

FUNDAMENTALISM, MARGINALIZATION, AND ESCHATOLOGY

HISTORICAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC, AND THEOLOGICAL FACTORS
INFLUENCING EARLY PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Pentecostalism is recognized and appreciated, for instance, for its fervent evangelism and vibrant worship but generally not well-known for its contributions to scholarship and formal theological education. Why is that the case? Rather than simply pointing to an anti-intellectual attitude within Pentecostalism, this article emphasizes there are complex historical, socioeconomic, and theological factors to be considered when describing the development of early Pentecostal theological education in the United States. From a historical perspective, early Pentecostalism had to come to terms with its nineteenth-century roots, which included the fundamentalist movement. Regarding socio-economic factors, many early Pentecostal leaders came from the margins of society and did therefore not have the means to invest in high-quality education. Theologically speaking, early Pentecostals were often influenced by dispensationalism and its pessimistic eschatology, which hindered them from developing a long-term vision for their theological institutions. By addressing some of these challenges from the past, Pentecostals in the twenty-first century will be able to envision a new kind of theological education that makes relevant contributions to current conversations in both the body of Christ and society as a whole.

Introduction

Particularly in the United States, Bible schools have played a key role in the history of early Pentecostalism. After all, it was at a Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, at Bethel Bible College, that Agnes N. Ozman (1870–1937) first spoke in tongues in 1901, which became a pivotal event in the development of the Pentecostal movement.¹ Besides Charles F. Parham (1873–1929), the founder of Bethel Bible College, many other Pentecostal leaders considered preparing people for ministry a priority as well. Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944), for example, opened the first Foursquare church (Angelus Temple) in 1923, and that same year she also started the first Foursquare Bible institute.²

However, despite these investments in ministerial preparation, Pentecostalism has been widely perceived as having an anti-intellectual bias.³ At least traditionally, Pentecostals have been known for their enthusiastic activism but have been less recognized for their scholarly contributions. This tension leads to the question: Why has Pentecostalism, despite its many impressive strengths, struggled to build up a reputation in the area of formal theological education? One would be hard-pressed to identify a single factor responsible for this situation. My argument is that one needs to consider a complex array of historical, socio-economic, and theological factors in describing the relationship between early Pentecostalism and theological education.

In the following, I discuss these factors from a historical perspective, focusing on early Pentecostalism in the United States between 1901 (the year when Agnes Ozman spoke in tongues) and 1936, when, because of economic hardship, the Azusa Street Mission building had to be given up. For the purposes of this article, I define theological education in broad terms, including both ministerial preparation (as offered through Bible institutes and Bible schools) and the more formal kind of education obtainable through accredited colleges and seminaries. As I demonstrate in the following, early Pentecostalism was strong in the former but reluctant to embrace the latter.

Historical Factors: A Twentieth-Century Movement with a Nineteenth-Century Legacy

Pentecostalism is often described as a twentieth-century phenomenon, but it really is a development of trends that dominated the religious landscape in the nineteenth century.⁴ One of these influences was the holiness movement, which grew out of American Methodism in the nineteenth century.⁵ Methodism is, of course, a

phenomenon with roots in the eighteenth century started by the Englishman John Wesley (1703–1791), but the holiness movement became especially influential in the United States, particularly through the Second Great Awakening (c. 1790–1840). Similarly, the Keswick movement, which began in England in the late nineteenth century, also influenced Pentecostalism by emphasizing sanctification and a second experience after conversion to empower the saints for service.⁶

Among the characteristics of the Second Great Awakening were revival events and camp meetings at which people were encouraged to undergo a personal and radical conversion experience. As a result of such a conversion or renewal experience, it was expected that believers would henceforth live lives of complete consecration to God and separation from the world. Emphasizing separation from the world in such a way often led to a strict set of rules to be followed. This kind of legalism was also characteristic of the early Pentecostal movement; consequently, rules prohibiting wearing make-up, playing cards, drinking Coca Cola, going to the movies, etc., were seen as essential elements of living out the faith as a Pentecostal.⁷

Another influence from nineteenth-century revivalism was an emphasis on the emotional and the ecstatic. At the camp meetings of the Second Great Awakening, manifestations of the Spirit, like shaking, shouting, weeping, and speaking in tongues, were reported, phenomena also common in Pentecostalism.⁸ These kinds of religious experiences had a positive impact on people, enabling them to relate to God in ways that included their emotions. However, the emphasis on emotions also created a downside: less weight was given to the life of the mind as it seemed unnecessary to invest in learning and education in order to experience a deeper relationship with God. A passion for the sanctified mind has been part of other Christian traditions, such as among Roman Catholic Jesuits and within the Presbyterian church, and both Jesuits and Presbyterians are known for establishing excellent institutions of education.⁹ By contrast, Pentecostals tended to invest in education based on a pragmatic approach, to prepare people quickly for the task of ministry, but not necessarily for advancing the frontiers of knowledge and discovery.

Fundamentalism was another crucial development in the religious landscape of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Feeling threatened by the increasing influence of the modern sciences, many evangelicals in the United States developed a corral mentality and proposed a version of the Christian faith in which they largely retreated from society. This led to a certain degree of narrowmindedness when it came to addressing academic and intellectual issues, especially when related to the theory of evolution and higher criticism of the Bible.¹¹ In addition, fundamentalism also led to a worldview separating the natural from the spiritual realm. Consequently, and in contrast to previous

reformers like William Wilberforce (1759–1833), evangelicals now exclusively emphasized the preaching of the gospel and the conversion of individuals, thereby neglecting public theology and social concerns.

Since, according to Robert Mapes Anderson, “the Pentecostal movement should be regarded as part of the Fundamentalist movement,” many challenges and issues characterizing fundamentalism apply to Pentecostalism as well.¹² Consequently, Pentecostal theological education was, from its start, affected by the shortcomings of fundamentalism. The first Pentecostal Bible schools were short-term training centers with a narrow focus.¹³ For instance, Parham’s school in Houston, Texas, “provided ten weeks of intensive Pentecostal indoctrination,” as Larry Martin puts it.¹⁴ Early Pentecostal schools were not only small and short-term in focus but also characterized by a limited outlook. At Parham’s school, “the Bible was the only textbook”; in fact, “virtually all pentecostal educational programs used the Bible as the sole textbook.”¹⁵ Unfortunately, by focusing exclusively on spirituality and knowing the Bible,¹⁶ Pentecostal educators neglected other areas, such as preparing their students for a complex world in which a variety of theological opinions and philosophical viewpoints compete with each other in the marketplace of ideas.

Paul W. Lewis, himself a Pentecostal educator, recognizes some of these historical shortcomings in Pentecostal theological education when he writes,

Following the Bible school movement, the Pentecostal Bible schools tended to emphasize short-term training anywhere up to 2 years (partially for eschatological reasons), and like the Bible schools [*sic*] movement, tended to emphasize pastoral (including church planting and evangelism) and missionary skills with Pentecostal spiritual life. The tendency was to establish many smaller schools, rather than a few key schools. Noteworthy was that after a short period of time many of these schools were closed or merged with others. The training tended to be basic Pentecostal indoctrination, and ministerial training, personal formation and education were collapsed into each other. Further, from the strong influence of fundamentalism, the textbooks tended to be non-Pentecostal or even anti-Pentecostal, such as the use of Reformed Henry Thiessen’s *Lectures in Systematic Theology* as a textbook.¹⁷

Some early Pentecostals were generally skeptical toward academics, but others did value education, if it was “of the right kind.”¹⁸ Training institutes to prepare people for ministry were launched by every major Pentecostal denomination “within months or years of their founding. By 1914 ten were up and running, by 1930 at least twenty

flourished.”¹⁹ Granted, much was accomplished within a relatively brief time.²⁰ However, it also needs to be highlighted that early Pentecostal theological education remained, by and large, rudimentary. Interest in offering a broader education by building liberal arts colleges only began around World War II, and it took the Assemblies of God until 1955 to open Evangel College in Springfield, Missouri, “as a denominationally sponsored liberal arts college.”²¹ It took Pentecostals even longer to recognize graduate level education as a priority; accredited seminaries were only set up in the 1960s, and the first Pentecostal/Charismatic university, Oral Roberts University, was opened in 1965.²²

To summarize, early Pentecostalism was influenced by streams of religious expressions leaning toward legalism, emotionalism, and fundamentalism. These elements all have something in common: they discourage the life of the mind and consequently limit the development of the kind of theological education that dares to ask questions and explores fresh approaches. Some Pentecostals were skeptical about theological education in general, while others supported it. However, even those supporting theological education saw it primarily as a tool to train future leaders for concrete roles, such as being an evangelist, pastor, or missionary. Consequently, the theological institutions of early Pentecostalism were primarily training institutes and Bible schools. Only decades later did Pentecostals have the vision (and the means) to build seminaries, liberal arts colleges, and universities.

Socio-Economic Factors: A Faith Movement on the Margins

To understand why early Pentecostal theological education developed in the way it did, it is crucial to consider the socio-economic realities of the movement. Typically, Pentecostalism is not a religion that attracts the rich and powerful but is more known for embracing the downtrodden and marginalized.²³ The poor, women, people of color—these were the kind of people who shaped Pentecostalism in its early days (and still shape Pentecostalism in the Majority World today).²⁴

Even the leaders of the early Pentecostal movement came from the margins of society. William J. Seymour (1870–1922), for instance, the leading preacher of the Azusa Street Revival, was an African American, a man born to former slaves who grew up under extremely challenging circumstances.²⁵ In addition, “a severe case of smallpox left Seymour blind in his left eye. His face was so scarred by the disease that he wore a beard through the remainder of his life.”²⁶ Arthur G. Osterberg, an eyewitness, acknowledged Seymour as “meek and plain spoken and no orator. He spoke the common language of the uneducated class.”²⁷ As James L. Tyson, himself an African

American, recognizes when describing the history of Pentecostalism, “It is amazing to witness the unfolding of God’s mind and purpose in men and women the world would deem either unfit or unqualified.”²⁸

Women were another marginalized group playing a significant role in early Pentecostalism; various observers who witnessed the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles noticed how the Holy Spirit was at work through and in women.²⁹ At times, not even the names of these women have been recorded, as also the following example shows: “One foreign-born reporter from a Los Angeles newspaper came on assignment to report on the ‘circus-like’ meeting in the Azusa Street ‘stable.’ While there, an ignorant woman rose to her feet, looked straight at him and spoke in his native tongue, telling him secrets that only he could have known. He left convinced of the authenticity of the ‘tongues’ experience.”³⁰

The most prominent and influential woman in early Pentecostalism was probably Aimee McPherson. Even before women in the United States received the right to vote (which only happened in 1920), McPherson already had an active ministry as a travelling evangelist. Not only that, but she also became a prominent radio personality, preached regularly in front of thousands of people, and started her own denomination. No wonder Matthew A. Sutton, a historian at Washington State University, describes McPherson as “the most famous minister in America during the interwar years.”³¹

The historical circumstances in which McPherson rose to fame are also important: “With rapid urbanization, the discovery of new technologies, the perfecting of powerful forms of mass media, the rise of the modern university system, and the growth of a celebrity-centered culture, many Americans in the early twentieth century predicted the extinction of classic evangelicalism.”³² In the midst of this climate gravitating toward modernization and secularization, McPherson and other Pentecostals proved people were still hungry for religious experiences.

Being part of a highly missional movement, Pentecostals early on sought to provide opportunities for ministerial training, in order to prepare the next generation of leaders for their rapidly growing churches. It was through Parham’s Bible schools that the Pentecostal doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (accompanied by the speaking in tongues) first spread throughout the United States. Parham’s most influential student was probably William Seymour, who first listened to Parham’s teachings in 1905, at his Bible school in Houston, Texas. However, since the infamous Jim Crow laws were still governing the southern United States, Seymour had to study while sitting on a chair outside the classroom. Unfortunately, Christian communities such as Parham’s were tainted by the same racism as was prevalent in American society during that time.³³

Belonging to a racial minority, Seymour had experienced discrimination and marginalization throughout this life. His father died in 1891, when Seymour was twenty-one years old, leaving his mother Phillis behind as a widow who now had to take care of three children under the age of sixteen. Their family farm had an assessed value of only one hundred dollars, and in 1894 the family's economic condition was so desperate Phillis sold half of the farm for just thirty dollars so her family could survive.³⁴ Seymour left home and in the following years worked as a porter, a driver, a waiter, and later as a travelling salesman.

Seymour rose to fame during the Azusa Street Revival and had an extensive traveling ministry within the United States at some point, but he "lived and died in near poverty."³⁵ A few years after the revival, Seymour had to reduce the activity at Azusa Mission; by then it only consisted of one weekly meeting and not many people attended anymore. Finances were tight, so much so that Seymour's wife Jennie Evans Moore Seymour (1874–1936) had to look for a secular job to make ends meet.³⁶ After Seymour died in 1922, the widowed Mrs. Seymour, hard-pressed by financial difficulties, "sold the mortgage on the Azusa Street property to a Los Angeles bank and also mortgaged her home."³⁷ In 1936, the bank foreclosed on the property, and two years later the once famous mission site was turned into a parking lot.

As this example of William Seymour shows, the economic and social realities of early Pentecostals were often extremely challenging. Among other things, this also meant Pentecostals frequently simply did not have the necessary means to build up the kind of theological institutions needed to engage in academic endeavors. By contrast, other Christian denominations that came before Pentecostalism quickly made a move toward building well-established institutions to train their ministers. One example Rick M. Nañez highlights in his book *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds?* are the Puritans, who were among the first Protestant settlers to arrive in North America.³⁸ The Puritans founded Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630 and only six years later, in 1636, they instituted Harvard College (which later became Harvard University). According to a contemporary witness, this is how and why Harvard College came into being:

After God had carried us safe to New-England, and wee had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, rear'd convenient places for Gods worship, and settled the Civile Government: One of the next things we longed for, and looked after, was to advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the dust. And as wee were thinking and consulting how to effect this great work; it pleased God to stir up the heart of one Mr. Harvard (a godly gentleman, and a lover of learning, there living

amongst us) to give the one halfe of his estate (it being in all about 1,700*l*.) towards the erecting of a Colledge, and all his Library; after him, another gave 300*l*. others after them cast in more, and the publique hand of the State added the rest; the Colledge was, by common consent, appointed to be at Cambridge (a place very pleasant and accomodate), and is called (according to the name of the first founder) Harvard Colledge.³⁹

Harvard College was founded in particular historical circumstances in which the Puritans saw the need for an institution providing “high, broad and rigid intellectual training” for their ministers and magistrates.⁴⁰ Why was the development of early Pentecostal theological education so different from what the Puritans envisioned, for example? One crucial factor has to do with the availability of the necessary financial means (or lack thereof). As already indicated in this article, Pentecostalism often attracted the poor and uneducated. According to Anderson, the rise of early Pentecostalism needs to be understood within the context of socio-economic developments the increasing industrialization and urbanization of the United States brought about. These developments left behind entire groups of people in problematic living conditions, be it as impoverished farmers or as an urban proletariat.⁴¹

In contrast, John Harvard (1607–1638), growing up in England, obtained a bachelor’s (BA) as well as a master’s (MA) degree from the University of Cambridge and later in life “inherited considerable property.”⁴² How different was his upbringing from the life experience of William Seymour, who was mostly self-taught and lived in poverty his entire life. Granted, the life story of Seymour is unique and cannot necessarily be taken as a general standard of what circumstances were like for early Pentecostal leaders in general. However, in studying the lives of forty-five early Pentecostal leaders, Anderson concludes most of them came from a farming or blue-collar background, and several among them “were victims of abject poverty” growing up.⁴³ Among other things, this means these leaders did not have much access to formal education. Some did go to Bible school but attending Moody Bible Institute (MBI) or the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Biola) in those days did not mean the same as it would today. In the early twentieth century, these Bible schools “did not require graduation from high school or even grade school, before admission” and the education offered “was little more than a program of indoctrination in the Holiness ideology by rote memorization of scriptural proof-texts.”⁴⁴

Admittedly, becoming ministers within the Pentecostal movement potentially placed them in a higher social class than their parents had been able to enjoy. However, for many Pentecostal ministers, their economic situation continued to be precarious, and they had to turn to secular employments such as farming or factory work to make a

living.⁴⁵ In short, their status as Pentecostal ministers could not be compared to the prestige a man of the cloth in an established denomination could attain. For Pentecostal preachers, “The class character of their congregations, the emotionalism of their services, their meager education, and their employment in secular occupations, often of menial character—all denied them the status accorded other ministers.”⁴⁶ Consequently, Pentecostal pastors (and even denominational leaders) “lay in a sort of limbo between working and middle class. Never quite one nor the other, they were marginal men and women.”⁴⁷

Similar to the leaders of the Pentecostal movement, “The Pentecostal faithful everywhere were drawn from the humbler orders of society.”⁴⁸ These included various ethnic groups, with substantial growth taking place among African Americans and Hispanics (mostly of Mexican descent) as well as among Native Americans and several groups of European ancestry, such as Scandinavians, Germans, and Italians. If establishing theological institutions of higher learning proved to be difficult for white Pentecostal denominations, it was surely even more challenging for Pentecostals belonging to marginalized minorities.

Hispanic Pentecostals, for example, operated mostly on the margins, especially in the area of theological education, as the following incident demonstrates.⁴⁹ The Mexican immigrant Francisco Olazábal (1886–1937) had been ordained with the Assemblies of God in 1917 and had a successful ministry as a healing evangelist and composer of Pentecostal hymns, exercising particular influence in California and in Texas. Olazábal saw the need for a Bible school but, as Daniel Ramírez explains, Olazábal’s “pedagogical aspirations foundered on the shoals of white paternalism.”⁵⁰ In 1922, it was decided Olazábal “would stick to evangelism” while the responsibility for ministerial training for Hispanics was entrusted to two white missionaries to Mexicans: Henry C. Ball (1896–1989) and Alice E. Luce (1873–1955).⁵¹

In 1926 plans were made for Ball to lead the Latin American Bible Institute (LABI) in Texas, while Luce would be in charge of the Berean Bible Institute in San Diego, California.⁵² In understandable frustration, Ramírez comments on this situation as follows: “The conspicuous absence of one of early Latino Pentecostalism’s most notable leaders from the Texas LABI first faculty roster was partially compensated by the inclusion of Ramon Lopez as music instructor. Theological pedagogy would remain the province of missionaries, while converts would be encouraged to develop their virtuosity in musical performance.”⁵³

As these instances illustrate, issues of race, financial capabilities, and social status loom large when describing the dynamics within early Pentecostalism, and especially so when one zooms in on the training of its leaders and their limited access to degree-

granting institutions of theological education. Nonetheless, historical and socio-economic factors are not sufficient to explain why early Pentecostals did not place more emphasis on academic endeavors. To a large extent, early Pentecostals made certain choices based on their theological convictions, and among these convictions their eschatological views proved to be especially influential.

Theological Factors: A Movement with Limited Interest in Academics

The significance of eschatology in early Pentecostalism and the impact it had on the development of the movement can hardly be exaggerated.⁵⁴ As David W. Faupel explains, “American Pentecostalism can best be understood as the emergence of a millenarian belief system that resulted from a paradigm-shift which took place within nineteenth-century Perfectionism.”⁵⁵ Consequently, “the second coming of Jesus was the central concern of the initial Pentecostal message.”⁵⁶ Many Pentecostals were convinced they were living in the end times, a conviction that was a principal element in providing the urgency and motivation to spread the gospel, both at home and abroad. This theological conviction that Jesus was about to return soon was nurtured through several sources. To begin with, early Pentecostals not only spoke in tongues but also uttered prophecies, and a common theme in these ecstatic utterances was the immediacy of the Second Coming. Many of these prophecies and visions were communicated by women, such as the following by Anna Hall who testified,

I heard the beautiful warbling of a bird, and thought it was a mocking bird which one might hear there [at her daughter’s house where Hall was staying that night]. But now, it seemed away down in my soul. And as that beautiful bird began to sing, I saw a little infant face right before my eyes. And as the song of the bird began to ripple, it began to sound like water running over pebbles. It increased till it sounded like many waters, and the face enlarged till it was a full grown face. I said, “Surely this is a messenger from the holy country.” The voice answered. “Yes and I have come to tell you that Jesus is coming. Go forward in My name, preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, for the King’s business demands haste.” . . . I said, “Lord, reveal unto me what this means, the singing of the bird and rippling of the waters.” And God spoke to me, “The singing of the beautiful bird and the baby face was the proclamation of the first coming into the world; and the voice of many waters is the proclamation of Jesus Christ that is soon coming.”⁵⁷

At times, prophetic insights included apocalyptic dimensions, such as in the case of Mary Galmond, who expected “future earthquakes disassembling Chicago and tossing Pasadena into the ocean.”⁵⁸ Such prophecies and teachings were extremely prevalent, which is why Anderson asserts that, especially in its early years, Pentecostalism “was first and foremost a millenarian movement.”⁵⁹

This eschatology highlighting the imminent return of Jesus was not only communicated through ecstatic utterances but also through the doctrines the leaders of early Pentecostalism taught. Influenced by dispensationalism, Pentecostal preachers promoted an eschatology that emphasized premillennialism and the secret rapture. For instance, in the January 1907 issue of *The Apostolic Faith*, Seymour wrote about the parable of the ten virgins, teaching that those “not ready at the rapture will be left to go through the awful tribulation that is coming upon the earth,” and subsequent issues also stressed the significance of the rapture in articles like “Type of the Coming of Jesus” and “Notes on the Coming of Jesus.”⁶⁰

However, similar to dispensationalists, Pentecostals not only turned to the Bible but also to current world events in order to interpret the times. They discerned an alarming prevalence of earthquakes, wars, and famines, and one particular concern was the growth of Islam as it “had swept Sudan and threatened to overwhelm western societies with its mosques.”⁶¹ The year 1917 was one in which “prophetic pundits everywhere were stirred when British foreign secretary Lord Balfour committed his country to establishing a Jewish home in Palestine.”⁶² In view of these historical developments, the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) pastor Sam Perry wrote in the *Church of God Evangel*, “From many indications it seems that the time is very near when Israel is to be a nation again.”⁶³ Pentecostal authors also addressed the potential danger of a one-world government (therefore criticizing the League of Nations) and attempted to identify the antichrist, with Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) becoming a prime candidate.⁶⁴

The emphasis on premillennialism and the secret rapture were not Pentecostal in origin but were adopted as part of the pessimistic worldview that had developed within the dispensational theology of fundamentalism.⁶⁵ That Pentecostalism was so strongly influenced by these eschatological views is as astonishing as it is unfortunate. It is unfortunate because the pessimism of dispensational premillennialism led to escapism since, in a world doomed to destruction, Pentecostals became short-term oriented in their ministerial approach.⁶⁶ Consequently, as Pentecostals were passionate about evangelism and church planting, they started short-term ministry schools to train workers for these specific tasks.⁶⁷ However, early Pentecostals did not have the kind of

long-term vision necessary for building up degree-granting institutions of higher education.⁶⁸

Furthermore, it is astonishing fundamentalism and dispensationalism exercised such a strong influence over early Pentecostalism considering fundamentalists and Pentecostals vehemently disagreed on topics such as tongues and divine healing.⁶⁹ The dispensational framework claiming the sign gifts ceased to be operational with the age of the apostles was obviously completely at odds with some of the most treasured beliefs and practices of the Pentecostal movement. As the Pentecostal scholar Frank D. Macchia states so well, “Pentecostals tried hard to graft a dispensationalist eschatology onto an incompatible theological tree, creating an ‘uneasy relationship’ with fundamentalist theology fraught with theological inconsistencies and problems.”⁷⁰ This makes one wonder: Why did Pentecostalism rely so heavily on a theological construct that, in promoting cessationism, contradicted important elements of Pentecostal thought and practice?

As a young movement emphasizing the life of the Spirit rather than the life of the mind, early Pentecostalism did not have its own fully developed theological frameworks yet, and it also failed to cultivate its own scholars and literature. That is why Pentecostals “devoured fundamentalist literature and adopted its theology as a framework for their own beliefs.”⁷¹ Pentecostalism’s theological education also suffered from the lack of genuinely Pentecostal foundations. Consequently, Pentecostal schools “were patterned after familiar fundamentalist institutions like MBI, Biola and Nyack. The textbooks most congenial to their needs were fundamentalist in nature, and Scofield enjoyed a prominent place in the education of AG clergy.”⁷² Despite the marked differences between the two movements, Pentecostalism depended on fundamentalism because “a robust pentecostal literature did not yet exist”; consequently, “the most trusted source for conservative, evangelical theology came from fundamentalist pens.”⁷³

Fundamentalist theological frameworks had a dulling effect on early Pentecostal theological education, but certain theological convictions of Pentecostal leaders played a decisive role as well. Smith Wigglesworth (1859–1947), for instance, had an amazing ministry as a preacher and healing evangelist, so much so he is considered “a legend” and a truly “pentecostal phenomenon” among Pentecostals.⁷⁴ Wigglesworth accomplished all this in spite of (or, considering God’s preferential option for the poor, maybe because of?) an extremely humble upbringing in which he was subjected to child labor and therefore received only the most basic education.⁷⁵ Wigglesworth, however, did not see this as a disadvantage—quite the contrary, his “proud boast was that he had never read a book other than the Bible.”⁷⁶

Another example of a Pentecostal leader expressing skepticism toward formal theological education is Frank Bartleman (1871–1936) who exclaimed: “We need no more theology or theory! Away with such foolish bondage! Follow your heart! Believe in your own heart’s hunger, and go ahead for God.”⁷⁷ Early Pentecostalism placed a high value on the ecstatic, on speaking in tongues, on visions and prophecies as well as on miraculous healings and deliverance from evil spirits. Pentecostalism did have theological frameworks for facilitating these experiences, particularly a strong pneumatology that invited divine intervention in the lives of individuals. But pursuing the kind of theological education that would encourage addressing complex questions and engaging in the reformation of society was, unfortunately, not part of early Pentecostalism.⁷⁸

Pentecostal theological education was cultivated in a less than ideal environment as the movement developed in the early twentieth century. These early developments did not only influence Pentecostal theological education in the United States but in other parts of the world as well.⁷⁹ Now, in the twenty-first century, Pentecostal Bible schools and seminaries have the opportunity to leave behind some of the historical baggage brought about by fundamentalism and to develop their own theological frameworks instead. In particular, a paradigm shift from a pessimistic eschatology (rooted in dispensationalism) toward a more hopeful eschatology of continuity has the potential to provide Pentecostals with the necessary long-term vision to bring about transformation in all areas of society.⁸⁰

Conclusion

From its humble beginnings, Pentecostalism grew into a global movement that became the most dynamic missions force of the twentieth century. Both in numerical and qualitative terms, it is astonishing how much early Pentecostals accomplished, and how the movement they started has shaped Christianity in both the West and the Majority World. Pentecostals from the very beginning believed God would use them to bring in a mighty end-time harvest, and in their eagerness to spread the gospel they approached theological education in a pragmatic way. Consequently, early Pentecostals primarily built up short-term training institutes and Bible schools, but it took them several decades to invest in seminaries, liberal arts colleges, and universities as well.

However, one would be misguided simply to criticize early Pentecostals for having an anti-intellectual bias, for not being willing to engage with academic and intellectual questions. Rather, the reasons why Pentecostals demonstrated a limited engagement in the academic realm are complex and manifold. To begin with, there were historical

reasons: early Pentecostalism was heavily influenced by the holiness movement of the nineteenth century and the fundamentalism that developed in the United States in the early twentieth century. Besides their positive contributions, these movements were characterized by tendencies like emotionalism, legalism, and narrowmindedness—propensities that weakened early Pentecostal theological education from its inception. In addition, early Pentecostals struggled with socio-economic constraints; most of them came from the lower classes and had never enjoyed a high-quality education themselves, therefore lacking the necessary funds to engage in the costly endeavor of founding seminaries and universities.

Perhaps most importantly, however, Pentecostals lacked the necessary theological frameworks for building up accredited and degree-granting institutions of theological education. Influenced by dispensational premillennialism, Pentecostals developed a pessimistic and escapist worldview that, at least initially, hindered them from making long-term investments in theological education. In addition, early Pentecostals tended to be generally skeptical about theological education, especially on the graduate level. Their focus was short-term, not long-term, and their theological priorities emphasized the power of the Spirit rather than the capabilities of the human mind to ask questions, solve problems, and expand the frontiers of knowledge.

Why is this lack of involvement in formal theological education important? Has not the rapid growth of early Pentecostalism proven to the world that formal theological education may be less essential than many established denominations have hitherto believed? Granted, it seems quite possible to evangelize and to plant churches by simply training people in short-term ministry schools and Bible institutes. However, in order to participate in the wider theological and societal conversation, a Christian movement also needs seminaries, academic journals, and publishing houses. Such elements enable a movement to mature and to enrich others as well by making relevant academic contributions.⁸¹ In addition, Pentecostal liberal arts colleges and universities need trained theologians who will help these institutions to maintain their theological distinctives. For these reasons, the quest to prioritize Pentecostal theological education continues—even in our time.



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Notes

- ¹ Cf. H. Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 90–91.
- ² The Foursquare Church, “History,” n.d., n.p., <https://www.foursquare.org/about/history/> (1 December 2018). See also Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Media, 2014).
- ³ Pentecostals have been self-critical of their own movement; an anti-intellectual bias is acknowledged, for example, by Rick M. Nañez, *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds? A Call to Use God’s Gift of the Intellect* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 1–11; Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostalism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 133–54; Allan H. Anderson, *An Introduction to Global Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 242–62.
- ⁴ E.g. Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 47–55; William K. Kay, *Pentecostalism* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 25–41; Gary B. McGee, *Miracles, Missions, and American Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 3–98; Allan H. Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11–36; David D. Daniels III, “North American Pentecostalism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., and Amos Yong (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 73–92; Harlyn Graydon Purdy, *A Distinct Twenty-First Century Pentecostal Hermeneutic* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 30–60.
- ⁵ As Robert Mapes Anderson affirms, “The immediate origins of the Pentecostal movement are to be found in the nineteenth-century Holiness movement.” *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 28.
- ⁶ Similarly, Anderson believes the Keswick movement “was absolutely crucial to the development of Pentecostalism.” *Vision of the Disinherited*, 43. See also William W. Menzies, “Non-Wesleyan Influences in the Pentecostal Revival from 1901 to 1906,” in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975), 85–90.
- ⁷ Gerald W. King, *Disfellowshipped: Pentecostal Responses to Fundamentalism in the United States, 1906–1943* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 195; Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 192.
- ⁸ Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 34–35.
- ⁹ “Presbyterians have had a long and strong commitment to education. From the beginnings of the church in America, Presbyterians planted schools and colleges wherever they lived, continuing a tradition that was already well established among Reformed

communities in Europe.” William Weston, “The Dying Light and Glowing Embers of Presbyterian Higher Education,” in *Called to Teach: The Vocation of the Presbyterian Educator*, eds. Duncan S. Ferguson and William J. Weston (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2003), 5. For a Jesuit perspective on Christian education see, for example, George W. Traub, SJ, ed., *A Jesuit Education Reader: Contemporary Writings on the Jesuit Mission in Education, Principles, the Issue of Catholic Identity, Practical Applications of the Ignatian Way, and More* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008).

¹⁰ King differentiates between protofundamentalists like Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899), A. T. Pierson (1837–1911), and R. A. Torrey (1856–1928), who were already active in the nineteenth century and the fundamentalist movement of the early twentieth century, which began with the World Christian Fundamentals Conference held in Philadelphia (in 1919), leading to the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA). King, *Disfellowshipped*, 13, 94.

¹¹ E.g., Martin E. Marty, ed., *Modern American Protestantism and Its World*, Vol. 10: Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1993); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Barry Hankins, ed., *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

¹² Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 6. For both similarities and differences between the two movements, see Marius Nel, “Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism: Blood Nephews?” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 158 (July 2017), 57–71.

¹³ Cf. Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 132.

¹⁴ Larry Martin, *The Life and Ministry of William J. Seymour and a History of the Azusa Street Revival* (Joplin, MO: Christian Life Books, 1999), 27.

¹⁵ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 71. At Mount Tabor Bible Training School in Chicago, “the promotional literature explained, ‘The Textbook is the Bible, And The Entire Bible.’” Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 150.

¹⁶ These two elements were sometimes directly combined in Pentecostal theological education, as “Bible instructors encouraged both tongues and interpretations of tongues to confirm the veracity of their teaching.” Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 83.

¹⁷ Paul W. Lewis, “Explorations in Pentecostal Theological Education,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 10:2 (July 2007), 170–71.

¹⁸ Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 152.

¹⁹ Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 152.

²⁰ E.g., William K. Kay, “Pentecostal Education,” *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 25:2 (2004), 229–39; Jeffrey Hittenberger, “Global Pentecostal Renaissance? Reflections on Pentecostalism, Culture, and Higher Education,” *The Pneuma Review* 16:2 (Spring 2013), <http://pneumareview.com/global-pentecostal-renaissance-jhittenberger/> (8 April 2019);

Teresa Chai, "Pentecostal Theological Education and Ministerial Formation," in *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*, eds. Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, and Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2014), 343–59.

²¹ L. F. Wilson, "Bible Institutes, Colleges, Universities," in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 379.

²² Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 144.

²³ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 165, 209; Johan Mostert, "Ministry of Mercy and Justice," in *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*, eds. Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2014), 163; Calvin L. Smith, "The Politics and Economics of Pentecostalism: A Global Survey," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., and Amos Yong (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 175–94; Purdy, *Distinct Twenty-First Century Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 45–47.

²⁴ E.g. Harvey G. Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 176; Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 173–75; Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 265, 291, 295.

²⁵ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 4, 12, 17–52.

²⁶ Martin, *Life and Ministry*, 80.

²⁷ Quoted in Robert Owens, "The Azusa Street Revival: The Pentecostal Movement Begins in America," in *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901–2001*, ed. Vinson Synan (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 46.

²⁸ James L. Tyson, *The Early Pentecostal Revival: History of Twentieth-Century Pentecostals and The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, 1901–30* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 1992), 17.

²⁹ Notably, the original board of the Azusa Mission consisted of seven women and five men. Eddie Hyatt, ed., *Fire on Earth: Eyewitness Reports from the Azusa Street Revival* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2006), 9. For a detailed report on women playing crucial roles at the Azusa Street Revival, see Estrela Alexander, *The Women of Azusa Street* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005).

³⁰ Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 101.

³¹ Matthew A. Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 4.

³² Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*, 4.

- ³³ Martin, *Life and Ministry*, 92–93.
- ³⁴ Martin, *Life and Ministry*, 56–58.
- ³⁵ Martin, *Life and Ministry*, 275.
- ³⁶ Alexander, *Women of Azusa Street*, 160.
- ³⁷ Martin, *Life and Ministry*, 333.
- ³⁸ Nañez, *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds?*, 69, 148.
- ³⁹ Quoted in Lucius R. Paige, *History of Cambridge, Massachusetts 1630–1877*, Vol. 1 (Altenmünster, Germany: Jazzybee Verlag, 2018), 246.
- ⁴⁰ Charles Lyttle, “A Sketch of the Theological Development of Harvard University, 1636–1805,” *Church History* 5:4 (December 1936), 307.
- ⁴¹ Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 240. Anderson writes from a secular/Marxist perspective; I disagree with his overall perspective on Pentecostalism but refer to him several times in this article because I find his socio-economic analysis insightful. Additionally, the prominent scholar on Pentecostalism, Walter J. Hollenweger, also highlights how people on the margins respond to Pentecostalism, e.g., in *The Pentecostals* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 457–64. For a critical review of Anderson’s work see, for example, Yong, *Spirit of Creation*, 49–50.
- ⁴² Encyclopedia Britannica, “John Harvard: British Minister,” n.d., n.p., <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Harvard> (28 March 2019).
- ⁴³ Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 100.
- ⁴⁴ Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 101.
- ⁴⁵ Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 106–7.
- ⁴⁶ Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 107–8.
- ⁴⁷ Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 108.
- ⁴⁸ Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 114.
- ⁴⁹ In telling the history of Pentecostalism, Latino Pentecostals have often been neglected. This includes their participation in the Azusa Street Revival as this “has long been overshadowed by an emphasis on the black and white origins of Pentecostalism.” Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 23.
- ⁵⁰ Daniel Ramírez, *Migrating Faith: Pentecostalism in the United States and Mexico in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 46.
- ⁵¹ Ramírez, *Migrating Faith*, 46.
- ⁵² Confusingly, that Bible school in San Diego was subsequently also called Latin American Bible Institute (<http://www.labi.edu/>). LABI later moved to La Puente, California, where it continues to this day—often offering theological education to Hispanics on the margins, as also described by Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity*:

Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). For more recent developments at LABI, see Rodolfo Galvan Estrada III, “Renewing Theological Education: Developing Networks of Latino/a Ethnocultural Inclusion,” *PentecoStudies* 17:2 (2018), 134–57.

⁵³ Ramírez, *Migrating Faith*, 46.

⁵⁴ Cf. Wonsuk Ma who states: “It is not an overstatement to view an immanent eschatological expectation as the backbone of early Pentecostal Spirituality.” Wonsuk Ma, “Pentecostal Eschatology: What Happened When the Wave Hit the West End of the Ocean,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 12:1 (January 2009), 97. Similarly, Peter Althouse believes, “it was the Azusa revival and its quest for spiritual and social renewal of the church in preparation for the imminent return of Jesus Christ that gave birth to the Pentecostal movement.” *Spirit of the Last Days: Pentecostal Eschatology in Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann* (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 9. Of course, not everybody agrees, and some authors see Spirit baptism as the most important theological distinctive of Pentecostalism. However, Spirit baptism and eschatology can be seen as related to each other, as Kärkkäinen explains: “The most distinctive, and most hotly disputed, Pentecostal doctrine and experience—that of Spirit baptism affiliated with strong eschatological fervor—nourished the beginning days of Pentecostal mission.” Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Mission, Spirit and Eschatology: An Outline of a Pentecostal-Charismatic Theology of Mission,” *Mission Studies* 16:1 (1999), 77.

⁵⁵ David W. Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 18.

⁵⁶ Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 20.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Alexander, *Women of Azusa Street*, 130–31.

⁵⁸ King, *Disfellowshipped*, 61.

⁵⁹ Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 80.

⁶⁰ *The Azusa Street Papers, 1906–1908: The Apostolic Faith, the Original 13 Issues* (San Bernardino, CA: PentecostalBooks.com, 2013), 129, 278, 301.

⁶¹ King, *Disfellowshipped*, 88.

⁶² King, *Disfellowshipped*, 91.

⁶³ King, *Disfellowshipped*, 88.

⁶⁴ King, *Disfellowshipped*, 117–19, 148–49.

⁶⁵ Cf. Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1987), 143–67; Randall J. Stephens, *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 161–62, 234–35.

⁶⁶ Cf. Amos Yong who recognizes Pentecostalism’s “escapist and futurist tendencies” due to the strong influence of dispensationalism. *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 317, cf. 324.

⁶⁷ This was true for the preparation of both pastors and missionaries. Allan H. Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 261.

⁶⁸ See also Frank D. Macchia who acknowledges, in the context of discussing early Pentecostal eschatology, that “this eschatological fervor may have hindered a vision among Pentecostals for long-term transformation.” Frank D. Macchia, “The Struggle for Global Witness: Shifting Paradigms in Pentecostal Theology,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, eds. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1999), 23.

⁶⁹ Cf. Gerald T. Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship,” *Pneuma* 6:2 (Fall 1984), 23–24; F. L. Arrington, “Dispensationalism,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 585; Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 108–9.

⁷⁰ Macchia, “Struggle for Global Witness,” 24.

⁷¹ King, *Disfellowshipped*, 201.

⁷² King, *Disfellowshipped*, 120.

⁷³ King, *Disfellowshipped*, 96.

⁷⁴ Donald Gee, “Foreword: A Pentecostal Phenomenon,” in *The Anointing of His Spirit*, ed. Wayne Warner (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994), 11–12.

⁷⁵ Cf. Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 478.

⁷⁶ Wilson, “Bible Institutes, Colleges, Universities,” 374.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Roger G. Robins, *Pentecostalism in America* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 58.

⁷⁸ See also Hollenweger: “The fact that the attention and concern of Pentecostal believers is directed towards the event of Christ’s second coming makes them indifferent to the political and social problems of the world.” Over time, this dynamic changes, influencing theological education as well: “As social conditions improve the fervent expectation of the imminent second coming disappears. It is still taught in theory, but is no longer a matter of experience. Pension funds are set up for pastors, and building and training programs which take years to complete are carried out.” Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, 417.

⁷⁹ As Allan Anderson points out when critiquing the export of a certain kind of Pentecostal theological education to the Majority World: “The result is that western conservatism and

premillennial eschatological pessimism become ‘orthodoxy’ in Pentecostal institutions throughout the world.” Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 243.

⁸⁰ Eschatological continuity is an important concept for Miroslav Volf as several Pentecostal theologians have highlighted: Murray W. Dempster, “Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective: Reformulating Pentecostal Eschatology,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1:2 (April 1993), 62; Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 4–5; Robby Waddell, “Apocalyptic Sustainability: The Future of Pentecostal Ecology,” in *Perspectives in Pentecostal Eschatology: World Without End*, eds. Peter Althouse and Robby Waddell (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 102.

⁸¹ Such contributions are particularly important coming from the Majority World where many of the most dynamic centers of Pentecostalism are found today. As the Nigerian scholar Babatunde Adedibu notes, “The shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity to the majority of the world has overlapped with the global rise of Pentecostalism characterized by its emphasis on mission.” Babatunde Adedibu, “Mission from Africa: A Call to Re-imagine Mission in African-led Pentecostal Churches in Britain,” *Missio Africanus: Journal of African Missiology* 1:1 (April 2015), 40. It is a real challenge of our time that the numerical center of Christianity has gravitated toward the relatively poor Global South, while most of the world’s theological resources remain in the affluent North—but what these dynamics signify for Pentecostal expressions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America is a discussion that goes beyond the scope of this article.