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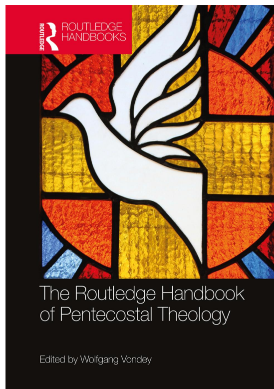

The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology

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SOCIAL JUSTICE
Theology as social transformation

Cheryl J. Sanders

Social justice is a topic often found under practical and ethical concerns rather than theological and doctrinal discussions. The Pentecostal movement, although involved in social engagement since its inception, has not produced a theology of social justice. Despite innovative social action across much of the global movement, Pentecostal social ethics is still rather ambivalent, if not contradictory. What is unclear is whether a comprehensive theology of social justice can be developed for the whole movement. Pentecostals are still in the process of finding their ethical voice amidst the transitional contexts that characterize much of the socioeconomic and political landscape worldwide.

At the same time, the origins of classical Pentecostalism in North America manifest a social vision that was paradigmatic for much of the early history of the movement. This chapter asserts that modern Pentecostals remain challenged to continue the radically inclusive ethics practiced and promoted at the Azusa Street mission and revival in Los Angeles, which brought people together for Spirit-led worship without regard for the rigid social barriers of race, sex, and class that characterized the dominant North American culture and churches. In the interest of constructing a Pentecostal theology of social justice, it may be helpful to underscore a few prominent trends that gesture toward the formulation of a systematic theological discourse across the diverse landscape of Pentecostalism. Because these trends would seem to lend themselves better to being spoken of in the plural than in the singular, a systematic approach to Pentecostal theology and social ethics can be initiated in two steps: first, by sketching a panoramic overview of the theological themes that are prevalent in Pentecostal churches and, second, by tracking the emergent public witness and social vision of Pentecostals whose spiritual and intellectual formation inheres in these systems of theological thought and ethical practice. Thus, the aim of this essay is to outline the evolution of a Pentecostal theology of social ethics that can be used to benchmark the continuing ebb and flow of social justice advocacy in the modern Pentecostal movement.

A typology of Pentecostal theology and social justice

Broadly speaking, there are three types of Pentecostal theologies relevant for social ethics: evangelical, liberation, and prosperity theology. Evangelical theology envisions a God who saves people's souls; liberation theology sees God setting people free, and prosperity theology

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emphasizes the God who blesses with health and wealth. These Pentecostal theologies can be mapped directly to corresponding conservative and liberal theologies that occupy the North American Protestant mainstream. Evangelical theology most closely resembles the thought and teaching of white evangelicals in Europe and North America. Pentecostal liberation theologies reflect the teachings of black theologians in North America and liberation theologians in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The prosperity gospel has its strongest articulation by megachurches and global televised networks who promote the personalized pursuit of health and wealth as evidence of the blessing of God. These three categories of theological orientation function as markers for understanding the social ethics of Pentecostals in general.

All three types share a Christological center: all lift up the name and person of Jesus, albeit to different social ends. Evangelical Christology emphasizes Jesus as the Son of God who brings salvation and healing to the individual who makes a personal confession of faith (e.g. John 3:16). Liberation Christology underscores the role Jesus plays in bringing liberation and deliverance to victims of oppressive systems and structures (e.g. Luke 4:16–18). Prosperity theology configures a Christology that fosters personal fulfillment, social promotion and financial well-being in the name of Jesus (e.g. John 10:10). The differences become visible in their pneumatological application.

Although there is a consensus among all Pentecostals on the importance of pneumatology (see Chapter 19), there are significant differences in how the impact of the Spirit is apprehended in the experience of the believer in reflection of their Christology (see Chapter 20). For the evangelicals, the manifestation of the Spirit engenders social unity and fosters reconciliation across the boundaries of language, nationality, race, gender, and income, especially in the context of worship. For the liberationists, the manifestation of the Spirit empowers social change by mandating a witness against injustice and a holy boldness that compels speaking truth to power in the public square. For prosperity theology, the Spirit manifests supernaturally to empower social mobility, propelling the believer's ascent from poverty, sickness and low self-esteem into a divinely favored position of financial, physical, and spiritual health, for the most part in the absence of social engagement or political consciousness.

As a result, a case can be made for the emergence of multiple Pentecostal soteriologies (see Chapter 21). Evangelical perspectives developed from classical Pentecostal theology shaped by the Christology of the full gospel (see Chapter 16), which views salvation in the terms of conversion, sanctification, Spirit baptism, divine healing, and the coming kingdom of God (Dayton 1987). White evangelical soteriology often neglects the experience of black Pentecostals who signified the experience of race-based victimization of Christians by Christians in the churches and society (see Chapter 39). Salvation meant advocating for the abolition of slavery, the equality of women and the alleviation of urban poverty (Dayton 1975). Another perspective on classical Pentecostal soteriology came to prominence with the emergence of women's leadership and organizations in Pentecostal denominations and their mission to "sanctify the world" grounded in a soteriology evidenced by the public witness of their distinctive lifestyle, strict morality and modest apparel (Stanley 2002; Alexander 2005; Butler 2007). White evangelical doctrine since the 1940s shifted the ideas of soteriology away from social concerns and primarily toward conversion.

A progressive soteriology emerged under the influence of Black and Latin American liberation theologies, which place emphasis on conscientization emerging from the experience of the Spirit (Sepúlveda 1988; Villafañe 1993) and leading to redemptive participation in the struggle among the oppressed (Johns 1993). Conscientization among Pentecostals is a personal and communal process subject to long-term cultural influences and sociohistorical developments (Vondey 2015). In essence, this progressive soteriology holds that salvation

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should not be understood solely in terms of rituals of personal absolution and spiritual transformation experienced by individuals in worship but also as the desired outcome of a divinely anointed and empowered ministry of liberation, undertaken by faith communities whose intention is to critique and contest social structures that foster oppression and marginalization based upon race, sex and poverty. Today, progressivism and its theological demand for active participation in social justice are largely in the hands of Pentecostals in Africa and the African diaspora (Yong 2006).

The brand of soteriology that is most closely associated with the prosperity gospel endorses bourgeois democratic American sensibilities (Bowler 2013); in effect, it entails a sanctification of the American dream. Instead of endeavoring to sanctify the world, the aim and measure of prosperity soteriology is to empower individuals to thrive and flourish in the world without necessarily challenging its capacity to sustain the existing disparities of wealth and privilege (Vondey 2013, 96–103). In other words, prosperity soteriology is more inclined to transform the individual to beat the system rather than to change the system to benefit people.

The most visible influence of these different soteriologies is found in Pentecostal ecclesiology (see Chapter 27). Through the lens of social ethics, the Pentecostal movement is characterized by at least three predominant ecclesiologies: exilic, fluidic, and aesthetic. Exilic ecclesiology originates with the Holiness movements who were drawn out of the Protestant mainstream because of their attraction to stricter articulations of the doctrine of sanctification and their rejection of aspects of the autonomous, congregational polity (Sanders 1996). The key participants in the Azusa Street revival (1906–15) followed this trajectory out of evangelical Protestantism and toward missions, congregations, and denominations whose adherents were free to conduct their worship and live their lives in a manner consistent with the hermeneutic they applied to the biblical mandate: "Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15). This exilic ecclesiology is most readily associated with evangelical Pentecostalism.

Fluidic ecclesiology pursues a perspective based on the notion that the sacred engages and transforms the world through the church. It is inclusive of two categories of Pentecostals: those who are politically progressive and those who are socially conservative. The first group adopts a fluidic view of the church with a high regard for liberation from human suffering as the principal manifestation of Christ and the church in the world. They envision the church operating under a divine mandate to stay fully engaged in the transformation of the systems and structures that have been devised to sustain exploitation and oppression of marginalized populations (Augustine 2012). A second group of Pentecostals at the opposite end of the theological spectrum subscribe to the prosperity gospel rather than a theology of liberation and see themselves not as followers of a counter-cultural Christ but rather as worldly exemplars of godly favor. They experience the world as a hospitable arena that rewards personal achievement and self-advancement; their lives and leadership exhibit a full complement of worldly status, wealth, and recognition; their ministries, facilities, conferences, and conventions showcase (or aspire to emulate) the highest standards of human achievement and worldly affluence (Coleman 2000). The role of the church is to incubate spiritual formation for self-improvement and to equip the saints to move up in the world instead of transforming it.

Aesthetic ecclesiology is arguably more a trope than an actual ecclesiological type. It denotes the Pentecostal aesthetic of artists and intellectuals whose work bears the undeniable influences of a church they have left behind but whose songs, sermons, stories, lessons, etc., remain deeply embedded in memory and imagination (see Chapter 31). When these distinctive styles of performance and proclamation appear outside of the church, the result

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is that the public witness of Pentecostalism is extended (intentionally or not) to unchurched audiences. Some exceptional individuals have taken their Pentecostal experience out of the church and into the world, making the Pentecostal aesthetic accessible to broader publics in the realm of art and ideas, notwithstanding personal decisions they may have made to abandon religious practices and commitments.

The typology of Pentecostal theology sketched here in light of the variances of a Pentecostal social ethics illustrates the difficulty to speak of a single Pentecostal theology of social justice. Some of the expressions of social concern and neglect stand in contrast to the original vision of the Azusa Street revival and mission as it was articulated most prominently by the leading pastor William J. Seymour (1870–1922). The remainder of this essay traces Seymour's social vision in order to allow it to speak to and correct contemporary Pentecostal theology in light of the original vision of the Pentecostal pioneers.

William Seymour's social vision: unity, equality, love

Beginning in 1906, Seymour presided over a congregation at the Apostolic Faith Mission in Los Angeles, California, whose experience of speaking in tongues and other manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is often seen as the birth of the global movement known as Pentecostalism (Robeck 2006). Seymour noted that this movement began when "God baptized several sanctified wash women with the Holy Ghost, who have been much used of Him" (MacRobert 1988, 48). Black Holiness women were the core constituents of the Mission. However, the movement that spread throughout the world was multicultural and inclusive of men and women of distinctly different backgrounds, as determined by conventional notions of race, nationality, denomination, education, and social status. The race, sex, and class of the core group should not be regarded as incidental to the social ethical significance of the revival. On the contrary, the fact that the black women who ministered at Azusa Street hailed from a Holiness tradition that fully endorsed the spiritual leadership and authority of women set the stage for the emergence of unity, equality, and love as key spiritual manifestations of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. These three marks signify the core of the original Pentecostal social ethics.

Seymour perceived in the Pentecostal movement God's desire to accomplish unity by breaking down every social barrier (McClymond 2015, 371). The single most dominant experience reflected in the pages of the Apostolic Faith Mission's newspaper and in the reports of the early Pentecostal believers was the solidarity and inclusivity of people from all nations (Irvin 1995, 50). W. E. B. Du Bois (1903), author of *The Souls of Black Folk* and arguably the leading black intellectual of the twentieth century, famously announced in 1903 that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" (13). Soon thereafter, Seymour championed one doctrine above all others, "that there must be no color line or any other division in the Church of Jesus Christ because God is no respecter of persons" (Smith 2015, 10–11).

Mexicans were perhaps the most marginalized social group of all at Azusa Street. The impoverished Mexican laborers who worked to prepare the building for worship were the first to speak in tongues, and a Mexican man with a club foot was the first to be healed (Ramirez 2015, 33–60). To credit Mexicans as the first modern-day Pentecostals on this evidence is not the point. Rather it is to acknowledge that during an era when black Americans were targets of extreme racial injustice and oppression, a congregation of black Americans welcomed all kinds of people to experience the power of the Holy Spirit at the Azusa Street mission, an inclusive community in Christ that remains a challenge and a model for Christians all

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around the world (McClymond 2015, 372–73). The Azusa Street mission not only demonstrated racial and cultural inclusivity but also liberation from social prejudice, and the experience of Holy Spirit baptism as a baptism of ethnic, gender, and ecumenical transcendent love (Wilkinson and Studebaker 2010, 10–11). From a classical Pentecostal perspective, the overcoming of social barriers at play in early twentieth century North American culture "coheres" with what was promised in Joel 2:28–32 and proclaimed in Acts 2:16–21. A theological and ethical recovery of the socially transcending nature of the Spirit's work must remind Pentecostals of the biblical and traditional roots of their social vision in and beyond Azusa Street.

Pentecostal social ethics: Azusa Street and beyond

In the early decades following the Azusa Street revival, black Pentecostal leaders enacted a rudimentary Pentecostal social ethics with three key components: multicultural leadership, holiness ethics, and pacifism. Consistent with the diverse cultural setting of the biblical Pentecost, Pentecostal denominations with black leaders always had white members, although the reverse was not often found. The growth of Pentecostalism out of the Holiness movement required a rehearsal of Holiness roots because the early Pentecostal leaders always addressed moral questions, even if some of their solutions were extreme. Advocacy of the pacifist and anti-war stances by Pentecostals during the first half of the twentieth century led to the persecution of Pentecostal leaders. Bishop C. H. Mason posed the question how one can fight a war in the name of the Prince of Peace; Bishop Ida B. Robinson publicly questioned the US involvement in World War II; the United Holy Church counseled conscientious objection for its members who were drafted into military service (Trulear 2004, 23–29).

Bishop Mason's pacifist campaign during World War I was the first major political activity of Pentecostal African Americans in the twentieth century. Mother Lillian Brooks Coffey, Mason's appointed head of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) International Women's Department, spearheaded the passing of a racial justice resolution at the denomination's Women's Convention in 1953. Also in the 1950s, Bishop Smallwood Williams of the Bible Way Church, Worldwide, led a legal battle against segregated public schools in Washington, D. C. A strong political message advocating racial and social justice was central to Williams's brand of Pentecostalism, urging his fellow clergy to fulfill their "Christian duty" by becoming advocates for the poor, the racially oppressed, and the downtrodden. During the 1960s, Bishops Arthur Brazier and Louis Henry Ford were active in the civil rights efforts in Chicago; Bishop Ithiel Clemmons was involved in civil rights campaigns in New York; Bishop J. O. Patterson, Sr. participated in the local civil rights campaign in Memphis, Tennessee, and Bishop Charles E. Blake participated in the march from Selma to Montgomery (Millner 1999). Bishop Herbert Daughtry was one of the founders of two black nationalist political groups, the Black United Front and the African Christian People's Organization. A main fixture of protest politics in New York during the post-civil rights era, he pursued a progressive political agenda with a justice emphasis as a means of empowerment and liberation (Yong and Alexander 2011, 143–44).

Another progressive voice emerged among Pentecostals toward the end of the twentieth century. James Forbes, a preacher, scholar, and activist, served for many years as pastor of the bellwether of liberal mainline Protestantism, the historic Riverside Church in New York. Forbes argued for "the theological liberation of the Holy Spirit from the ecclesial arena and the theological acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit within political and economic sectors" (Yong and Alexander 2011, 143). He advocated a progressive approach, which translates

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Pentecostalism into social action, advancing from preoccupation with individual experience and internal church affairs to concern for the larger context of society and the world. The progressive Pentecostal response to poverty involves feeding the poor, offering personal charity, and setting up social service agencies but also influencing social, economic, and political structures in opposition to racial, class, and religious injustices (Ware 2016, 108–109).

The biblical prophecy associated with the day of Pentecost clearly indicates that the outpouring of the Spirit transcends various categories used to justify social marginalization and exploitation of other human beings, namely, race and ethnicity, gender, and social status (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). Classical Pentecostalism has not as effectively integrated the social message and liberating work of the Holy Spirit in its ecclesial practice, mission, and social work as these examples might indicate. Nevertheless, even the traditional Pentecostal stress on personal spirituality and salvation bears an implicit message of social redemption and emancipation. After all, the liberating ministry of Jesus, as announced in Luke 4, is also the work of the Holy Spirit. In response, a progressive vision of Pentecostal social justice today relies on Christians who are inspired by the Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus as they seek to address the spiritual, physical and social needs of people holistically (Wilkinson and Studebaker 2010, 6). Beyond Azusa Street, this progressive Pentecostal theology has become the new face of social engagement (Miller and Yamamori 2017).

Contemporary modes of social engagement: ethics and ecclesiology in the public square

Frederick Ware (2016, 10–20) has cataloged a broader genealogy of Pentecostal social engagement based upon four distinctive perspectives that influence Christian thought: realism, idealism, reconstructionism, and communitarianism. Realism is the dominant view, most readily associated with the classical roots of white Christians in North America. Christian realists believe that because humans are sinners, the moral principles that normally govern Christian life have limited or no application in public life, government, and international affairs. Following the thought of Reformed theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, the role of democratic government is to maintain order, national security, and ownership of property. A key exemplar among these Pentecostals is John Ashcroft, who served as Governor of Missouri, US Senator from Missouri, and US Attorney General under President George W. Bush (Ware 2016, 105). Pentecostal realists pursuing vocations in military or public service roles regard their religious faith as private and separate from public life.

Idealism, primarily embraced by black Christians, peaked during the 1960s with the emergence of the civil rights movement where a foundation was laid for increased black participation in electoral politics (Chism 2019). Idealism is the view that moral principles, resting upon God's eternal law, can be actualized in democracy and government when used for ordering and improving human life. Following the thought and activism of Martin Luther King, Jr., Christian idealists see the necessity of exerting pressure, through nonviolence, on governmental bodies for the formation of policy and laws conforming to the ideals (eternal law) of justice (Ware 2016, 105–6). Pentecostals espousing versions of Christian idealism include Bishop J. O. Patterson, Jr. (COGIC bishop and former councilman and mayor of Memphis), Eugene Rivers (COGIC pastor, political commentator, and community activist), Leonard Lovett (ethicist and ecumenical officer for COGIC), and Bishop Leah Daughtry (House of the Lord pastor and former CEO of the Democratic National Convention Committee).

Reconstructionism has governed the interpretation of Christianity and morality in American public life among evangelicals since the 1980s. They view the United States as

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a Christian nation whose path to renewal, restoration and charge of enforcing God's law is disclosed in the Bible (Ware 2016, 106). They advocate a politics of limited government, laissez-faire capitalism, and fiscal conservatism, and emphasize personal responsibility, self-determination, and thrift as essential for social change. Racism can be overcome by black achievement and success, without the assistance of "big government." Bishop Harry Jackson is a well-known Pentecostal reconstructionist (Jackson 2008).

Communitarianism is the view that the church, not democratic government, is the principal realm where persons can discern and strive for the good. It appeals to Christians seeking to realize the potential of the church as an autonomous institution for social change through reconciliation and community development. Pentecostals who adhere to the exilic ecclesiology of "in the world but not of it" and work for social change principally within their churches and faith-based organizations may be classified as communitarians (Ware 2016, 107). Exemplars include Bishops T. D. Jakes, Charles Blake, and George McKinney.

Each of these perspectives on social and political change is informed by a particular view of the role and relevance of the church in public affairs (Yong 2010, 99–108). Politically, the idealists and communitarians trend toward political liberalism, while the realists and reconstructionists are politically conservative. On the spectrum of Pentecostal ecclesiologies, realists and communitarians adhere to an exilic ecclesiology, while the idealists and reconstructionists exhibit a fluidic ecclesiology that envisions the church in active engagement of social issues as an advocate of social change.

A radical social gospel: present and future challenges

Whatever happened to Seymour's social vision of unity, equality, and love? For a moment in history, a new social dynamic was set in motion. Christian formation was disentangled from the prevailing social conventions of North American life in the early 1900s, namely, assimilation based on race, subordination based on gender and marginalization based on economic status. This disruptive decentering of social mores messaged a radical social ethics of inclusion and empowerment and ignited the eruptive emergence of Pentecostal Christianity. In his detailed history of the Azusa Street mission and revival, Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. (2006) has emphasized the importance of this attempt by one congregation to live out a vision of racial and ethnic inclusion with men and women regarded as equals in a ministry and leadership based on the principles of social justice. Robeck also acknowledges that this brilliant story came to a sordid ending marked by Seymour's institution of a pragmatic solution to the drama, dissension, and doctrinal disputes engendered by whites. In the end, Seymour ruled that while whites were welcome to be part of the Mission, no white person would be allowed to serve in leadership as long as racial prejudice and discrimination undermined the unity and love commanded by Christ (Robeck 2006, 319–320). The era of radically inclusive interracial Pentecostal revival effectively ended with Seymour's death in 1922.

More than a century after the Azusa Street revival, white Pentecostalism in Europe and North America has developed into an evangelical middle-class religion with efficient fund-raising structures, a streamlined ecclesiastical bureaucracy and a Pentecostal conceptual theology accused of taking white evangelicalism and tacking on the doctrine of speaking in tongues as evidence of Spirit baptism (Hollenweger 1987, 531). If modern white Pentecostals trend toward evangelical theology, and if the prosperity gospel is being prioritized by blacks in North America and people of color in other nations, then what possibilities exist for the survival of theologies of liberation and inclusion among contemporary Pentecostal congregations? Does Seymour have any successors remaining to perpetuate his social justice legacy?

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Keri Day (2018, 11) has described Azusa as a "holy, insurgent communion" that continues today in the quest for inclusion of all peoples led by Bishop Yvette Flunder's Fellowship of Affirming Ministries in Oakland, California and in the National Call for Moral Revival led by Reverend William Barber, II. But the predominant traces of this legacy we find today primarily in the global South where Pentecostalism has become the face of social activism (Miller and Yamamori 2007). In Zambia, it was the HIV/AIDS pandemic that propelled the church to work alongside the state in the fight against the disease (M'fundisi-Holloway 2018). Similarly, in Nigeria, Pentecostals moved in response to overwhelming societal problems from ministries within the church to engage poverty alleviation, economic empowerment, and national transformation (McCain 2013, 160–84). Progressive Pentecostal social activism in El Salvador shows similar tendencies alongside the dynamics to separate from, consume, and critically engage social problems (Wadkins 2013). These interrelated and sometimes conflicting tendencies run beneath the Pentecostal vision of social justice.

At Azusa Street, there was a global summons to participate in an interracial, egalitarian congregation orchestrated by women and men whose diversity of languages and courageous social ethics manifested the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Seeds were planted for healing streams of reconciliation and social justice to flow forth from radically reconfigured soteriologies of inclusion and wholeness, in the church, in the world and on the margins. Indeed, the question of whether or not the unity, equality, and love experienced at Azusa Street can be replicated is ultimately a soteriological one. Speaking as someone "of the church but not in it," the acclaimed American writer James Baldwin once declared that there is no salvation without love, that salvation connects and does not divide, and that it is not the exclusive property of any dogma, creed, or church (Baldwin 2010, 165). If those within the Pentecostal church would dare to take ownership of this soteriological imperative in any meaningful way, that is, by fostering spiritual formation for social justice praxis in their communities of faith (Vondey 2015, 211–14), then Pentecostal theology must be reconfigured in light of the radial social vision that inspired the earliest revivals. Two foundational scripture texts illumine this Pentecostal social vision.

The foundational biblical texts of Acts 2:17 and 47 frame the events of the day of Pentecost and therefore also the application of the gospel to the concerns of social justice. From the point of view of Acts 2:17, a Pentecostal theology of social justice begins with the fulfillment on the day of Pentecost of God's promise to empower all different kinds of people with the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals concern themselves with the supernatural dimension of the experience, the comprehensibility of the languages spoken by the persons upon whom the Spirit was poured, the soteriological significations of the experience, and the theological implications the narrative brings to bear upon the nature and identity of God. At the root of these concerns stands the promise that God has poured out the Spirit "upon all flesh," and that all kinds of people are included whenever the Spirit of God moves. The intentionally inclusive character of the outpouring at Pentecost upon males and females, young and old, "even upon slaves" (v. 18) was as surely a sign of God's power as was the diversity of languages miraculously spoken to convey a single message to all members of the global company of observers. Thus, any effort to marginalize, deny, or devalue anyone's participation in the supernatural praxis of the beloved community on the basis of gender or economic status stands as a witness against the Holy Spirit. The implicit social ethical imperative, then, mandates spiritual formation for liturgical celebration of the diversity of the congregation and the equal status of all participants. Nobody should be excluded or ascribed subordinate roles on the basis of race, gender or economic status, nor relegated to token roles or representation designed to reinforce the dominant culture (see Chapter 10). This pneumatological perspective deeply

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informs and influences the modes of social engagement performed outside the church, serving as a template for the church's advocacy and promotion of political, cultural, and economic means and ideals of inclusion. The Spirit poured out on all people must be honored in all people.

The biblical record of the Pentecost event ends with the declaration that "day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Perhaps the most glaring contradiction of all in the evolution of Pentecostal social ethics is the reinstitution of barriers of racial separation (see Chapter 39) and the subordination of women (see Chapter 36) within the very same communions that were birthed from the interracial, multicultural, egalitarian throes of the Azusa Street revival. It seems highly unlikely that the salt of social justice and the light of Christian unity will be forthcoming from Pentecostal communions whose exilic ecclesiologies isolate their constituents from engagement with the urgent issues of the times, nor, on the other hand, from Pentecostals whose fluidic ecclesiologies emulate a brand of spirituality that celebrates social privilege and sublimates social responsibility in lockstep with the dominant political sensibilities of the modern age. However, the church has much to gain by acknowledging and engaging the aesthetics of those who have crossed over or come out of Pentecostalism (see Chapter 31). In the terms of the biblical texts, salvation is the gift of God to all those of different age, gender, class, ethnicity, and socio-economic standing upon whom the Spirit is poured out. This promise of the ecclesiology of Acts 2 presents a formidable social ethical challenge to the Pentecostal churches today to affirm the diversity of the outpouring of the Spirit, to build the capacity to receive all whom the Lord adds, and to sanctify the world via active networks of social engagement and public witness.

Conclusion

The origins of Pentecostalism at the Azusa Street mission and revival present the foundation for a radical theology of social justice based on love, unity, and equality. However, the diversion of Pentecostal theology into streams of evangelical, liberation, and prosperity theology have redirected and dispersed the attention of Pentecostal churches. In much of the West and the northern hemisphere, the majority of Pentecostals have adopted an evangelical soteriology that emphasizes a personal relationship with Jesus Christ at the cost of any social engagement. The often-sectarian origins of classical Pentecostals in North America have made way for sociopolitical conservatism. Progressive social activism is largely in the hands of Afropentecostalism and Latin American Pentecostals under the dominant influence of liberation theology. A global Pentecostal vision of social justice remains elusive, although a constructive discovery of its theological roots may well depend on the renewal of the radical social vision of the Azusa Street mission and revival.

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