt 5:42; 6:2-4, 19-34; cf. Is 1:17. Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2003), p.93.

<sup>14</sup> Norberto Saracco, "The Holy Spirit and the Church's Mission of Healing," *International Review of Mission* 93, pp. 414,415.

<sup>15</sup> NRSV.

charismatic theology of Spirit empowerment of Christ for his mission.<sup>16</sup> Beyond a commissioning, Luke links this Holy Spirit experience to the Old Testament motif of Spirit empowerment. The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, as Stronstad notes, was an empowering force given to God's "anointed" for particular purposes.<sup>17</sup> With such a motif in mind, the baptism experience can be understood as Christ's 'anointing' for ministry. As we have noted, this ministry had overtly social implications revealing that this was not simply a side issue on the way to the cross, but the very reason for which he was sent and given the Holy Spirit according to Luke 4:18,19.

That same Spirit, as Stronstad writes, was "transferred" to the new Church at Pentecost.<sup>18</sup> Luke opens the book of Acts with Christ telling his disciples that soon they "will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."<sup>19</sup> Understanding the social implications of Jesus' ministry, the disciples ask, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?"<sup>20</sup> Jesus replies, "It is not for you to know the times or the periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you (ἐπ' ἐμεῖ); and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."<sup>21</sup> The same Holy Spirit that came upon Jesus at his baptism, came upon his followers and for the same reason. According to the same Old Testament motif of spirit empowerment, the disciples will receive power, "δύναμιν," in order to be

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<sup>16</sup> Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology*, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology*, p. 26.27.

<sup>18</sup> Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology*, p.49.

<sup>19</sup> Lk 1:5. NRSV.

<sup>20</sup> Lk 1:6. NRSV.

<sup>21</sup> Lk 1:7,8. NRSV.

witnesses for the mission of Christ.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it is implied in such an answer to the disciples' question that this is how the kingdom is coming.

In the following chapter, Acts 2, the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples, just as Jesus had said. Jesus had received the Spirit for his ministry, and now the church receives the same Spirit for the same ministry. At Pentecost, Peter announces, "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear."<sup>23</sup> Jesus has poured out that which was poured out to him. "This can only mean," Stronstad states, "that the disciples, as it were apprentices, are equipped for continuing the ministry which Jesus had inaugurated."<sup>24</sup> If Jesus considered social action within his own mission (Lk 4:18,19) and it was the Spirit that empowered him and commissioned him towards that mission, and that same Spirit was poured out on the disciples to continue that mission, then all the implications of Jesus' inaugural reading in the temple apply to the Church. The Spirit has been poured out on the Church for the same reason, to "bring good news to the poor, [...] release to the captives, [...] sight to the blind, [freedom for] the oppressed," and freedom for the "oppressed."<sup>25</sup> Stronstad writes,

By this transfer of the Spirit, the disciples become the heirs and successors to the earthly charismatic ministry of Jesus; that is, because Jesus has poured out the charismatic Spirit upon them the disciples will continue to do and teach those things which Jesus began to do and teach.<sup>26</sup>

We can see that through a Pentecostal interpretation of Jesus' baptism as well as Acts 1 and 2, it becomes clear that social action is a part of the mission of the Church. Missions

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<sup>22</sup> Acts. 1:8.

<sup>23</sup> Lk. 2:33. NRSV.

<sup>24</sup> Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology*, p. 51.

<sup>25</sup> Lk 4:18,19. NRSV.

<sup>26</sup> Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology*, p. 49.

cannot be understood as the proclamation of the formula of salvation alone. Acts 1:8 states that the disciples will be witnesses, but since they are empowered by God towards this end, this cannot be interpreted passively in a courtroom understanding of the term. Rather, the empowering implies that the disciples must actively go 'to the ends of the earth' bearing witness to Jesus by doing and teaching the things he said and did, even to point of death. The remainder of the book of Acts is the story of how that happened.

Some interpreters may be willing to agree that Jesus' inaugural address has tremendous social implications, but prefer to understand it in reference to the eschatological kingdom, when all such healing and liberation will be in a completed form. Such an interpretation is possible, despite its apparent contradiction with Jesus' earthly ministry in the material world, the liberations and healings to which his inaugural address refers. However, this becomes more difficult if we understand that the disciples received the same spirit and commissioning that Jesus did, if the Spirit was 'transferred' to them. The disciples, and consequently all Christian believers, are not going to bring in the eschatological kingdom through human actions alone, but through participation with God's Spirit, they will participate as agents in its development and coming.

According to Pentecostal theology, the transfer of the Spirit is, among other things, empowerment for ministry. Pentecostal theologians, however, have generally restricted this empowerment to be for what they believe to be the mission of the Church. If the mission of the Church is limited to evangelism, then the theology of empowerment is likewise limited. Yet since social justice is inherent in Jesus' mission and one of the reasons why he was 'sent,' the logic follows that that same mission for which we have been sent includes social justice as well as the charismatic empowerment for it. Such is

the basis for a truly Pentecostal theology of social justice. One activity of the Holy Spirit can be understood to be urging and empowering believers towards fulfilling God's will in the world. If we agree that God wills justice in political and economic systems, daily human interactions and relationships, then the Spirit can be understood as empowering believers towards justice within them. Beyond the role of urging seekers towards a metaphysical redemption, the Spirit's vocation needs to be understood as "dynamically recreat[ing] the ministry of Jesus in the Church."<sup>27</sup>

In the early 1990's, Gordon Fee with Murry A. Dempster and Douglas Peterson among others, wrote *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*. It was a remarkable step forward for Pentecostal social justice theology and their work has far reaching implications.<sup>28</sup> Fee concludes that,

Our global mission, therefore, is rooted ultimately in Jesus' application of Isaiah 53 and 61:1-2 to himself. He himself brought in the time of the End, the "year of the Lord's favour," in which the good news to the poor meant release for captives of all kinds. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit precisely for such a mission; and he in turn poured out the Spirit on his disciples so that they might continue that same mission.<sup>29</sup>

Beyond proclaiming the formula of salvation based on the metaphysical transaction that Christ made on behalf of humanity, using this charismatic approach, missionaries understand themselves to be empowered to take on the mission of Christ as a form of a microcosm of his own mission. Everything Christ did is thus important for missions as he is then the model for all missions not just the message. Such an approach places a great deal more attention on Jesus, his actions and teaching, than a system that maintains

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<sup>27</sup> Dempster, "Evangelism and Social Concern," p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> In the past 15 years, Pentecostals have largely failed to heed the words of these authors partly due, in my opinion, to the ongoing tensions of Pentecostal identity and relationship with Evangelicalism as described above. *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective* eds. Murray A. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, Douglas Petersen (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991).

<sup>29</sup> Fee, "The Kingdom of God," p. 18.

Jesus' sole mission was the sacrificial atonement. If Christ's mission is now his believer's mission, then the gospel accounts of his life and message are imperative for missions. This is an area that I believe Pentecostals must explore further. The teaching of Jesus, and thus social action, are central and not limited to personal morality or teaching on signs and wonders; Jesus' work is missionary work.

If too much attention is given to the atonement work of Jesus, as Pentecostal scholar Jean-Jacques Suurmond writes, "the person of Jesus is reduced to a static and bloodless formula remote from the lively person who according to the Gospels roamed the streets, sorrowing with the sorrowful and rejoicing with the happy."<sup>30</sup> A faith centered on the mission of Jesus and Spirit empowerment towards it, as Jacobsen writes, "compels us to enter fully into historical reality and be concerned about its transformation."<sup>31</sup>

Working on a Pentecostal theology, Suurmond points out that,

For Pentecostals, the story of salvation centers not only on the cross, the sacrifice of Jesus, and the gift of forgiveness and justification, but also on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus culminating at Pentecost. Pentecost is "the consummation and the crown of the events of Christmas and Easter."<sup>32</sup>

Pentecostals understand Pentecost to be the in-breaking of the Spirit into the world for salvation but also restoration of this world. Rather than passive messengers, believers are then active agents of the Spirit's work in the world. The Spirit's mission to bring salvation, healing and fulfillment to humanity becomes the mission of the Church itself, and the subject of the Great Commission's announcement.

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<sup>30</sup> Suurmond, *Word and Spirit at Play*, p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, p. 157.

<sup>32</sup> Suurmond, *Word and Spirit at Play*, p. 139.

The late Princeton professor of ecumenics Richard Shaull also believed that Pentecostals must extend our definition of the mission of the church. He wrote in his study of Pentecostalism,

To be saved is to be called to participate in a struggle of global and eternal significance to extend the reign of God. This means, above all else, a total commitment to evangelism and, as now it seems increasingly evident, a commitment to be involved in social and political struggles.<sup>33</sup>

Linking the Pentecostal pneumatological dynamics to a Biblical understanding of Christ's proclaimed coming of the Kingdom of God is the best source for social action.

One distinction of Pentecostal theology is that it emphasizes the Holy Spirit's work in the physical world. Though generally understood in terms of healings and the supernatural, to Pentecostals, the Spirit is an active empowering force which can and should be applied towards social change through the lives and work of believers.<sup>34</sup> "Life in the Holy Spirit," Kärkkäinen writes, "energizes Christians to engage in evangelization and to work for justice in society."<sup>35</sup> Formulating a social justice theology while keeping in focus the Spirit and the community implications, allows one to steer clear of a flat social theology that sees social change only through political means. Some political approaches dehumanize the poor by treating them only as victims in need of an exterior salvation. Following a Spirit based social ethic prevents one from dissecting social problems simply as a social science. Spirit-empowered social action is not a reduction of the faith to the material plane, but is rather expanding the theological understanding of

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<sup>33</sup> Richard Shaull, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 146. Though a Presbyterian, Shaull was sympathetic to the Pentecostal cause and saw in it a possible hope for the future of the Church.

<sup>34</sup> Stronstad argues that an Old Testament theology of the Spirit reveals an active and dynamic Spirit of God that is a powerful force in history. Pentecostals adopt such theology into their pneumatology and provide the Spirit with a much more active role in church life. *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, pp. 14-20.

<sup>35</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Are Pentecostals Oblivious to Social Justice? Theological and Ecumenical Perspectives," *Missiology* 29 (4), p. 424.

the role of the Spirit. Yet historically, Pentecostals have been hesitant in such an application of their charismatic theology. Jürgen Moltmann asks, where are the

charismata of the 'charismatics' in the everyday world, in the peace movement, in the movements of liberation, in the ecology movement. [...] If charismata are not given to us so that we can flee from this world into a world of religious dreams, but if they are intended to witness to the liberating lordship of Christ in this world's conflicts, then the [Pentecostal] movement must not become a non-political religion, let alone a depoliticized one.<sup>36</sup>

Further theological reflection on meaningful participation in the work for justice in history is required for Pentecostals to create the connection between their theology of Spirit empowerment, and the work of social justice. A foundation for such a connection can be found in the rubric of the Kingdom of God.

### Kingdom of God

The context of Jesus' and his believer's work for social justice is the rubric of the Kingdom of God. Acts of social justice done by believers are not merely random acts of generosity and compassion along the way to the goal of an eschatological Kingdom. Rather, such social action is participating in the arrival of the inaugurated Kingdom. The New Testament rubric of the Kingdom of God is an excellent starting point for a theology of social justice. A theology that understands the gospel as the proclamation of the Kingdom of God can be holistic enough to include social justice elements in the mission of the Church and become more reflective of the seamless interaction between social justice and conversion in the New Testament.

The most vital determining point on the degree to which social justice will play a part in the life of the church is whether or not it is included in the 'mission' of the church.

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<sup>36</sup> Jürgen Moltman, *Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 186.

Most Pentecostals currently maintain that it is ‘important’ (in varying degrees) but consider it only an individual ethical responsibility. If it is outside the category of the mission of the church, then, in ecclesial decisions, social justice issues must always submit to the primary mission, that is, the proclamation of the formula of salvation. It is possible to include social justice initiatives, but only with the larger goal of gaining converts. Conversely, the Kingdom of God rubric allows for a holistic understanding of the mission of Jesus.

We will now work towards a biblical and Pentecostal understanding of the Kingdom of God and how it forms the basis for meaningful social action. Beginning by examining some key eschatological questions that weigh heavily on this issue we will outline some points of departure from traditional evangelical theological approaches to Missiology. The case will then be made for why Pentecostal pneumatology, especially regarding the doctrine of Spirit empowerment for service, should be linked to a biblical theology of Christ’s proclaimed coming Kingdom of God. Within the last decade, some Pentecostal scholars have been giving more attention to this theological motif that is usually lacking in Pentecostal theology, we will also briefly examine their concept of the Kingdom of God.<sup>37</sup>

The Kingdom of God is not to be understood as synonymous with the Church. This can be, as the Pentecostal Eldin Villafañe suggests, the most visible expression of the church but the Kingdom of God’s full realization involves the entire cosmos, not simply the church. Villafañe writes:

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<sup>37</sup> The most significant work is the aforementioned *Called and Empowered*. Peterson also later produced his own work, focusing on the Latin American context where he works, entitled, *Not By Might Nor By Power* (Oxford: Regnum Press, 1996).

There is no area of life where the rule of God cannot be exercised. While God rules in the church through the pneumatic (risen) Christ, the church must not see itself as the only *locus* of the Reign of God '[...the church must] define itself as an instrument for the full realization of the Kingdom of God and as a sign of a true yet still imperfect realization of the Kingdom in the world.' The church is thus challenged not to see itself as an *end* but as a means towards the building of God's Reign.<sup>38</sup>

Though the Kingdom of God is referred to in a variety of ways in the New Testament, it is clear that it refers to the realm of God, or the category of that which God wills. One both enters God's Kingdom by doing his will, and, as we will examine shortly, assists in the growth of the Kingdom. Since the Kingdom is not limited to the Church, actions done outside the Church that work towards God's will are participating in God's will and acting as agents in the building of God's kingdom. Though a non-believer is not considered 'within' the Kingdom, his or her social actions can still be considered work towards building the kingdom if they are acts of love and compassion. Consequently, the Kingdom is not limited then to the confines of the Church. The complete Kingdom of God arrives when all of God's will is followed in the eschatological new creation after the return of Christ. The coming of God's kingdom is the subject of the 'good news' in the gospels, often described as "the good news of the Kingdom."<sup>39</sup> This good news is that God's will will be done and that his Kingdom is coming.<sup>40</sup> What will become important throughout this study is that "Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God as both a future event and a present reality."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *Liberating Spirit: Towards an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 196.

<sup>39</sup> Mt 4:23; 9:35; Mk 1:15; Lk 4:43; 8:1; 16:16; Ac 8:12.

<sup>40</sup> Mt 6:10; Lk 11:2.

<sup>41</sup> Fee, "The Kingdom of God," p. 11.

## Eschatology

### Eschatology and the Kingdom of God

Inextricably entwined with any theology of the Kingdom of God and social justice is eschatology. Though eschatology is a mainstay of orthodox theology, there has never been an agreement on its details. Churches may mutually concur that Jesus will return, but beyond that there are significant differences. The popularity of eschatology rises and falls among the laity and, within Evangelicalism, is currently at high tide. How one understands eschatology is vitally important for social justice because it determines how one views the possibility of social change on earth and the degree to which it is necessary. With certain eschatological stances, compassionate people with a keen desire to help the needy can be persuaded against social action. Among those who believe in premillennialism there is a significant amount of disagreement on how much good can, or should be done before Christ's return. The problem is not simply premillennialism but how such an eschatology is applied to the material world.

Eschatology was central in the Fundamentalist – Modernist debate at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the Fundamentalists made an abrupt turn from their postmillennial, revivalist roots. Earth and history was considered doomed and thus needed to be abandoned, saving only the 'souls' within it. Rejecting older concepts of progress in history, the Fundamentalists maintained a concept of the inevitable decline of the church, morality and culture. Since the Liberal churches did not agree, they served as evidence to support the Fundamentalist claim of the prevalence of decay in history. Of course this entropic view of society was not completely pessimistic. They placed a great deal of certainty on the expectation that Christ would return and set up his Kingdom and

subsequently, all the political, social, environmental and moral pangs would be healed. The Fundamentalists were holding out until the Kingdom arrived.<sup>42</sup>

### Transformational Eschatology

The most significant theological problem that arises from the question of social concern is how the future Kingdom relates to the present. Though the nature of this question is far beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note the implications it has for social justice. It is often noted that a “this-worldly eschatology is the best or even an adequate framework for thinking about Christian social responsibility.”<sup>43</sup> Certainly those using a protological (this worldly) theology place a much greater emphasis on social justice and spend their resources accordingly. Nevertheless, it must be asked, if it is logically necessary for those with an eschatological (premillennial) framework to be negligent towards social justice? If one’s eschatology is centered around the pending destruction of the planet, then the answer is likely ‘yes.’ However, if one’s eschatology is centered around the New Testament concept of the Kingdom of God and all its implications, then the answer can be ‘no.’ Such a rubric can release the tension between social justice and evangelism and understand them both to be part of the same gospel.

We should note at the beginning that Pentecostalism did not arrive on the scene with a finished eschatology as the movement developed out of ‘pilgrims’ from all varieties of Christianity bringing ample theological influences with them. Tracing the theological influences on Pentecostalism through Pietism, John Wesley, Charles Finney,

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<sup>42</sup> Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, p. 39-40; Daniel R. Mitchell, “Man on the Eve of Destruction,” *Fundamentalist Journal* 3 (11), pp. 23-27.

<sup>43</sup> Miroslav Volf, “On Loving with Hope: Eschatology and Social Responsibility,” *Transformation* 7 (3), p. 28.

Methodism and the Holiness movement, Donald W. Dayton suggests that Pentecostals did not start with a prepackaged premillennial theology. Many Pentecostal converts also came from various Baptist churches already influenced by premillennialism thus creating a theological tension within early Pentecostalism. The Holiness movement, as Dayton and Synan agree, had tremendous influence in the development of Pentecostalism.

Holiness believers, Dayton writes,

historically had little interest in eschatology or have inclined toward a postmillennial eschatology often viewed as the opposite of premillennial, not only be virtue of its expectation of a millennium preceding the return of Christ (thus making the return less imminent), but also because it provided a more “this-worldly” eschatological hope that could support social transformation and other broader cultural commitments.<sup>44</sup>

Just before Pentecostalism arrived on the scene, there were radical factions within the Holiness movement that began to prefer a premillennialist eschatology. The coals of the debate were still hot when Pentecostals had to determine for themselves what they believed about the future. What is clear, Dayton notes, is not so much that the earliest Pentecostals were not premillennial (though many of them were not), but rather, that a distinctly Pentecostal eschatology was in the making. Dayton writes, “We shall be more inclined to see the emergence of Pentecostal eschatology as a parallel development (occasionally an antecedent) to the rise of dispensationalism, though, of course, we shall see common dynamics and a great deal of intermingling.”<sup>45</sup>

Despite some postmillennial influences, Pentecostalism became inextricably connected to its premillennialism, though not to dispensationalism. Pentecostals agree with Jürgen Moltmann’s assessment that eschatology is at the very core of the Christian faith. Volf summarizes Moltmann’s argument concisely, “Christian life is life in the

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<sup>44</sup> Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1987), p. 156.

<sup>45</sup> Dayton, *Theological Roots*, p. 147.

Spirit of the new creation or it is not Christian life at all.”<sup>46</sup> Using this as an *a priori* understanding, how then should social concern be understood within history that is (as in Pentecostal thought) almost at an end? The question of the continuity or discontinuity of this present world with the next weighs heavy on our social concern issue. If this world will be destroyed and created again *ex-nihilo*, then our social justice work has only limited and temporal value. In a postmillennial view, changing the social order will have lasting value because through such work the earth becomes the new creation. However, within an eschatological framework that awaits the return of Christ and a catastrophic ending to our current history, human work for justice holds much less significance. Unless, that is, human work towards justice has some continuity with the new creation.

Miroslav Volf, influenced by his former professor Moltmann, argues that a premillennial eschatology does not need to maintain an annihilationist view of creation.<sup>47</sup> Reflecting Eastern Orthodox eschatology, Volf argues that the creation of the new earth occurs through the transformation of the present earth while all work that has been done towards justice, will not be made irrelevant or insignificant, but preserved and completed.<sup>48</sup> “If [...] the world will not be destroyed but transformed,” Volf writes,

then human work is of eternal significance in a direct way. Then nothing is wasted. The noble products of human ingenuity, “whatever is beautiful, true and good in human cultures,” will be cleansed from impurity, perfected and transfigured to become a part of God’s new creation.<sup>49</sup>

Human work towards justice on earth then has eternal significance and will be a part of the ‘wheat’ that is separated from the ‘chaff.’

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<sup>46</sup> Volf, “On Loving Hope,” p. 28.

<sup>47</sup> Miroslav Volf, “Human Work, Divine Spirit, and New Creation: Toward a Pneumatological Understanding of Work,” *Pneuma* 9 (2), p. 173-193.

<sup>48</sup> Sometimes this transformation is called a “recapitulation of creation.” Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, p. 72.

<sup>49</sup> Volf, “Human Work, Divine Spirit, p. 176.

The evidence for such a ‘transformational eschatology’ comes from the doctrine of the bodily resurrection. Volf writes, “theologically, it makes little sense to postulate a non-earthly eschatological existence while believing in the resurrection of the body. The resurrection body demands a corresponding glorified but nevertheless material environment.”<sup>50</sup> Though this does not yet necessitate a continuity between the two physical realities, other New Testament passages suggest such correlation. Romans 8:21 reads, “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”<sup>51</sup> As F.F. Bruce remarks:

If words mean anything, these words of Paul denote not the annihilation of the present material universe of the day of revelation, to be replaced by a universe completely new, but the transformation of the present universe so that it will fulfill the purpose for which God created it.<sup>52</sup>

Volf summarizes, “the liberation of creation – i.e. of the whole sub-human nature, both animate and inanimate – *cannot occur through its destruction but only through its transformation.*”<sup>53</sup>

Some theologians, such as Stephen Williams, suggest that social responsibility is still possible with an annihilationist framework on the basis of ethical responsibility and enjoying the gift of creation while it lasts.<sup>54</sup> That may apply to social welfare and other ethical responsibilities, but is incompatible with work for lasting social change, that is, “making the world a better place to live.”<sup>55</sup> Volf responds that, “the expectation of the eschatological destruction of the world (and everything human beings have created in it)

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<sup>50</sup> Volf, “On Loving with Hope,” p. 28.

<sup>51</sup> NRSV.

<sup>52</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 170; quoted by Volf in *On Loving With Hope*, p. 29.

<sup>53</sup> Volf, *On Loving with Hope*, p. 29. Emphasis his.

<sup>54</sup> Stephen Williams, “The Partition of Love and Hope: Eschatology and Responsibility,” *Transformation* 7 (3), p. 24-27.

<sup>55</sup> Volf, *On Loving with Hope*, p. 30.

is not consonant with belief in the value and goodness of creation: what God will annihilate must be either so bad that it is not possible to redeem it, or so insignificant that it is not worth being redeemed.”<sup>56</sup> It is difficult to affirm the beauty and goodness of creation if it will be rejected and destroyed when Christ returns.<sup>57</sup> Conversely, the goodness of creation can be embraced with the expectation that all of creation will be redeemed as the permanent home for a redeemed humanity.

Human work, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, can be considered a ‘partnering’ with God in the renewing of creation. Volf states that, “in the New Testament the injunction to wait eagerly for the kingdom is not opposed to the exhortation to work diligently for the kingdom. ‘Kingdom participation’ is not contrary, rather it is complimentary to ‘Kingdom expectation.’”<sup>58</sup> Believers can both expect the imminent return of Christ and the new creation as well as work diligently for the betterment of the created order through the cooperating with God in the building of the Kingdom.

### Remnant and Avant-garde

This point is illustrated through two opposing metaphors for the Church. The first metaphor is the ‘remnant,’ which is popular in Fundamentalist circles.<sup>59</sup> The Church is the last remaining faithful of a fallen Kingdom who are holding out in an occupied territory until their leader, Christ, returns to rescue them and subsequently destroy the

<sup>56</sup> Volf, *On Loving with Hope*, p. 30.

<sup>57</sup> Volf, “Human Work,” p. 177.

<sup>58</sup> Volf, *Human Work*, p. 178; Cf. Peter Kusmic, “History and Eschatology: Evangelical Views,” ed. B.J. Nichols, *Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1985), p. 150.

<sup>59</sup> Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1998), p. 107; Note that I am not using the term ‘remnant’ in the Old Testament sense of those who remained in Palestine after the diasporas, but rather its modern usage referring to a group of ‘survivors.’

world. The key feature of the remnant view is that this planet is not home to such believers and they live with expectation to be rescued from this planet before it is destroyed. The Church's mission, according to those who reflect this metaphor, is about rescuing people from their pending doom (not their present circumstances), by encouraging them to join the remnant. Those rescued are then equipped to become a rescuer themselves. Concern for the proverbial 'sinking ship' is a waste of resources, unless it assists in the rescue effort. From such a point of view, it is possible to argue that work towards social justice is not only futile, but a waste of valuable resources that should have been devoted towards evangelism.

The other metaphor for the church is the *avant-garde*; an historic French military term for the first military installment into a recently taken region. Though the region has officially come under the conqueror's rule and because the conqueror has not yet arrived in complete force to set up his dominion, things remain under the order and laws of the old regime. The *avant-garde* are those who go ahead and begin to set up the new regime and live by its new laws within the old regime. Both function at the same time, though only one is true and will last. Citizens can decide to either "cooperate with the new regime or the old."<sup>60</sup> The *avant-garde* have hope, not that they will be taken away to the Kingdom, but that the Kingdom is coming to them and all that they have been expressing and working towards will be validated and completed.

It is this second metaphor that better reflects the New Testament picture of the Church. Christ has won the decisive victory and the world is his, yet the ways of the old regime are still functioning until the new King arrives. The proclamation of the coming

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<sup>60</sup> Harvey Cox provides an excellent description of this metaphor in his *The Secular City*, (New York: MacMillan, 1966), p. 131.

Kingdom then is not an escape, but involves the whole planet; God's complete reign is on its way. Christ's followers, then, are those who understand that they are foreigners according to the present regime, but nationals according to the new regime. Despite the continued rebellion against the new King by the majority, those who follow the King are home as the land belongs to him and eagerly anticipate the return of the King. Social action, then, is far from a waste but is the vocation of the *avant-garde*, to be participants in the building and arriving of the coming Kingdom. Yoder writes:

[Jesus'] baptism is the inauguration and his cross is the culmination of that new regime in which his disciples are called to share. Men may choose to consider that kingdom as not real, or not relevant, or not possible, or not inviting; but no longer may we come to this choice in the name of systematic theology or honest hermeneutics.<sup>61</sup>

The Biblical scholar J. Christiaan Beker, from the point of view of his Pauline studies, has come to the same conclusion. He writes,

[The] church is not an aggregate of justified sinners or a sacramental institute or a means for private self-sanctification but the *avant garde* of the new creation in a hostile world, creating beachheads in this world of God's dawning new world and yearning for the day of God's visible lordship of his creation, the general resurrection of the dead.<sup>62</sup>

Pentecostals need to shift their thinking away from the remnant image, and towards the *avant-garde* which allows for meaningful cultural and social change.

To the disappointment of the Fundamentalists, the concept of the *avant-garde* and of the preservation of our present social change does not fit a tightly closed rational system. Yet the coming Kingdom, as described in the Bible, has a vagueness and an openness that does not necessarily need to be undone. It is difficult and generally fruitless to try to determine the logistics of how such a preservation will apply when

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<sup>61</sup> Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, p. 63.

<sup>62</sup> J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 155.

Christ returns. Nevertheless, as Yoder states, to be honest to the biblical witness, such a vagueness is preferred over the escapist rejection of the earth and our present history.

Howard Snyder, who advances this preference argues that, despite the ambiguity, it is the only method that takes into account both emphases in the Bible. The paradox of the ‘already but not yet’ is a conundrum that must remain in order to reflect the biblical witness. He writes,

Millennial theories may be seen as attempts to solve and dissolve this mystery of the kingdom by resolving all paradoxes into a consistent, rational system. But more is lost than gained by this attempt. Finally, the mystery of the kingdom will not be resolved by our theories but only in our experience of the kingdom – partially now, and fully when the kingdom comes in completion. [...] I stress [...] both the gradual and the cataclysmic coming of the kingdom, though without commitment to any particular millennial or dispensational theory.<sup>63</sup>

It is possible to maintain a premillennialism without discarding the present involvement of the believer in the development of the Kingdom of God in the present.

### **Early Pentecostal Eschatology**

Early Pentecostals developed an eschatology distinct from the postmillennialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the dispensationalism of the Fundamentalists. Though maintaining a premillennialism, the Pentecostals developed what Jürgen Moltmann calls, ‘a good apocalyptic.’<sup>64</sup> Congruent with his theology of hope, the early Pentecostals were energized with a vision of the glorious final outpouring of the Spirit announcing Christ’s return. This section will examine the potential of a re-envisioning of the latter rain eschatology for a context in which Christ’s return could happen imminently, or be delayed for a considerable time yet. By shifting the latter rain metaphor to include the

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<sup>63</sup> Howard Snyder, *A Kingdom Manifesto* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1985), p. 126-127.

<sup>64</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Grounds and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (trans. James W. Leitch; London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 124-138.

rubric of the growing Kingdom of God, a Pentecostal foundation for social action can be realized.

Pentecostals have a beneficial vantage point on this debate because they were observers when dispensational premillennialism was initially being developed. Some Pentecostal theologians continue to be unwilling to give any side their complete support. Many of the issues are outside the field of relevance to Pentecostals, as Canadian Pentecostal William A. Griffin writes,

Classic Pentecostals have shown little interest when post- or a-millennialists are trying to claim Calvin for their own camp or demonstrate ways in which the Westminster confession supports their position. Neither are Pentecostals very anxious to defend dispensational premillennialism. Their forefathers joined the Fundamentalist and dispensational camp mainly because there was no other choice.<sup>65</sup>

Pentecostals did not begin as dispensationalists, but began to assimilate Fundamentalist theology through the 1930's and forties. As they aligned with the evangelicals in the fifties, they then moved away from their dispensationalist borrowings though certain vestiges remain.

### Premillennialism

Though early Pentecostals as a whole never made clear exactly where they stood on many issues of eschatology, they were, overall, premillennial. When Pentecostalism first stepped into history, the postmillennialism of Liberalism was still in its heyday. Liberal Protestantism, as historian Justo Gonzalez writes, “had dreamt that under its leadership humankind would see a new day. It had convinced itself that its colonial

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<sup>65</sup> William A. Griffin, “Kingdom Now: New Hope or New Heresy?” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. November 1987.

ventures were a vast altruistic enterprise for the good of the world.”<sup>66</sup> The liberals of the time felt that the Kingdom was to be brought about through human work and innovation. God would eventually have complete dominion over the earth through his followers as the entire earth is converted to the Christian faith. There was also a degree of colonialism with its ‘Manifest Destiny’ and a racism mixed into this package as such a belief was generally associated with white people who felt it was their duty to bring God and their civilization to the rest of the world.

The Pentecostals, however, were adamant in their preference for the transcendent work of God in the eschaton.<sup>67</sup> Yet, they also understood the vital role of humans in the inauguration of the end of history. As we insisted earlier, the early Pentecostals were not Fundamentalists. Gerald Sheppard’s paper, “Pentecostalism and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship” presents the case that Pentecostals did not begin with a Fundamentalist dispensational eschatology but only moved towards the adoption, such a theological system in the 1930’s.<sup>68</sup> Such a capitulation was essentially complete by the 1950’s.<sup>69</sup> The earliest statements of faith written by Pentecostals included short statements on their belief in the “blessed hope” of the return of Christ and the resurrection, as well as the “millennial reign” of Jesus, but had no mention of the rapture or tribulation. Peter Althouse writes, “The emphasis in Pentecostal eschatology was not on the apocalyptic destruction of the world for those not taken in the Rapture, but on ‘a final glorious revelation and outpouring of the Spirit in the

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<sup>66</sup> Justo L. Gustavo, *The Story of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1985), p. 360.

<sup>67</sup> Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, pp. 80-84.

<sup>68</sup> Gerald T. Sheppard, “Pentecostalism and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship,” *Pneuma* 2 (2), p. 5-34.

<sup>69</sup> Peter Althouse, “‘Left Behind’ – Fact or Fiction: Ecumenical Dilemmas of the Fundamentalist Millenarian Tensions within Pentecostalism,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13 (2), p. 197; *Spirit of the Last Days*, p. 187.

last days.”<sup>70</sup> As Jacobsen writes, “while eschatological expectations provided the backdrop for the revival, eschatology was never the main theme. [...] eschatology was not the core message.”<sup>71</sup> In addition, William Seymour’s own book was silent on the issue of eschatology beyond reference to the latter rain.<sup>72</sup>

Althouse also brings attention to the fact that the dispensational interpretation of history illegitimizes the quintessential Pentecostal doctrine of the return of tongues speaking as a sign of the end times. According to the dispensationalists, Old Testament prophecies and promises do not apply to the ‘hidden’ church age, thus invalidating the Pentecostal claim to the prophecies in Joel regarding the last outpouring of the Spirit in the last days. Nevertheless, as Althouse notes, “in 1935 [...] the executive Presbytery of the Assemblies of God officially enforced a pre-tribulation Rapture doctrine on their ministers and read this back into the ‘Fundamental Truths’ retrospectively.”<sup>73</sup>

Early Pentecostals did not use the same eschatology popular in Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism today and were free from the problematic implications it has for social justice. Unfortunately there were too many other factors involved for this young movement to formulate their own eschatology and by the second generation, those who wished to align themselves with the Fundamentalists, rather than do the labour of developing their own theological program, gained control of the movement. Such an approach did eventually help in bringing a form of uneasy unity and peace between the two adversaries, but in retrospect, it came at a high cost.

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<sup>70</sup> Althouse, “Left Behind,” p. 197; Sheppard, “Pentecostalism,” p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, p. 81. Jacobsen notes that eschatology received very little attention in The Azusa Mission’s *Apostolic Faith* periodical. Like many other early Pentecostal works, Seymour’s book *Doctrines and Discipline* was silent on the issue of eschatology.

<sup>72</sup> Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, p. 81

<sup>73</sup> Althouse, “Left Behind,” p. 198.

### The Latter Rain and the Kingdom of God

The early Pentecostals thought their movement to be God's prophesized method to bring in the harvest before the end. Though such a latter rain view eventually faded from prominence in Pentecostal self-description, the theology of the involvement of humanity in God's transcendent eschatological work is important. Such a concept can be understood as a theology of the participation of humanity in the coming of the Kingdom, exactly what is needed for a Pentecostal theology of social justice.

In order to incorporate such a Kingdom theology, the premillennial return of Christ is not rejected, but it is accompanied by the belief that before the return of Christ, God works through his believers for his kingdom purposes, both the salvation of individuals and the restoration of the planet and its social systems. Some prominent Pentecostals have begun to realize that human involvement in the development of the Kingdom of God in the present is not anathema to the faith. It is not simply switching to the liberal camp. The leader of the Four Square Gospel Church, Jack Hayford tells of his experience of realizing the implications of Jesus' prayer, "Thy Kingdom come..."

I thought these words were a prayer for the future – for the "someday" when Christ will come again and exercise his perfect Kingdom on earth [...] here is the distinction I had failed to recognize: that Jesus intended *Thy kingdom come* to be upon our lips not for His future Kingdom, but in intercessory prayer for this present era of the Church's ministry.<sup>74</sup>

Though Hayford's remark represents an important step forward, it is hoped that Pentecostals can learn to take this beyond intercessory prayer and into the world. In order to create a Pentecostal theology of social justice, there is a degree of 'unlearning' that

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<sup>74</sup> Jack W. Hayford, *The Church on the Way* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1983), p. 85

must be done. Stepping back and considering the early emphases of the Pentecostal founders is a good place to start.

It is possible to appropriate the early Pentecostal concept of the latter rain to today's current cultural setting, and extend the implications of the outpouring of the Spirit to include a holistic understanding of the Spirit's work in the world. The argument is as follows: Jesus' mission was the proclamation of the arrival and the coming of the Kingdom of God for which the Spirit had commissioned. That mission involves social justice, as seen in Luke 4:18, 19, which is 'transferred' to the Church. The proclamation of the Kingdom, which involves social action, is consequently the mission of the Church. The latter rain is the final outpouring of the Spirit before the return of Christ. Therefore the latter rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days, then, is an outpouring of Spirit empowerment for social action.

Pentecostals, to be true to their own heritage and the demand of the biblical witness, need to reinvigorate the early concept that Seymour preached of the cancellation of the old ways. Racism, inequality, prejudice and violence must be negated as the Spirit arrives. However, from this historical point of view, Pentecostals must recognize, as the early church did, the dialectical tensions involved in eschatology. Jesus is coming soon, but, as Pentecostals have learned, that does not necessarily mean he will come in the next few calendar days. Now, a hundred years old, Pentecostals must swallow their pride and recognize that they were not the literal Latter Rain in a chronological sense. Nor must they simply abandon the old notion of the Latter Rain. There is still great value in that Latter Rain self-understanding if it is linked to the concept of the inaugurated and growing Kingdom of God. The challenge here is not to ratify or reject an early

Pentecostal theological position. Their early self understanding was flexible and adaptable to their situation and it would be a great benefit to North American Pentecostals if they could regain some of that flexibility. It can be maintained that the Spirit is poured out on all flesh in the last days for the purpose of empowerment for mission, yet we have been within the last days for two millennia.

### **Challenges**

This section will outline a few challenges that Pentecostalism faces in the application of such a theology of social justice. Since Pentecostalism is heavily influenced by Evangelicalism it is appropriate to examine evangelical views of the Kingdom of God and then compare them to the official position paper on ‘The Kingdom of God’ of the Assemblies of God USA. This will reveal both a similarity with the evangelical views, as well as reveal an inadequate understanding of the holistic Kingdom of God. Not only is denominational Pentecostalism influenced by evangelical and Fundamentalist eschatologies, but the laity are heavily influenced through popular media-based forms of indoctrination.

#### Fundamentalist and Evangelical Views of the Kingdom

The dispensationalist thinking of the Fundamentalists placed the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God in the future. Since their theology was accented by emphasizing the sharp distinctions between the dispensations in history, little attention was given to the Kingdom in the present age beyond an agreement with Luther of a spiritual Kingdom

of those who follow the authority of God, a Kingdom which did not interfere with the secular realm. The restoration of this planet was left entirely for the next dispensation.

In the 1940's the new evangelicals updated this theology with a greater emphasis on the present and inaugurated Kingdom of God. Figures such as the highly lauded evangelical leader Carl F.H. Henry advanced a theology of 'the already, but not yet,' and marked the beginning of the end of the dispensationalist dominance of the broader Evangelicalism in North America. There was a blurring, they argued, between the periods in history and that it would be biblically irresponsible to differentiate the Bible into sections rendering parts inapplicable for today. The most important blurring was of the future into the present world. The Kingdom of God was already inaugurated, yet awaits full completion at the eschaton.

Henry serves as a fitting example of this point of view. He accepted Karl Barth's proclamation that the Kingdom of God is already here, though not yet. In an article written in 1992 entitled "Reflections on the Kingdom of God," Henry quotes Barth.

The *basileia* is here, and yet it is not here; it is revealed, yet it is also hidden; it is present, but always future; it is at hand, indeed in the very midst, yet it is constantly expected, being still, and this time seriously, the object of petition: Thy Kingdom Come.<sup>75</sup>

The teaching of Jesus and his demonstration of power through his miracles were "manifestations of the inbreaking Kingdom of God."<sup>76</sup> Yet he makes a significant effort to remove this from any possible earthly interpretation. Henry was concerned with the 'Manifest Destiny' idea of too closely associating the Kingdom of God with an earthly

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<sup>75</sup> Karl. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T and T. Clark, 1958), 3.3.156; quoted in Carl F.H. Henry, "Reflections on the Kingdom of God," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 (1), p. 40.

<sup>76</sup> Henry, "Reflections," p. 41.

political agenda.<sup>77</sup> Christian legislation, as far as Henry is concerned, is not bringing in the Kingdom of God, yet he was also concerned that Fundamentalism had gone too far in their retreat from society.

Henry rightly responded to the American Fundamentalist's theology that places the accent on the transcendent work of God to the negation of participation in healing the social structures. He wished to take into account the Biblical accounts where the Kingdom of God is described as already among us. However, in his insistence on transcendence and the culmination of the Kingdom at the eschaton, he removed any need for meaningful work towards the restoration of the planet and its social structures. "The task of the Church," Henry unequivocally stated, "simply is not that of salvaging a world that insists on dying in its sins."<sup>78</sup> The advancement of the Kingdom of God is thus focused on the spiritual realm. Though he gave a brief nod to competent political involvement, overall it has no long term or spiritual significance. Henry rejected the idea of any preservation of progress made towards the Kingdom of God in the eschatological Kingdom of God. To Henry, and most evangelicals in general, they are distinct. Henry wrote:

Sporadic victories over injustice in the historical order, welcome and commendable as they are, are less continuous with the transcendent justice in the approximations of divine justice that revisable statute law encapsulates than in what it disavows and repudiates.<sup>79</sup>

Essentially, the greater role of the church is not to reform society, but to continually be in condemnation of it. Henry insisted, "God's people must expose the world's pretentious assumptions, must indicate whence these flawed premises come and whither they lead,

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<sup>77</sup> Henry, "Reflections," p. 47.

<sup>78</sup> Henry, "Reflections," p. 47.

<sup>79</sup> Henry, "Reflections," p. 48.

must counter them with the sovereign Lord's revealed truth."<sup>80</sup> It appears that though he expresses a commendation for social justice work, Henry is still content with leaving the work of justice to God at the end of history and in the interim; it is the vocation of Christians, rather, to proclaim and defend abstract theological propositions. Bringing in the Kingdom of God is something in which humans have no part.<sup>81</sup> Though Henry's inaugurated eschatology was a great leap forward for systematic theology, when it came to social justice, the same dispensational categories remained.

Pentecostalism has been heavily influenced by this concept of the Kingdom of God and its benign approach to the present situation of human suffering and injustice. Its overemphasis on the transcendence of God and condemnation and separation from 'the world' as the role of the Christian appears to reflect little of Jesus' mission to the poor and disinherited as we examined above. Moreover, Henry aggressively condemned movements such as liberation theology which maintain a human role in the coming Kingdom of God. Henry appears to have a 'wait out the Kingdom and proclaim the truth' eschatological approach which has disastrous effects for social justice. To his credit, Henry also insisted that the Gospel included "the seed of human dignity and freedom."<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, though the gospel brings human dignity and freedom to individuals, it plays no role in the development of justice in the social order. Such justice is limited to the eschatological Kingdom.

Jürgen Moltmann's work, *The Coming of God* attempts to understand the popular compulsion towards premillennial views and suggests that they are, in part, a form of

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<sup>80</sup> Henry, "Reflections," p. 48.

<sup>81</sup> Henry, "Reflections," p. 49.

<sup>82</sup> Carl Henry, *Christianity Today* 19 (20) p. 65. Quoted in Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology Vol. 2* (Peabody: Prince Press, 1998), p. 168.

protest against the sinful world.<sup>83</sup> They serve as a condemnation of the current social structures and a demand for a new beginning. Many in liberal democratic societies have a justifiable suspicion of the possibility of totalitarianism in unified world or religious movements. The problem of sin in the world, many evangelicals feel, requires a much more drastic, apocalyptic response. The danger, however, is that they are too often reduced and secularized to a cataclysmic destruction of the planet. The spiritual significance of the ‘Battle of Armageddon,’ for instance, is overshadowed by the expectation of the downward spiral of history. Social and ecological destruction becomes permissible and synonymous with the apocalypse, rather than the things which bring about that apocalypse. Moltmann writes, “Anyone who talks here about “the apocalypse” or the Battle of Armageddon is providing a religious interpretation for mass human crime, and is trying to make God responsible for what human beings are doing.”<sup>84</sup> Though such premillenarianism begins as a protest against a dominant hegemony and a demand for an absolute change of order, it ends up supporting that oppressive order through a passive escapist expectation and possible participation in the destruction of the earth and its social structures. Canadian Pentecostal scholar Peter Althouse summarizes this well.

Instead of standing in solidarity with those who suffer and opposing the ungodly powers, they represent an escape from this world. An escapist mentality in the face of apocalyptic destruction will not lead to the new kingdom, but is an apocalypse without hope.<sup>85</sup>

Sadly, North American Pentecostalism reflects this same Fundamentalist approach to both eschatology and the Kingdom of God.

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<sup>83</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 203.

<sup>84</sup> Moltmann, *Coming of God...* p. 203.

<sup>85</sup> Peter Althouse, “‘Left Behind’ – Fact or Fiction: Ecumenical Dilemmas of the Fundamentalist Millenarian Tensions within Pentecostalism,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13 (2), p. 191.

### Assemblies of God Position on ‘The Kingdom of God’

An example of how North American Pentecostalism prefers the evangelical route over an exploration of a Pentecostal theological approach to social justice is seen in the Assemblies of God, USA position paper on the ‘Kingdom of God.’ On occasion, the AG releases position papers asserting their doctrinal position as various issues arise. The items on the list of papers include statements on personal morality issues such as gambling, abstinence of alcohol, and divorce. Other papers are released to settle doctrinal conflicts, such as apostles and prophets, creationism, eternal punishment, ordination of women, and even transcendental meditation.<sup>86</sup> Among the twenty-three diverse position papers listed on their webpage is a paper on ‘The Kingdom of God,’ likely triggered by the more recent theological musings on the Kingdom of God by mainline denominations.

The position paper defines the Kingdom of God as “the sphere of God’s rule” yet in an attempt to avoid postmillennialism, the paper avoids any connection of the Kingdom of God to social change created by the work for justice by humans. Rather, the Kingdom of God is described, in spiritual terms, as caught in a celestial battle between time categories. It reads,

The interim between the first and second advents of Christ (the present age) is marked by violent confrontation between the power of the Kingdom and the power that dominates the world in this present age. Divine conflict with the demonic characterizes the present era. It is the era of conflict as well as the era of the Spirit. Believers must engage the forces of darkness.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Assemblies of God USA website*, Position Papers and other Statements [on-line] available from [http://ag.org/top/beliefs/position\\_papers/index.cfm](http://ag.org/top/beliefs/position_papers/index.cfm); Internet; accessed 25 January, 2006. n.p.

<sup>87</sup> “The Kingdom of God as Described in Holy Scripture” *Assemblies of God USA website*, Position Papers and other Statements (Jan. 25, 2006)[on-line] available from [http://ag.org/top/beliefs/position\\_papers/index.cfm](http://ag.org/top/beliefs/position_papers/index.cfm); Internet; accessed 25 January 2006. n.p.

The vestiges of Fundamentalist dispensationalism are evident. The paper articulates that the decisive battle is already won, but the reality of the “ultimate Kingdom is qualified.”<sup>88</sup> The absence of the complete Kingdom is then employed to explain why the aging process still occurs and why we are victim to “natural law.” One statement about social justice is included. “Righteous political and social actions are important, but the main thrust of the Kingdom is the spiritual transformation of individuals who make up the body of Christ. The millennium and the ultimate expression of the Kingdom will not come without the physical return of Jesus Christ to the earth.”<sup>89</sup> Such can be accepted as true, yet this statement appears to use such a transcendent theology in a negative way to discourage social action. The statement thus provides a slight nod toward good works, but is really a reminder that they are futile with respect to the return of Christ.

One phrase in the paper, however, shows a kernel of understanding of the holistic Kingdom of God. Though it is in direct reference to spiritual healing, it is still a remarkable statement for such a Pentecostal position paper. “We do not give in to the ravages of evil; we do not give up the fight. As instruments of the Kingdom in this present age, we faithfully battle against evil and suffering.”<sup>90</sup> Despite the initial potential of such a statement, it unfortunately becomes exhausted in the language of spiritual warfare. It continues:

Biblical charismata, anointed proclamation of the Word, and confirming signs and wonders are distinguishing marks of the kingdom of God at work now. The kingdom of Satan has already been invaded by Jesus in the power of the Spirit (John 16:11; Colossians 1:13, 2:15). Yet final destruction of Satan and complete victory over all evil is part of a future eschatological consummation (Revelation 20:10).<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> “The Kingdom of God as Described in Holy Scripture.”

<sup>89</sup> “The Kingdom of God as Described in Holy Scripture.”

<sup>90</sup> “The Kingdom of God as Described in Holy Scripture.”

<sup>91</sup> “The Kingdom of God as Described in Holy Scripture.”

The ground work is already present in Pentecostal theology but it requires the application of such Kingdom theology to the material world and the release of their concept of the Kingdom from its captivity to spiritual warfare and supernatural signs and wonders. This position paper reveals a narrow view of the advancement or building of the Kingdom of God as it states that, “the Kingdom comes in a measure whenever a person receives Christ as Savior, is healed or delivered, or is touched in any way by the divine.”<sup>92</sup> On the surface it appears that this does not leave room for the Kingdom of God coming through the provision of food and healthcare, or the creation of more equitable and just social systems. Since the paper states that, “preoccupation with life's basic necessities indicates little faith,” it appears to suggest that the authors are intending to persuade the reader away from material applications of the Kingdom. It can be agreed that such a preoccupation may indicate a little faith, but we must also consider the negative consequences if one has a preoccupation with the spiritual needs as well.

Though AG Pentecostals, such as Douglas Petersen and Murray Dempster have written some excellent theological work on social justice, it has still not significantly impacted the official doctrinal stances of the Assemblies of God. Nevertheless, this position paper reveals that the theological ground work for inaugurated eschatology has been sufficiently laid, however, the application of the theology remains limited to metaphysical aspects such as spiritual warfare and supernatural healing. It has yet to be connected with social justice.

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<sup>92</sup> “The Kingdom of God as Described in Holy Scripture.”

### Social Justice Left Behind?

One hurdle in the development of not only a Pentecostal theology of social justice, but also of a Pentecostal eschatology itself is the popularity of dispensationalist eschatology repackaged for 21<sup>st</sup> century North American culture. The best example of this is the *Left Behind* series of novels and films. Since Pentecostalism is, overall, a popular movement with no authoritative theological leadership structures, popular means of disseminating theology is very effective within their ranks.<sup>93</sup> All the hallmarks of the most Fundamentalist approach to eschatology are included in the *Left Behind* fictional narratives.<sup>94</sup> Since the film version includes special effects and violent scenes which titillate viewers while influencing their theological views, it makes for an incredible challenge for non-dispensationalist theologians. The series condemns the ecumenical movement, international networks such as the United Nations, claims Catholics (especially the Pope) are guided by the antichrist and displays an inevitable downward spiral of history. If anything, the series makes it clear, as Althouse states, “that political solutions to the world’s social, economic, political and environmental problems are hopeless.”<sup>95</sup>

Such pop-eschatological works serve as a distraction from legitimate issues such as social justice and even evangelism. Christian book stores are flooded with materials that attempt to decode history, and as Noll writes, “use the Bible as a crystal ball instead of as a guide for sorting out the complex tangles of international morality.”<sup>96</sup> Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to determine how such popular influences can be

<sup>93</sup> Althouse, “Left Behind,” p. 189.

<sup>94</sup> John R. Yeatts, “The Fictionalizing of Fundamentalist Eschatology” *Brethren in Christ History and Life* 24 (1), pp. 109-126.

<sup>95</sup> Althouse, “Left Behind,” p. 188.

<sup>96</sup> Noll, *Scandal*, p. 140.

countered, it is important to note that on that quest for a theology of social justice, they are a prime adversary far beyond the halls of academic circles which suggests that social justice is unimportant. It is impossible to over-estimate the influence that pop-fiction based pop-eschatology has over Pentecostal lay people. They will not live with a void where a theology of social justice should be. If it is not filled with a thoughtful and biblically based theology of the human responsibility to each other and to the planet, then they will develop a theology from whatever sources they have, including popular eschatology. A *Left Behind* approach to theology truly thrusts Pentecostalism into the ‘backwaters of religiosity’ and makes it guilty of Robert Anderson’s charge that Pentecostals support the status quo, while leaving vitally important issues far behind.

### **Conclusion**

I submit that Pentecostal theology must make the following changes. First, Pentecostals must understand that the true mission of the Church is not solely evangelism, but the proclamation of the Kingdom of God which includes both evangelism and efforts toward social justice that fosters human wholeness. Second, Pentecostals must understand that premillennial eschatology does not negate social action. Conversely, any progress made will be accepted, preserved and purified at the second advent. The New Testament does not claim that the present earth will be annihilated, but it will be restored and renewed. The work towards social justice is not a waste of resources but has lasting value and plays a part in the renewal of the planet. Third, if the above is accepted, Pentecostals must be consistent with the charismatic theology and apply their charismatically driven efforts towards social action as they would evangelism or healing.

In this chapter we outlined the biblical foundations for a Kingdom of God based theology of social justice. Using Jesus' baptism, inaugural temple reading and subsequent teaching and ministry we were able to determine that social justice was a vital part of Jesus' mission. Using Stronstad's charismatic theology of the transfer of the Spirit, it was argued that the Church's mission is synonymous with Christ's mission, thus social justice is not only important for the Church, but within its very 'mission.' It was suggested that the rubric of the Kingdom of God gives theological significance to meaningful positive social change and that such efforts and progress made by noble, Spirit-guided human work towards justice will be preserved and transformed and accepted into the new creation. Believers are the *avant-garde* whose role is to be the people of the new way, acting as agents in the building of the Kingdom, though within a premillennial eschatological system.

It was argued that early Pentecostal eschatology avoided some of the problems of Fundamentalist dispensationalism and was flexible enough to include a transformational view of the world through their theology of the glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days. Such a potential was eventually eclipsed by Fundamentalist eschatology which is a significant present challenge for Pentecostals. Such a challenge was discussed including the popular, though theologically influential *Left Behind* fictional series which provides a modern platform for the presentation of Fundamentalist ideas which causes a significant set back in the work of social justice.

By reflecting on the biblical demand for social justice as mission, as well as re-examining Pentecostal history and theology, there is potential to create a vibrant

Pentecostal theology of social justice which understands it to be within the mission of the Church.

## CHAPTER 5 KINGDOM-BASED PENTECOSTAL MISSIOLOGY

### Introduction

In this chapter we will examine the possibility of developing a Pentecostal missiology that is Spirit-centered and both proclaims and participates in the coming of the Kingdom of God. We will also explore how Pentecostal spirituality can be a resource towards social action. To conclude our study, a sampling of current Canadian Pentecostal missiology will be examined which reveals a concern for social welfare, but refrains from making 'Kingdom based' social justice part of the mission of the church. We will then briefly look at a case that serves as an example of Pentecostal lay movements that are, perhaps unwittingly, putting the Kingdom of God into the mission of the Church. The passion and energy is present, but the theological leadership is not.

Missions that proclaim the Kingdom of God involve more than the announcement of information that is vital to the listeners, but has implication for the physical and spiritual, both the present and future. It contains the good news of salvation but also announces the good news that fellow humans are compassionately seeking to alleviate one's suffering and bring justice to their present circumstance. The good news then holistically involves the hope of new life and community within which one can live. Evangelist then, are not just those who announce the news, but those who actively participate in the building of more just social structures. The presentation of the 'good news to the poor' becomes more than the pronouncement of good news with respect to matters on the other side of the grave but matters greatly to this life as well.

### **The Proclamation of the Kingdom as the Mission of the Church**

The Church's mission is grounded in Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God.<sup>97</sup> Gordon Fee, has encouraged Pentecostals to reflect on the Kingdom of God as the foundation of Jesus' message, the eschaton and the ultimate norm of social justice. The mission of the Church, according to Fee, is not the conversion of unbelievers, but the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which involves conversion of unbelievers, yet is not exhausted by evangelism. Reaching back to the Abrahamic covenant, Fee understands the Kingdom of God as the fulfillment of God's statement that through Abraham, and subsequently Christ, all nations will be blessed.<sup>98</sup> Linking, as Fee and others do, social justice and the concept of the Kingdom of God with an 'already but not yet' eschatology creates a powerful impetus towards social justice. The Kingdom has both already arrived, but also still coming.

The evangelical and current Pentecostal interpretation of the Kingdom of God typically places the accent on the transcendent Kingdom. Though evangelical scholars will concur that the Kingdom of God is 'already but not yet,' this concept is generally not applied to social justice, largely due to the fact that many work with an annihilationist theology of the new earth. Consequently, the Kingdom of God concept becomes exhausted in the theology of Christ's work of redeeming humanity from the sinful offence against God. The Kingdom of God is then closely associated with the community of 'regenerate' souls and has less to do with the development of earthly justice, love and peace.

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<sup>97</sup> Gordon Fee, "The Kingdom of God and the Church's Global Mission" *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), p. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Fee, "The Kingdom of God," p. 7.

Rather than being a spiritual concept that has little connection to earthly existence, the inaugurated Kingdom theology can be considered starkly involved with this world. We must be careful not to over emphasize its transcendence however. Fee notes that the term “Kingdom of God/heaven” in the New Testament is not used as a place or a particular time, but refers to a realm or authority, just as the English word ‘kingdom’ can be used metaphorically, rather than geo-politically today.<sup>99</sup> The coming reign of God has already begun and, according to the New Testament evangelists, this is the gospel; Jesus told his followers to go forth and proclaim the Kingdom.<sup>100</sup> In fact, to miss this is to miss Jesus’ message altogether.<sup>101</sup> Through submitting to the Spirit, living out the fruits of the Spirit, working towards justice and sharing the good news of the Kingdom to the spiritually as well as economically poor, God is growing the Kingdom through us. Fee writes,

Our gospel is not simply that of “saving souls”; it is rather, as with Jesus, the bringing of wholeness to broken people in every kind of distress. Mission simply cannot be divided between “spiritual” and “physical.” To do one is to do the other, and both constitute the global mission of the church.<sup>102</sup>

An inaugurated, Kingdom-based theology allows us to avoid the trap of creating a ‘one sided Christianity’ that ignores half of Jesus’ message to the detriment of the care of God’s creation and the welfare of humanity. Fee writes, “It is *the presentness of the kingdom in Jesus* that ultimately serves as the basis for the ongoing global mission of the church.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Fee, “The Kingdom of God,” p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> Matt 10:7; Luke 10:9.

<sup>101</sup> Fee, “The Kingdom of God,” p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> Fee, “The Kingdom of God,” p. 17.

<sup>103</sup> Fee, “The Kingdom of God,” p. 11. Emphasis his.

## The Social Gospel

Having established the basis for a Pentecostal theology of social justice, one might notice that the Kingdom foundation articulated thus far has similarities with the ‘social gospel,’ a social movement from within the liberal churches especially active at the time Pentecostalism first developed. Though the aim of this thesis is not to compare the liberal social gospel with a Pentecostal theology of social justice, however, it is important now to note some basic similarities and differences between the two approaches to social justice. The two theologies have much common ground. The theology that I am advising in this thesis shares with the social gospel the identification of social justice as a vital element of the gospel. Where they differ, however, is their ‘theological location’ that is, the entire theological system from which they approach social justice. Liberals found it easier to emphasize the material because their theology was already much more focused on ‘immanence’ and, as H. Richard Niebuhr noted, “The social gospel tended to prefer to see sin as a communal thing at the expense of the individual.”<sup>104</sup> It was generally marked by a confidence in the evolutionary process and applied that to human social structures.<sup>105</sup>

In addition, the liberal understanding of religious authority employed within the social gospel also differs greatly from Pentecostalism as well as their eschatologies. Where Pentecostal social justice can incorporate the involvement of believers with God in the building of his Kingdom, the liberals understand the Kingdom coming exclusively through the immanent means of human work. Thus, Pentecostal theology is explicitly

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<sup>104</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, “The Attack upon the Social Gospel,” *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America*, ed. Ronald C. White Jr. and C. Howard Hopkins, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), 264.

<sup>105</sup> William McGuire King, “History as Revelation’ in the Theology of the Social Gospel” *Harvard Theological Review* 76 (1), p. 110-111.

premillennial while liberal theology is postmillennial or amillennial. The social gospel then, is not dependent on complex theologies that deal with the nature of the efficacy of change in the material world with relation to the second advent. In Pentecostalism such human work is a dynamic interaction between God through the Spirit and the submitting believer who together build the Kingdom. Differing from the liberal social gospel, Pentecostals believe that Christ will return regardless of human work.

What they can share, however, is the recognition that social justice was within Jesus' mission and is subsequently a vital mission of the church. Walter Rauschenbusch also understood the social gospel to be participating in the building of the Kingdom of God.<sup>106</sup> He believed that regenerated souls still play an important role in the reformation of society and is the basis for social action. Much of the social gospel can be appropriated into a Pentecostal theology of social justice without also importing the theological assumptions of Liberalism. Further reflection by Pentecostals on the social gospel would be rewarding. Sounding like an early Pentecostal, Rauschenbusch wrote, "The tongue of fire will descend on twentieth century men and give them great faith, joy and boldness, and then we shall hear the new evangel, and it will be the Old Gospel."<sup>107</sup>

Though they have vastly different theologies and originated from polar ends of the economic scale, on the theology of social justice, Pentecostals and liberals, as D. William Faupel argues, can meet as estranged but nevertheless, "fraternal twins."<sup>108</sup> The potential for ecumenical dialogue on social justice between Pentecostals and the mainline churches is immense. Faupel writes, "If the Assemblies of God can embrace its origins, it

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<sup>106</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: MacMillan, 1912).

<sup>107</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, "The New Evangelism," *The Independent* (1904). Reprint pamphlet in the Rauschenbusch papers, the American Baptist Historical Society, Rochester New York.

<sup>108</sup> Faupel, "Whither Pentecostalism," p. 941.

is well positioned to be a mediating force and an agent of renewal to the rest of Christendom.”<sup>109</sup> The concept of the Kingdom of God is a common ground where vastly different theological movements can meet and dialogue.

### The Nature of the Kingdom

We will now review some of the important aspects of the Kingdom of God theology that apply to a Pentecostal social justice theology. First, the Kingdom of God is dialectic. Second, the Kingdom of God is not restricted to the ‘inner man’ and has important, material significance. Third, the Kingdom of God is holistic and its material effects are not merely fringe benefits. Fourth, the Kingdom of God is a transcendent work of God, but also occurs through the labours of his believers.

First, Kingdom theology is dialectic; it is concurrently ‘already and not yet.’ Pentecostals can affirm, as they always have, the coming Kingdom of God at the end of the age. Christ will return and renew creation and our present history, as we know it, will come to a climactic end. Traditionally, such a view is thought to stifle social action. However, through understanding the Bible’s description that the Kingdom as both already arrived and still coming, social justice can have significance alongside evangelism. In a way, it is a ‘both / and’ between the evangelicals and the liberals. As evangelical theology maintains, the coming of Christ will usher in a new era which will bring a conclusion to this present world. However, at the same time, the future is paradoxically breaking into the present. Not only is this middle period a time when Christ has defeated evil, although some evil remains until the ‘Day of the Lord,’ the

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<sup>109</sup> Faupel, “Restorationist Vision,” p. 941.

Kingdom of God, in an earthly and literal sense, has arrived and is amongst us.<sup>110</sup> Fee writes, “the future is not something new; it is merely the consummation of what Jesus already began through his ministry, and finally and especially through his death and resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit. Thus, the kingdom, though still future, is already ‘at hand.’”<sup>111</sup>

Second, the Kingdom of God is not just a spiritual concept but has important material implications. The Kingdom at the eschaton will mean the restoration of complete justice and equality along with expulsion of sin. Poverty, racism, disease, suffering, sexism, and violence all will end at the consummation of the Kingdom.<sup>112</sup> However, as each of these evils is fought against before that time, the Kingdom of God grows much like Jesus’ proverbial mustard seed. When someone is convicted of their sin and repents, the Kingdom of God on earth grows. Equally, when a law is passed that protects the voiceless, or when humans intervene to meet needs and alleviate suffering and promote justice and peace, the Kingdom of God grows. In the New Testament image of Jesus eating with the sinners and outcasts, the great banquet at the end of the age had already begun.<sup>113</sup>

Any action that is taken to increase earthly justice and to protect and embrace the poor are steps towards co-creating the Kingdom with God. As the Spirit resides in believers they become the body of Christ, the hands through which God is growing his kingdom. This does not mean the Kingdom is humanly created, but that humans participate in God’s growing of the Kingdom on earth. The arrival of the Kingdom is still

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<sup>110</sup> Luke 17:21 is an often quoted passage which reveals that in Jesus’ consciousness, the Kingdom was had arrived.

<sup>111</sup> Fee, “The Kingdom of God,” p.12.

<sup>112</sup> Isaiah 65: 17-25; Rev 21:1-7.

<sup>113</sup> Fee, “The Kingdom of God,” p.11.

a transcendental act of God, which, dialectically, involves human agents. Thus Pentecostals can agree with Julio de Santa Ana, a Uruguayan Methodist and director of the World Council of Churches (WCC) ‘Commission on the Church’s Participation in Development,’ as he writes, “No human effort that moves towards the realities of love, justice, and truth, which Christians can identify with God’s Kingdom, can be outside the boundaries of God’s activity.”<sup>114</sup> Pentecostals often associate their missiological thinking towards determining what God is doing and where the Spirit is already at work. The work towards social justice should not be considered divorced from such Holy Spirit work. Rodger C. Bassham, also from the WCC, suggests such a pneumatological approach to social justice. “The church’s mission arises out of God’s mission to the world. [...] The movements for justice, peace, liberation and humanization may also be seen as evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in people’s lives.”<sup>115</sup> The Spirit can be considered at work in the redemption of the planet and human relationships. “God’s rule has come present in Jesus to free people from *all* the tyrannies of Satan’s rule, to bring ‘release to the captives’ in every imaginable way.”<sup>116</sup> Such actions are not wasted efforts, but will be accepted as valuable, purified and integrated into the coming Kingdom at Christ’s return.

Third, Jesus’ concept of the Kingdom of God is a holistic approach to humanity and is not burdened by a dualistic concept of reality. The proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom to the poor refers to, as Fee states, the poor in every sense of the word.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Julio de Santa Ana, “The Mission of the Church in a World Torn Between Poor and Rich” *International Review of Mission*. 72 (2), p. 22.

<sup>115</sup> Rodger C. Bassham, *Mission Theology: 1948-1975 Years of Worldwide Creative Tension – Ecumenical, Evangelical and Roman Catholic*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979), pp.334-335.

<sup>116</sup> Fee, “The Kingdom of God,” p.13.

<sup>117</sup> Fee, “The Kingdom of God,” p.17.

It is equally wrong to reduce it to the economically poor as it is to reducing it to spiritually poor. The gospels record that Jesus lived out such a holistic approach to humanity as he seamlessly met spiritual needs as well as physical needs.<sup>118</sup> It is the task of his followers to do likewise and be proclaimers of good news to the poor of every kind and not possess a prejudice against one kind of need as is often done in current evangelical and Pentecostal missions.

Equally so, in a biblical worldview, evidenced by the attention Jesus gave to material matters, this life is no less important than the life to come. Christian theology must resist the temptation to use a platonic anthropology that understands the bodily and the physical world to be mere disposable tools for the spirit which is true reality.<sup>119</sup> The New Testament does not reflect the concept that this present reality is merely a brief training period before the real world beyond physical death. The material matters as much as the spiritual.

Fourth, the complete Kingdom of God which brings justice and restoration to all humanity is a transcendent work of God which has begun with Christ and continues through his followers. It did not come as expected, with “‘great signs to be observed’ but was present in weakness, in the humiliation of [Jesus’] incarnation.”<sup>120</sup> Those in Jesus’ time expected the Kingdom of God as an earthly political revolutionary; they were disappointed. It came through someone who cared for, fed and healed and encouraged

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<sup>118</sup> Fee also notes that throughout the OT piety is expressed as ‘pleading the case of the poor’ and ‘unrighteousness denounced in similar terms.’ “The Kingdom of God,” p.17; an injustice is done to the Bible if all the spiritual elements are removed, but Pentecostals must come to the realization that to spiritualize the Bible and remove the political/physical elements is equally a violence against the text.

<sup>119</sup> Clark H. Pinnock provides a convincing argument in his chapter of *Most Moved Mover* entitled, “Overcoming a Pagan Inheritance.” The philosophical dualism from the Hellenist influences is deep in Western Christian theology. This is far beyond the scope of this paper, but an important study could be done on how dualistic philosophy has a negative impact on Western Christianities concept of social justice. *Most Moved Mover* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), pp. 65-111.

<sup>120</sup> Fee, “The Kingdom of God,” p.11.

and defended, lifted up and died for his neighbours. Likewise, the continued growth of the mustard seed of the Kingdom will never become synonymous with a political power. Yet through any acts towards justice, peace and love the Kingdom grows. It calls political powers to account and defends the dignity of all of God's children, converted or not. The complete consummation of the Kingdom will not come until Jesus returns, but until then, that same future Kingdom is growing in the present and bringing release to captives of political oppression, poverty, injustice, and suffering. Christian believers are "people of the future," the *avant-garde* of the coming Kingdom who must equally announce John the Baptist's message that we must repent, but also Jesus' message, that the Kingdom of God is already arriving through Christian actions towards those in need, through the work for social justice.<sup>121</sup> Murray Dempster summarizes the Kingdom mission well.

From an eschatological perspective, the mission of the church is to witness to the truth that the kingdom of God, which still belongs to the future, has already broken into the present age in Jesus Christ and continues in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. From an ethical perspective, the mission of the church is to witness to the reality of what life looks like when humans respond to God's eschatological reign.<sup>122</sup>

### **Spirituality as a Resource for the Mission of Social Justice**

A Spirit-based social ethic also guards against the diminishment of theology to an active humanism as is the danger of some extreme liberal social justice methods. A focus on the Spirit likewise reminds one of the dependence on God for all social change in the

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<sup>121</sup> Fee, "The Kingdom of God," p. 16.

<sup>122</sup> Murray Dempster, "Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective," Presented at the Twenty-first Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Southeastern College, Lakeland, Florida, October 1991, p. 31; quoted in Byron Klaus, "The Holy Spirit and Mission in Eschatological Perspective: A Pentecostal Viewpoint," *Pneuma* 27 (2), p. 332.

world, yet understands that such social change can come about through human intervention as the Spirit works through believers. It involves prayer and meditation and can be involved in the worship service of a church because social action is no less a spiritual exercise. The potential of this idea was discussed at the Pentecostal-Catholic dialogue that spanned from 1990 to 1997.<sup>123</sup> There it was agreed that “transformed people are compelled by the Spirit, the Creator and Sanctifier, to transform the world in the light of the in-breaking Kingdom.”<sup>124</sup> This was certainly a remarkable step forward for Pentecostals. The two movements together noted that the early church “did not act from [an abstract] concept of social justice. The concern they showed for the poor, widows and strangers, was not seen as an entirely separate activity, but rather an extension of their worship.”<sup>125</sup> This is the challenge for contemporary North American Pentecostalism. It is important that North American Pentecostals fuse the theology of social justice into their already existing charismatic theology, rather than supplement it. Social action needs to flow from the same worship and spirituality that energizes Pentecostal missionary and evangelism work.

It is not the case that Pentecostal churches need to start acting more like the mainline churches and emphasize the church’s role in condemning unjust political structures and have more social action based programs. Rather, the challenge is to incorporate God’s demand for justice on the planet into Pentecostal spirituality and worship. As mentioned above, this was something that happened naturally in the early days of Pentecostalism. They did not have a mandate to defend the oppressed black

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<sup>123</sup> “Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: The Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue 1990 – 1997 between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Leaders,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2 (1) pp. 105-151.

<sup>124</sup> Kärkkäinen, “Spirituality as a Resource,” p. 84.

<sup>125</sup> Kärkkäinen, “Spirituality as a Resource,” p. 88.

people, or to condemn the economic system in America that caused so much poverty. Rather, they naturally resisted it as a natural extension of Pentecostal theology. In liberation theology's terms, the Pentecostals gave a voice and humanity to the dehumanized. The same things cannot be said of today's Pentecostalism in North America. The challenge for the established and increasingly 'respectable' Pentecostalism is to reincorporate a spirituality of social justice. But this is still not a restorationist vision. Though social action happened naturally in early Pentecostalism, as Pentecostalism 'matured' they failed to retain a spirituality of social concern, and neither did they create a theology to preserve their early social impulses. This must be corrected.

A charismatic theology of social justice that is intimately involved in the spiritual lives of believers has the potential to combat the compulsion towards a 'one sided Christianity.' The work of social action can benefit from an infusion of a charismatic spirituality and restore the relationship between prayer, worship and social action. Moreover, what Pentecostals have to bring to the ecumenical table in the work for social justice is a belief and practise of Spirit empowerment which is the closest connection possible between spirituality and Christian service. That kind of linkage is necessary in social action. When Pentecostals understand themselves to be empowered by the Spirit for the work of evangelism, they are clear that it is not their work, but God's work through them. It is a spiritual act, not the calculations of advertising the faith. The same emphasis is required in social action; it is God's work.

Kärkkäinen also notes that surprisingly North American Pentecostals do not apply their prayer emphasis and concept of spiritual gifts to social justice.<sup>126</sup> This is likely because Pentecostals have lost the conceptual understanding of how social justice

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<sup>126</sup> Kärkkäinen, "Are Pentecostals Oblivious," p. 425.

plays a role in the gospel of Christ. Presently, it is understood as important, but it is not clear that it is a part of the gospel. Provided with an understanding of how social action is incorporated into the gospel, which the Kingdom of God rubric can provide, Pentecostals can be free to release their charismatic energies to social justice with the same fervency they have with evangelism.

### **Canadian Pentecostal Missiology**

The PAOC is currently reflecting on its missionary emphasis and what it means to be a ‘missional church.’ As an example, I will refer to the September 2005 issue of *Testimony*, the ‘official organ’ of the PAOC, focused on this idea of the ‘missional’ church. Richard Burton, a PAOC Pastor in Ontario, describes ‘missional’ as “a term in vogue today used to describe what God requires of the church.”<sup>127</sup> Burton contrasts the missional church with the ‘historical institutional church’ that “exists for its members and depends on pastors and staff to evangelize the lost. [...] The missional church exists to take Christ to the lost and its members are personally engaged in reaching their communities with the message of Jesus Christ.”<sup>128</sup> Such reflection is necessary to resist the temptation to be an organization that exists for itself. Viewed from the outside, such internally focused churches can be hardly distinguished from various special interest clubs. Burton calls on churches to a drastic change in their approach to the mission of the church. “The objective of the churches today should be to focus beyond their four walls. Effective congregations today must undergo a paradigm shift from being insular in focus

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<sup>127</sup> Richard Burton, “Where People and the Gospel Meet” *Testimony* 86 (8), p.5.

<sup>128</sup> Burton, “Where people and the Gospel Meet,” p. 6.

to having a vision for the lost in their own communities, country and the world.”<sup>129</sup>

Burton and the PAOC wish to ensure that their fellowship is outwardly focused and rightly so.

This is certainly a worthwhile call Burton is making to his fellow Pentecostals. As he concludes, he appeals to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. “The primary purpose of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit is empowerment for service. The early church needed a supernatural empowering to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.”<sup>130</sup> Burton is clear on one point, “the purest expression of being missional” is “nonbelievers [hearing] John 3:7 ‘You must be born again.’”<sup>131</sup>

Social action is not included in the PAOC missional programme. The opening editorial of that same issue written by David Hazzard, PAOC Assistant Superintendent for Ministerial Services, is encouraging. He writes, “The Christian journey is an exciting and rewarding opportunity to partner with God in His redemptive work in His world.”<sup>132</sup> Unfortunately, Hazzard appears more concerned with God’s work outside of the natural world. He states that, “The missional church exists to share Christ with the lost, engaging each member personally in reaching their community with the good news.” It appears that the current reflection is limited to viewing missions as spiritual salvation alone, and the paradigm shift is really only a reemphasizing of the standard Pentecostal-evangelical missionary message.

By way of another example, Irving Whitt, the director of Overseas Missions at the PAOC has written a book along with Jim Craig, the PAOC archivist, entitled, *Mission*

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<sup>129</sup> Burton, “Where People and the Gospel Meet,” p. 5

<sup>130</sup> Burton, “Where People and the Gospel Meet,” p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> Burton, “Where People and the Gospel Meet,” p. 7.

<sup>132</sup> David Hazzard, “Being Missional” *The Testimony* 86 (8), p. 4. He is quoting an author without citation.

*Philosophy* which summarizes the PAOC's approach to world missions. One area of concern is that Whitt and Craig rely heavily on Reformed Missiologists Charles Van Engen and Darrell L. Guder with no reference to the monumental Pentecostal work, *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*. Van Engen and Guder take the remnant position by placing the accent in missions on being a social witness. Social welfare is included, but its purpose is to reveal compassion and love "as an open invitation for those outside the Kingdom to enter."<sup>133</sup>

In the book the authors sketch out twelve key characteristics of a missional church. The second characteristic catches our attention in this study. "The missional church is holistic."<sup>134</sup> They write, "missional churches do not treat humans as disembodied souls but engage them as whole persons in the context of life. The missional church expresses the passions of God in all of the theatres of its culture whether that culture is willing to acknowledge the kingdom truth or not."<sup>135</sup> This statement is as far as they are willing to go in the direction of social justice theology, though it is still an important step in the right direction. It is unclear the extent to which the work towards justice in the social order is included in this "engaging people as whole persons in the context of life." It is fortunate, however, that this characteristic mentions that the church must "express the passions of God" whether they acknowledge Christian truth or not. Such is certainly the case for social action since it is not limited to those inside the community of the church.

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James D. Craig and Irving A. Whitt, *The Theology and Philosophy of Missions* (Mississauga: PAOC, 2004), My source was a print out of the material from this book from the PAOC archives, pagination may differ from the printed version), p. 102

<sup>134</sup> Jim Craig and Irving Whitt, "Missional Church" *The Testimony* 86 (8), p. 14.

<sup>135</sup> Craig, "Missional Church," p. 14.

Nevertheless, the vagueness of this characteristic is indicative of the Pentecostal inclination to keep social justice out of the mission of the church. It is acceptable that we not treat people like ‘disembodied souls’ but to say that the mission of the church involves the delivery of justice to those in need within this social order, as Jesus did, is often too much to ask. Moreover, the context of Whitt and Craig’s need for holistic ministry, is the cultural consideration of postmodernism. They write,

The postmodern world view gravitates towards a wholistic view of humanity. Postmodern people are concerned about the soul, the mind and the body of a person. Do we have compassion for physical hunger as well as spiritual hunger? [...] The missional church expresses the passions of God in all of the theatres of its culture whether that culture is willing to acknowledge the Kingdom truth or not.<sup>136</sup>

Unfortunately, the authors do not expand on this holistic section enough to really understand their basis for social welfare. Is it truly on the basis of adapting to postmodern culture as they appear to suggest, or because it is concomitant with the gospel?

Though Whitt and Craig define the Kingdom of God as separate from the church, they have a very close relationship in their theology. They write,

The church represents the reign of God by incarnating the life and values of the Kingdom in its community, by doing good works of compassion in the midst of the world’s brokenness and by proclaiming the arrival of God’s Kingdom and inviting humanity to enter into its life and blessings.<sup>137</sup>

The blessings of the Kingdom are thus enjoyed upon entry into the community of believers. Social welfare is then a demonstration of the compassion of the community, but still outside of the mission of the church. Nevertheless, such an inclusion of social welfare into a theology of mission is a sign of hope and a step in the right direction. It is

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<sup>136</sup> Whitt, *The Theology and Philosophy*, p. 104.

<sup>137</sup> Whitt, *The Theology and Philosophy*, p. 102.

my hope that further reflection and development of a theology of social justice will lead to the inclusion of social action in the mission of the church.

The September 2005 issue of the *Testimony* also included an article entitled “Building Community” by Sue Carlisle which describes the ‘Community Connection’ mission she and her church are involved in which meets physical needs of the poor in Toronto. In the article Carlisle interviews Jonathan Smith, the director of the program who describes the mission efforts of the bus ministry which delivers and serves food, helps children with school supplies and connects immigrants with volunteers who help them with their ESL classes among other things.<sup>138</sup> It is remarkable that there is no attempt to justify the social welfare with the greater goal being conversion. Though he mentions how the inner city churches are growing, he is primarily elated by the growing sense of community they are helping to build. Through his expression of his hope for changed communities, and not simply through conversion, he reveals his interest in social action. Sue, a lay volunteer with the organization, summarizes Christian missions better than any of her national or district leaders and has caught the essence of the point I wish to make in this thesis. “The volunteers involved in Community Connections are putting the gospel into practice. They love their neighbours as themselves, and in doing so they connect human hands with each other and connect human hearts with the Savior.”<sup>139</sup>

Though the bus mission is primarily social welfare, it also contains a powerful element of social action. The focus is not entirely on the meeting of immediate physical needs but also on the building of community. Social change is a result as those in need of

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<sup>138</sup> Sue Carlisle, “Building Community” *The Testimony* 86 (8), p. 11.

<sup>139</sup> Carlisle, “Building Community,” p.11.

the ministry also begin to volunteer with it and help each other in their own community. Though they may not speak in such terms, Community Connections is building solidarity with the poor in urban Toronto. Community building is far beyond providing someone with food because of a moral obligation to do so. The large Agincourt Pentecostal Church sponsors the program, but also plants and helps the development of smaller urban churches right in their place of need. Burton and Hazzard's emphasis on conversion and Whitt's concept of inviting people into the Kingdom miss the point. Smith's work, and others like it, are bringing the Kingdom of God to these people, not as a method to get them converted, but because they are loved and thus the gospel is provided, shared and demonstrated. It could be said that conversion is a byproduct of the building of the Kingdom, not the reverse.<sup>140</sup>

With such an approach to missions Pentecostals can truly approach humanity holistically and bring them the 'full' gospel. In ministries such as these throughout North America is the hope for Pentecostal social justice. Such an approach needs a theological articulation and doctrinal formation in order to get such an approach into the 'bloodstream' of Pentecostalism. The tools are there. Early Pentecostal history provides a deep well to draw from, the ecumenism of early Pentecostalism is another we have not explored in great detail. Pentecostalism needs to first turn to their own resources to determine what it is they are, and what they believe, and then bring it to the ecumenical table for dialogue and discussion. Such an approach is likely to be far more fruitful than categorizing themselves under the leadership and guidance of another movement. Moreover, the theological thinking on Pentecostal social justice has been brewing over the past two decades, yet the denominational structures appear to have little interest in

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<sup>140</sup> Fee, "The Kingdom of God," p. 13.

tasting. Also, as with Smith's bus ministry, there are *avant-gardes* within Pentecostalism leading the way to new places, Pentecostals would do well to listen.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

The early Pentecostal movement had tremendous social implications, especially regarding race and economic class animosities. The urgent sense of Premillennialism of the early Pentecostals unfortunately distracted them from further theological development on these social implications and averted the development of Pentecostal thinking about social action.

Vehemently rejected by the Fundamentalists, the Pentecostals equally rejected the Fundamentalist dispensational interpretation of the Bible, their belief in the cessation of the charismata, and their over all dogmatic and rigid approach to theology. Despite this early rejection of Fundamentalism alongside Liberalism, Pentecostals became wary of the liberal option in an increasingly polarized society and felt a centrifugal pull to the right of the political spectrum and towards Fundamentalism. Pentecostal distinctives were subsequently toned down as they became influenced by Fundamentalism; a movement that offered no reciprocation and maintained their rejection of Pentecostalism as a dangerous cult.

Pentecostals rose among the economic classes after the Second World War and further shied away from their revivalist and experiential excesses. The new evangelicals were those dissatisfied with Fundamentalism and thus stepped out of its ranks to seek a softer, positive approach to theology. This new approach was illustrated by their offer of fellowship with the Pentecostals, lifting them from years of isolation and rejection.

Despite the evangelicals having express interest in 'Cooperation without compromise,' the inclusion of Pentecostalism within Evangelicalism had a tremendous

influence on Pentecostal theology. Pentecostal theology began to mirror evangelical theology. Distinctives such as the latter rain fell into obscurity among Pentecostal leaders.

Official denominational Pentecostalism is heavily influenced by evangelical theology. Since Evangelicalism arose from Fundamentalism and its bitter conflict with the liberals (who were proponents of a social gospel), Evangelicalism's theology of social justice is underdeveloped. Primarily through its insistence of the metaphysical aspects of salvation, Evangelicalism is hesitant to include social action within the mission of the Church. Pentecostals follow suit, preferring individual over structural change. Thus Pentecostals remain limited in their social action and focus their efforts towards reactionary social welfare contrasting Pentecostal fellowships in other parts of the world as well as early Pentecostal history.

Since Jesus' mission included social action, so must the Church. Social action is described in the Bible in terms of the growth and arrival of the Kingdom of God. The early Pentecostal concept of the latter rain can serve as a useful resource in a Pentecostal understanding of the Kingdom of God. This will create the basis for 'transformative eschatology,' where the noble efforts of humans are preserved and incorporated into the new creation. Through such an eschatology, premillennialism can be maintained, yet the element of cooperation with God in building the Kingdom can be added.

What is needed is a Spirit-empowered, Kingdom-focused Pentecostal missiology. Proclamation of the holistic Kingdom of God becomes the mission for which believers receive empowerment from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been poured out upon Jesus' followers for the proclamation of the Kingdom which includes social action.

At the conclusion of *Vision of the Disinherited*, Robert M. Anderson makes a stark condemnation of Pentecostalism. Though Pentecostalism arose, he argues, as a grassroots protest against unjust economic, social structures, those same social problems become concretized as Pentecostals channel their energy away from seeking social change and into “the harmless backwaters of religious ideology.”<sup>141</sup> By releasing their energy into religious experience and expression, and aligning themselves with political conservatism they serve to stabilize the status quo, rather than critique or condemn it. “The radical social impulse inherent in the vision of the disinherited,” Anderson charges, “was transformed into social passivity, ecstatic escape and, finally, a most conservative conformity.”<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, in the North American context, Anderson’s charge often proves to be correct.

The hope for a Pentecostal theology of social justice is to re-capture the vision of the third way of early Pentecostalism and to understand how the Pentecostal experience can lead to spiritual empowerment to change the world, rather than stifle or dampen such efforts. Anderson’s argument relies on the assumption that religious experience depletes social energies and distracts adherents from the pressing needs of society. The charge crumbles if the Pentecostal experience is understood to empower, encourage and springboard Pentecostals back into the world to be servants of the Kingdom of God. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is then just the opposite of what Anderson accuses it; it becomes an active, empowering force that ejects Pentecostals outside of the backwaters of religious ideology and into the greater world as avant-guards for the coming, and already arrived, Kingdom of God.

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<sup>141</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 239.

<sup>142</sup> Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, p. 240.

It is my hope that North American Pentecostals, especially at an organizational level, will take a hard look at the biblical theology of social action, the mission of Christ, and their own missiology. I encourage Pentecostals to turn to their own history and identity in order to release themselves from an unnecessary theological captivity in which they have placed themselves, and catch a vision of the coming Kingdom of God that is already in their midst.

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