Historically, Pentecostalism has displayed a reluctance to formulate comprehensive systematic theological proposals. This reluctance forces Pentecostals to borrow from the theological methodologies and linguistic underpinnings of Protestant and Evangelical traditions in the construction of their theological systems. Often conflicting with the ethos of Pentecostalism, these adopted theological systems are incapable of capturing the ethos of the Pentecostal tradition. *Tongues of Fire: A Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* by Frank Macchia attempts to remedy these incompatibilities by utilizing traditional theological categories to construct a comprehensive systematic theology centered upon Pentecost, the primary theological symbol of Pentecostal theology. Macchia’s work challenges Protestant and Evangelical traditions to explore Pentecostal sensibilities within traditional theological structures, by prioritizing the theological narrative of Pentecost as central to the construction of its systematic theology. Engaging the traditional loci of Christian theology from the vantage point of Pentecost, Macchia provides a voice for Pentecostal scholarship within traditional pursuits of systematic theology, without relinquishing the spirituality that shapes the theological expression of Pentecostal spirituality.

*Tongues of Fire* begins with a section devoted to the task of theology. The pneumatological influence of Pentecost is immediately felt by the assertion that the tongues of Pentecost are an essential facet in theological development. Macchia asserts that the tongues of Pentecost declare the wonders of God, making Pentecost an inherently theological event in which God reveals himself as a God who creates, redeems, and indwells. Building upon God’s self-revelation through the Pentecost narrative, Macchia promotes theology as a constructive discipline that focuses on doctrinal development, from the sacred text of Scripture to the systematic categories of theological product that have developed throughout the history of the church. Such a theological proposal is rooted in the salvific narrative of Scripture and is historically situated in the finite and socially conditioned language of the church’s witness.

Pursuing dogmatics through the lens of Pentecost affords Macchia the opportunity to construct a systematic theology in which christology and pneumatology are mutually informative. Macchia argues that the incarnation and atonement of the Divine Son prevailed as the orthodox position of the Christian faith at the expense of the Spirit. Christology in the West has tended to reduce the Spirit to the utilitarian purpose of bearing witness to Christ in the world. To avoid this tendency, Macchia argues for a Spirit-Christology, which views Christ’s incarnation, life, death, and resurrection as leading to Christ’s outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.
 Appropriately, Macchia engages three theological giants as dialogue partners to represent the broad classifications of modern Protestant theology. Friedrich Schleiermacher represents the liberal stream, with an emphasis on the enlightenment of human consciousness. Karl Barth represents the neo-orthodox stream, which reflects a shift away from the soul’s journey with God towards the self-revelation of God through his Son Jesus Christ as the authoritative revelation of the Christian faith. Paul Tillich represents the correlation stream, which was an intentional attempt to mediate the tensions between Schleiermacher’s emphasis on experience and Barth’s emphasis on the proclaimed Word of God. Macchia’s willingness to employ these three theological titans as interlocutors provides an opportunity for the dialectic encounter between the Pentecostal narrative and the traditional theological methods that are to come.

Having laid the foundation on which the narrative of Pentecost can interface with traditional theological systems, Macchia begins the heavy lifting of integrating the Pentecost narrative with the categories commonly utilized within the Protestant tradition. Using Pentecost, Macchia expands the epistemological horizons of the traditional categories of theology beyond propositional statements to encompass both the affective and embodied sensibilities of Pentecostal theology. This endeavor has the potential to aid in strengthening the cause of Pentecost in the Western world by providing opportunities to integrate traditional theological systems with the sensibilities found within Pentecostal spirituality. With Pentecost at the center, Macchia’s theological proposal can appeal to traditional Protestant theological systems without disregarding or abandoning the basic structures of those systems.

This undertaking by Macchia is not an easy task. The distinct epistemological and ontological views of Pentecostalism are difficult to integrate with Evangelical and Protestant theological systems. Many of Macchia’s colleagues, such as (but not limited to) Daniel Castelo and Ken Archer, argue that Pentecostal spirituality is incompatible with Protestant and Evangelical modes of theology. Nonetheless, Macchia presses forward with his attempt to use Pentecost as the filter for traditional theological categories. Adopting Pentecost as the primarily theological symbol to construct systematic theology, Macchia provides the scaffolding that Pentecostals can engage with traditional theological systems of theology without compromising the integrity of the theological narrative that undergirds the production of Pentecostal theology.

Macchia’s work serves to demonstrate the capability of Pentecostalism to incorporate itself into traditional Protestant theological structures. Macchia leaves little doubt that traditional Protestant theological development would benefit by assimilating the Pentecostal narrative into its theological systems. In a time when the growth of Pentecostalism significantly dwarfs that of Protestant and Evangelical traditions, Macchia’s work should be received as an opportunity for a reassessment of the theological systems employed by Protestant and Evangelical traditions through the
theological narrative of Pentecost. *Tongues of Fire*’s masterful incorporation of the Pentecostal narrative into traditional Protestant and Evangelical theological systems serves to display the constructive role Pentecostal scholarship can have in shaping and reforming Evangelical and Protestant theology.

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