

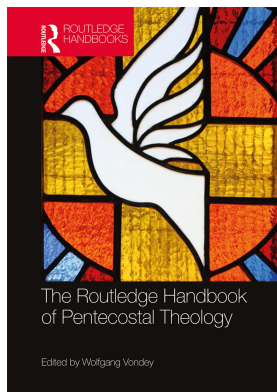
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3

PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY AS SPIRITUALITY

Explorations in theological method

Daniel Castelo

Whenever the topic of Pentecostal theology is extensively and broadly explored, the notion of spirituality must be addressed in some fashion. This chapter focuses on the body of literature which suggests explicitly that Pentecostal theology is best understood as involving spirituality in a significant way. The general claim is that the one goes hand in hand with the other—the way Pentecostals theologically reason and the way they live out their faith are connected. I wish to press the connection more strongly in this chapter by suggesting that Pentecostal theology should be considered as a feature of Pentecostal spirituality. Issues of crosspollination, overlap, and identification are all relevant here. That this latter proposal is at some level counterintuitive or possibly nonsensical, and even radical, says something about the state of theological reflection today. In contradistinction to the Pentecostal situation, the assumption in many theological quarters today is that theology and spirituality are separate if not divorced from one another (Sheldrake 1998, 33–64). This reality influences the way Pentecostals think about the interconnection between theology and spirituality; Pentecostals may see that they are connected, but nonetheless have difficulty establishing how they are. The appeal of the language of “divorce” is that it suggests a breach that once was not, and this is certainly the case with the history of theology and spirituality. Prior to the broad periods known as modernity and the Enlightenment, theology and spirituality were intimately connected in ways that are hard to imagine today. At least from the long vantage point of history, then, it is possible for theology and spirituality to be linked, and intimately so. Part of the challenge of the Pentecostal movement is that it contests this divorce head on, even as it attempts to find its own way in this deeply contested theological landscape.

The present chapter proceeds by showing some of the challenges and warrants for thinking of Pentecostal theology as spirituality before moving to consider a number of specific proposals that call for this active connection. Persistent in this discussion are questions related to theological method, since so much of the connection of theology and spirituality rests on assumptions and judgements within this domain. The overall goal here is to show the blissful union between theology and spirituality, one that is at the heart of the Pentecostal ethos, both as challenge and as opportunity.

Theology and spirituality

To put the matter sharply in response to the contemporary situation, Christian theology is a contentiously fragmented discipline. As a result, Pentecostal theology is pursued in different ways in light of this disciplinary fragmentation. The more accurate description is that there are a number of Pentecostal *theologies* rather than a single Pentecostal theology to consider (see Chapters 1 and 2). It is important to explore some of this terrain to contextualize the rationale for thinking of Pentecostal theology as spirituality.

One take on these matters would have it that classical Pentecostalism did not emerge as a movement stressing a new kind of theological methodology or epistemology; it simply has to do with a different kind of revivalist experience sometimes reduced to the speaking with tongues. Given its unusualness, the phenomenon of speaking with tongues or glossolalia is typically the most talked about aspect of Pentecostalism by observers of the movement, thereby receiving considerable attention from many different disciplinary camps (see Cartledge 2006). Moreover, this privileging of glossolalia is not simply on display among outside assessors of the movement; it can also be found among certain rank-and-file Pentecostals as well. For instance, when Pentecostals are asked what is doctrinally distinctive about their movement, some from the orbit of classical Pentecostalism in North America respond with the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues (see McGee 1991). This appraisal is funded by a particular reclamation of the theology of Charles Parham (see Castelo 2017, 132–48). That this understanding is lifted up as what makes Pentecostalism distinctive from other theological traditions is both promising and challenging on several fronts. The promise rests on the manifest instinct that Pentecostal theology and experience must go hand in hand in some mutually informing fashion. After all, Spirit baptism, with which glossolalia is associated in this formulation, is understood by Pentecostals as a powerful experience of God (see Chapter 23). As for the challenges surrounding this formulation, these relate to the various dynamics associated with the kind of latent reduction of Pentecostal spirituality and theology to a single phenomenon. This construct tends to stress the phenomenon of tongues (particularly with the language of “initial” and “evidence”) more so than the theological underpinnings of that phenomenon (“baptism in the Holy Spirit”), thereby leaving many doctrinal themes unattended (including Scripture, ecclesiology, and the like). In light of this vacuum, other theological paradigms can fill the void in relatively unaltered form from their formulations elsewhere. For instance, one senses this dynamic at work when Pentecostals adopt various fundamentalisms that have often been cessationist, and so outright dismissive of the legitimacy of Pentecostal forms of worship and expression. Amos Yong highlights that of certain proposals (but the point is generalizable to more examples), it is easy for theologies produced with this operative reduction to be “evangelical theologies plus”—that is, evangelical theologies that have added a matter or two related to pneumatology and spirituality in an ancillary way rather than having such themes constitute a methodological orientation that grounds the theological endeavor from the very start (Yong 2014, 10). Hence, we do not arrive at a genuinely Pentecostal theology.

A second option in Pentecostal theology would say that one can do theology in a Pentecostal way akin to how other traditions do theology within their own contexts. Given that there are such things as (for example) Lutheran and Reformed theologies, likewise there should be something called “Pentecostal theology.” What would Pentecostal theology modelled after other tradition-based theologies look like? Terry Cross (2000, 34–35) suggests that it would involve thinking of theology broadly as a second-order discourse constructed by humans and responsive to the primary act of God’s self-disclosure. The construction itself

would be ordered according to an organizing principle or integrative motif “for the sake of clarity of presentation and coherency of content” (Cross 2001). For his part, Cross highlights trinitarian theology generally as that kind of principle or motif. Another principle or motif for Pentecostal theology is the “full gospel” schema (see Chapter 16) in which Jesus is cast in a four-fold (“savior, spirit-baptizer, healer, soon-coming king”) or five-fold (“sanctifier” added to the prior titles) way. This model has a rich heritage within the movement itself and has recently been promoted by several Pentecostal theologians (Kärkkäinen 2007; Thomas 2010; Vondey 2017).

The election of a guiding motif, framework, or organizing principle for the work of Pentecostal theology is both promising and challenging and does provide a degree of generalizable coherence and logicity. Pentecostal theology presented in this way is both easy to follow and capable of being communicated to wider audiences that are already inclined to think of the theological task in a certain way. However, challenges also exist with this second approach. The adequacy of the preferred principle or motif can be exposed over time as it is extensively used. Furthermore, casting theology as second-order discourse sounds potentially too anthropocentric—a human activity that is responsive to, and so distinguishable from, the act of God’s self-revelation.

The paradigm that is Christian spirituality has the potential to address these matters in a fitting way, but some broad points are worth considering first. To summarily define the notion, “Christian spirituality speaks of the lived experience of faith” (Albrecht and Howard 2014, 235). The way faith is practiced, embodied, and lived out are all aspects of spirituality (Albrecht 1999). As a result of this “incarnational” feature of spirituality, it is easy for some to cast theology and spirituality, if they are understood as connected in some way, as poles upon a single line—reflection on one end and embodiment on the other. More, however, could be said, and Albrecht and Howard (2014, 235) continue in a robust theological tone, “Whereas theology examines our *understanding* of God, spirituality considers our *more encompassing experience* of God” (emphasis added). The appeal of this depiction is that theology is cast as complementing spirituality. As a result, the connection is more pronounced.

The lurking question in this definition, however, is one that is also present in the two proposals outlined above: does “our more encompassing experience of God” in fact *involve and include* “our understanding of God,” and vice versa? Notice that what is being pressed with this question is not so much a connection between two separate entities (theology/understanding or spirituality/experience/embodiment) but rather a recognition that these dimensions overlap or coincide in some mutually determining fashion. For this arrangement, I tend to prefer the language of “interface” (see Castelo 2017, 27–31) to show that theology requires spirituality in order to properly be theology, and spirituality requires theology in order to properly be spirituality. One cannot thrive apart from the other.

This way of connecting theology and spirituality integrates the possibilities and contributions of the proposals above while addressing some of their challenges. In view of the first proposal, casting Pentecostal theology as spirituality retains the fundamental role of experience by placing a premium on experiencing God and living in conforming response to God, all the while avoiding some of the latent reductions at work with exorbitantly focusing on tongues or initial evidence reasoning. As for the second proposal, Pentecostal theology as spirituality can include a multitude of understandings, including the doctrinal loci, by placing these within a holistic, orienting framework. Themes like Scripture, the church, salvation, and others all can operate out of rich dimensions once theology and spirituality are seen as mutually constituting — dimensions that not only stress coherence or organization but also discipleship, character, mission, and the like.

In short, the casting of Pentecostal theology as spirituality opens venues of exploration while staying consistent with certain impulses of the movement. That this proposal sometimes sits uneasily within the contemporary theological landscape is an unfortunate consequence of the theology generally being shaped and diminished within the throes of various challenges at work within the Western intellectual tradition. Pentecostal scholars as a result have had to offer supplementary and extensive proposals to shore up these intuitions within scholarly debates. Some of these contributions will be considered in the remainder of the chapter.

Proposals that cast Pentecostal theology as spirituality

Before proceeding to the different modes for understanding theological knowledge in the Pentecostal tradition, it should be noted that the field of Christian spirituality in and of itself can be approached in a variety of ways. One dominant way is through the expansive field known as “practical theology,” which at times can draw from the social sciences in order to make specific contributions, and that work has been done within Pentecostal circles (see Chapter 15). More difficult has been the integration of spirituality in traditional notions of systematic theology or theology proper (see Chapter 1). What follows are gestures that point to different modes involved for thinking of Pentecostal theology proper in terms of spirituality. They press diverse methodological commitments within the specific act of theological reasoning. The dominant approaches highlighted are identified as integrationist, philosophical, liberationist, and mystical.

Integrationist

The most influential early voice for thinking of Pentecostal theology as spirituality is Steven J. Land and his work *Pentecostal Spirituality* (1993). This is the watershed book for thinking about Pentecostal theology as spirituality which has set the tone for this approach since its publication.

In his opening chapter, Land (1993, 32) establishes a pneumatological center by casting theological science as beginning with the Holy Spirit, that is “God with us.” He cites Lesslie Newbigin to good effect when he notes that the famous ecumenist drew a distinction relevant for Pentecostals, who do not emphasize right structure like Roman Catholicism or right message like Protestantism but rather “the Christian life [as] a matter of the experienced power and presence of the Holy Spirit today” (Land 1993, 33, citing Newbigin 1954, 95). Naturally, beginning the theological task with the Holy Spirit involves human perception of the presence and work of the Spirit, but this within a wider context of consideration: “Theology requires not only discursive reasoning but also the engagement of the *whole person* within the communion of charisms” (Land 1993, 34, emphasis added). This wider orbit of theology includes those modes and registers where the Spirit touches human selves, including worship, prayer, and testimony. In a summarizing statement, Land (1993, 36) remarks,

The language of the vocative and the indicative, of prayer and belief, must be seen together. For Pentecostals it is impossible to know God and the things of God without prayer, because in prayer one responds to the Spirit of truth.

To supplement these instincts, Land relies on the work of Karl Barth and Don Saliers (Barth 1985), particularly as both connect prayer to theological epistemology. The overall argument

Land is sustaining here is that on Pentecostal terms, life in the Spirit is the ground for the life of the mind.

Land's vision has been labelled integrationist along a variety of strata with the expansive and all-encompassing presence and work of the Holy Spirit as his starting point. At its most basic, the integrationist theme is registered in various domains within the Christian life, which Land (1993, 41) highlights in a tripartite way:

The wholeness of the body of Christ given in the proper relation of Spirit, Word and community has as its corollary a view of spirituality which is the integration of beliefs, affections, and actions (of knowing, being, and doing). Indeed, for a Pentecostal theology-as-spirituality, with a starting point in the Holy Spirit, it is a *necessary* correlation (emphasis added).

Land (1993, 31–34, 182–83) also uses throughout the volume another tripartite formula to communicate the same correlation: “orthodoxy” (right praise–confession), “orthopathy” (right affections), and “orthopraxy” (right praxis). For Land, the integration of these aspects is “necessary” to avoid fragmentations and deviations into intellectualism, sentimentalism, and activism, respectively. Should one of these aspects be isolated from the other two, something other than a vibrant Christian witness would be at work. In the case of the theology-spirituality interface, it is clear: “knowing” apart from “being” and “doing” will not produce the kind of knowledge that is fitting to the Pentecostal theological ethos, for aspects of God-knowledge come to be and are shaped by a person's character and behavior, which are all undertaken within a Spirit-drenched world.

At various stages in the volume, Land nuances the directionality of his tripartite scheme further. Early on, Land (1993, 13) states, “Spirituality is defined as the integration of beliefs and practices in the affections which are themselves evoked and expressed by those beliefs and practices.” As evident in this definition, the momentum of integration tips toward and out of the affections, a religious-psychological-moral category oftentimes associated with John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards. Land (1993, 22) employs the category of the affections as a means of getting at the “‘deep things’ of the human heart; the abiding, decisive, directing motives, and dispositions which characterize Pentecostals.” Later, and in light of the “ortho-” categories, Land (1993, 44) remarks, “The personal integrating center of orthodoxy and orthopraxy is orthopathy, those distinctive affections which are belief shaped, praxis oriented and characteristic of a person.” With this holistic center, he goes on to include themes such as transformation, sanctification, and the fruit and gifts of the Spirit into his vision. All of this points to not simply the “what” of theological reflection (that is, the content of what is said, confessed, or believed) but also to the “who” (the identity and character of the theologian), the “how” (the manner in which theology is undertaken), and the “why” (the rationale or end for which it is pursued) of theological endeavoring important (not only) for Pentecostals.

The sheer energy of this text endures to bear fruit today in that Land's generative vision continues to inspire research projects. Land represents an integrationist perspective on the theme of Pentecostal theology as spirituality because he gives due attention to registers of theological inquiry that go beyond the cognitive, rational, or propositional registers of that work. In short, Pentecostal spirituality offers a vision for “life in the Spirit” that is attuned to various theological discussions and concerns so as to generate fresh methodological proposals that capture many different features of what Pentecostal theologizing can formally be.

Philosophical

It may appear strange at some level to think that the casting of Pentecostal theology as spirituality would involve philosophical concerns (see Chapter 37), but on closer inspection, the divide between theology and spirituality within the theological academy is itself the product of various philosophical decisions made over the years in the Western intellectual tradition. Given Pentecostalism's ethos, which is in some respects out of step with this tradition, it makes sense to think that Pentecostalism's contribution to wider Christian arrangements is not simply at the experiential level but more fundamentally in terms of how the world is imagined, how truth is discerned, and so on. Walter Hollenweger (1992) was attuned to these possibilities by identifying a "critical tradition" within Pentecostalism, which again, sounds strange on the surface, since early Pentecostals were not typically viewed as participating in the great intellectual challenges of their day. Hollenweger's keen intuition and analysis here, however, are significant: the Pentecostal way of life is intellectually and socially consequential; as a result, it is philosophically significant.

Years later, that "critical tradition" of Pentecostalism was fully explored and elaborated by the Christian philosopher James K. A. Smith in his book *Thinking in Tongues*. Rather than approaching Pentecostalism with categories pre-established by the (Christian) philosophical academy, Smith ventures into bold territory, actively asking what contributions Pentecostalism could make to the (Christian) philosophical academy itself. That contribution has many aspects to it, but one point bears highlighting from the beginning: this contribution is grounded in an embodied and lived spirituality. As Smith (2010, xiii) remarks in a footnote, "there is a unique 'genius' implicit in Pentecostal spirituality that should yield a distinct and integral philosophy." One could add more nuance to this claim: whereas Pentecostal spirituality could yield and make suggestive philosophical contributions, those contributions are themselves employable in the effort to explore and understand this spirituality. All of this is fitting for the theological task, for as Smith (2010, 5) rightfully acknowledges, "philosophy has often provided the basic concepts (*Grundbegriffe*) that theology employs." Put sharply in terms of this chapter, the casting of Pentecostal theology as spirituality requires a distinct philosophical framework, one that openly critiques the division between theology and spirituality itself (a division which in many ways is itself the result of philosophical determination in a particular context) and that offers new terms and possibilities. As Smith (2010, 5) avers, "pentecostal theology should utilize basic concepts forged in a *pentecostal* philosophy," and this, I would argue, contributes to a strengthened identification between Pentecostal theology and spirituality.

One particular aspect of Smith's proposals that relates to Pentecostal theology as a spirituality is his notion of a "pentecostal worldview." Smith uses the term "worldview" loosely here, for he has in mind the way people hold reality together and imagine themselves in it; he thinks of this phrase in terms similar to Charles Taylor's (2004) notion of a "social imaginary." As constituent of this worldview, Smith (2010, 11) focuses on five key themes that function as a constellation of "fundamental pentecostal commitments:" (1) a radical openness to God in which something new can happen, including transformation; (2) an "enchanted" theology of creation and culture in which the Spirit of God is at work in all things and throughout all places, as are other spiritual realities and dynamics; (3) a nondualistic affirmation of embodiment and materiality in which latent gnosticisms are critiqued and both human bodies and the created realm retain features of their created goodness; (4) an affective, narrative epistemology that is explicitly rooted in manifest forms of Pentecostal spirituality; and (5) an eschatological orientation toward mission and justice that actively empowers

believers to be agents of change in the world here and now. Each of these themes can be unpacked and developed significantly, but when taken together, they suggest that Pentecostals, in a sense, inhabit a “different world” from others who operate out of different fundamental commitments. Such a claim is not meant to privilege or make exceptional Pentecostal forms of Christianity; however, the claim stresses that differences along such fundamental themes do matter for grounding assumptions and orienting visions. What all of this means for the present chapter is that if Pentecostals inhabit a distinct “world” at this fundamental level, then how they imagine and pursue theology will be affected as a result.

Smith’s fourth point—that of an affective, narrative epistemology—is especially fitting to elaborate for the purposes of spirituality. As one can easily see, the language of both affectivity and narrativity is similar to Land’s project; in fact, Smith (2010, 26–27) stresses with explicit reference to Land that Pentecostal spirituality is both a grounding point for Pentecostal theology and philosophy and that it involves its own account of knowledge, a kind of “affective understanding.” This kind of knowledge or understanding is latent, tacit, and pretheoretical; it operates out of distinct registers that are sometimes best communicated through testimony and story (see Chapter 4). At work here is a unique theological epistemology, one that is not antirational but antirationalist. As Smith (2010, 53) stresses, “it’s not reason that is the target, but our idolatrous construction of it.” The implications of this account of epistemology for the theology–spirituality interface are considerable. What God–knowledge is and how it is pursued must be lodged within a different world than the rationalist kind that so grips the modern West (see Chapter 7). Rather than finding the truth in a testimony, this perspective casts truth as the testimony itself (see Smith 2010, 64). Therefore, when a Pentecostal believer claims that “they know that they know that they know” deep things of the Spirit in their lives, and this is attested by hearers, what is on display is not so much a shared solipsistic experience but a manifest critique and alternative to modern forms of theological knowledge brought about by the depths of Pentecostal spirituality.

Liberationist

One of the unfortunate consequences of the Western intellectual paradigm regnant today is its penchant toward partitioning the human self. As a result, it makes sense in this environment to keep theology in one realm (public and openly deliberated) and spirituality in another (private and individually justified). One trend that counters this fragmentation is liberation theology, broadly conceived. Liberation theology recognizes that these fragmentations are not simply expressions of a kind of privilege in which the mind is functionally disembodied from the social conditioning and contextualization of the self, but they are also deleterious to the life of faith overall. The greater the partitioning, the more devastating is the incongruence between God, faith, and life. The history of Western colonialism, with all of its Christian influences and support, is one disastrous consequence of such incongruence.

Therefore, strong parallels exist between liberation theology and the vision of Pentecostal theology as spirituality. No wonder, then, that some have made these parallels work as fruitful exchanges and emergent permutations. One such case is Samuel Solivan and his work *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation*. Significantly, Solivan (1998) also uses a tripartite schema, and similar to Land, one that is marked by orthodoxy, orthopathy, and orthopraxy. The difference, however, largely rests on the middle term. Whereas Land stresses “orthopathy” and develops this along Wesleyan lines, Solivan stresses “orthopathos,” which is at the heart of his distinct proposal. For both Land and Solivan, passion and pathos serve as a kind of integrating center, and the proposals are, per Solivan’s perspective (1998, 13), complementary so

as “to comprise a more integrative understanding of Pentecostal spirituality in its pneumatic and social context.”

For Solivan, that particular location and experience have to do with the existential and practical plight of those who are oppressed, poor, and disenfranchised. Solivan’s orthopathos “brings empathic concern for the sufferer into the act of doing theology,” which is important because without such a factor, “‘orthodoxy’ and ‘orthopraxis’ are incomplete epistemologically” in the North American setting (Solivan 1998, 60) and (I would argue) beyond. In Solivan’s view, these realms are incomplete because without this empathic concern, too much is lost in the process of formulating what is “right” belief or practice; in fact, part of what makes these “right” is their directedness to changing what is “wrong,” and what is “wrong” in this world is not simply personal sin and brokenness, but structural sin and brokenness of a kind that keep untold millions from finding the strength and hope to rise in the power of the Holy Spirit beyond those forces that keep them dehumanized and oppressed on a daily basis.

What we have once more on display, this time through Solivan’s account, is a problematizing of standard accounts of theological knowledge through the offering of methodological alternatives. In a summary of his concerns with evangelical framings of orthodoxy, Solivan (1998, 64) offers this fitting statement:

Orthodoxy, narrowly defined as propositional truth, dehumanizes revelation and elevates the cognitive, radically bifurcating it from the affective. We are not saved by what we know but by whom we know, and how God informs and transforms our lives and our neighbors’ lives. Knowledge about God is not an end in itself. It must point beyond itself to the other, the neighbor.

That this concern for the neighbor as inherent to the theology–spirituality interface is difficult to appreciate is itself an indicator of severe and damaging developments, for the witness of history shows otherwise. Some of the most active and empathic expressions of Christianity operated from a basis that cast theology and spirituality as a vibrant interface.

Mystical

Another approach worth considering is the mystical connection between the Pentecostal vision of the theology–spirituality interface and ancient Christian tradition. For many, the developments of modernity and the Enlightenment have been characterized as contributing to the divorce of theology and spirituality. In contrast, Pentecostalism has operated with assumptions related to their interconnection, which establishes a working affinity between Pentecostalism and premodern voices and movements. On a broad scale, this link makes sense: when one looks at various Pentecostal testimonies from various times and places, one readily finds expressions and statements that are congruent with such classical phrases as *fides quaerens intellectum* and *lex orandi–lex credendi* (see Stephenson 2006) as well as ancient themes such as wisdom and contemplation (Albrecht 1992). Just given the remarks of Land highlighted above, Pentecostals can be said to stand within an Eastern sensibility as highlighted by Kallistos Ware (1993, 207):

Theology, mysticism, spirituality, moral rules, worship, art: these things must not be kept in separate compartments. Doctrine cannot be understood unless it is prayed: a theologian, said Evagrius, is one who knows how to pray, and he who prays in spirit and truth is by that very act a theologian.

Of course, the difficulty in all of this involves the widespread perception that Pentecostalism is a relatively recent phenomenon in world Christianity. More established church traditions may think of Pentecostalism as faddish and prone to novel teachings and ideas, whereas insiders might revel in the energy and appeal of offering something “fresh” to jaded or skeptical hearers. And yet, when one observes how Pentecostals stress the relationship between theology and spirituality, one cannot help but recognize longstanding features of the Christian intellectual tradition, particularly ones related to method and epistemology as these are grounded in a pneumatological framework. As it turns out, “life in the Spirit” looks similar in certain respects regardless of time and space, and this because the Spirit of the Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever. What appears as novel from one vantage point may be something quite ancient from another.

One of the most important efforts to situate Pentecostalism within ancient Christian tradition has been the work of Simon Chan (2000). Chan believes that Pentecostalism should locate itself within larger streams of ancient Christian tradition for the sake of Pentecostalism’s ongoing vitality and renewal. This situating exercise would necessarily involve recovering “the ancient art of spiritual theology where reflecting on the nature of God and praying to him are indistinguishable acts” (Chan 2000, 12) as well as other matters that overall can serve a role in the traditioning process within Pentecostalism. For Chan, there is a crisis within various Pentecostal communities of passing on and remaining firm in features of their collective theological identity (see Chapter 9). He believes a way forward is to embed Pentecostalism within the riches of Christianity’s ancient spiritual traditions.

Of the terms Ware mentions in the quote above, mysticism is an important term that can help in the process of embedding Pentecostalism within longstanding spiritual traditions and allowing Pentecostals to engage faithfully and critically their tradition. Although Chan does not make significant use of the term, I have done so in my own work for a variety of reasons. One reason is the way that mysticism is often appealed to by people who are trying to make sense of Pentecostalism in broad, generalizable terms. To take but one example, Harvey Cox (1995, 92), in reflecting on his experiences with global Pentecostalism, comes to the conclusion that Pentecostalism represents today “sublime forms of mysticism” inherent to the ancient Christian past. It could very well be, as Margaret Poloma (2003) hints in the title of one of her works, that Pentecostals are contemporary “main street mystics.”

Another reason for the appeal of mysticism to describe Pentecostalism relates to what Cox and others sense, and that is how the term can be fruitfully put to use in talking about God and the Christian life. In other words, it can serve a crucial role in substantiating and energizing the theology-spirituality interface. Mysticism itself is a difficult category, but its usage in the Christian past shows that the term need not be condensed to its modern reductions related to privatized, esoteric experiences; rather, mysticism within ancient Christianity dealt with many of the issues that have been developed so far in relation to the theology-spirituality interface, especially as these relate to the ultimate mystery of all, the divine mystery (McIntosh 1998). Beholding and living in the divine mystery requires trading in holy mysteries, whether these be doctrines, sacraments, spiritual disciplines, or other matters. As a result, theological method, theological epistemology, and even theological language must be both invigorated and chastened by the vision of a holy, awe-inspiring God. Intellectual humility, the recognized need for apophaticism, and even a role for pillars of the faith—namely, saints—all can be registered in light of the mystical playing a role in Pentecostal self-identification and self-naming.

What does the claiming of the mystical look like in terms of the theme of Pentecostal theology as spirituality? One consequence would be that Pentecostals should give up

trying to be something that they have never easily been, namely “evangelicals who speak in tongues.” The unease associated with the evangelical identifier has to do with the typically impoverished pneumatology that pervades many evangelical fellowships. Put another way, Pentecostals have never really fit well into the evangelical fold because of the latter’s routinely deficient role for the Spirit, especially as it relates to methodological and epistemological registers. Another consequence would be the formulation of doctrine itself. One sees this in particular with the logic of initial evidence reasoning surrounding Spirit baptism, which in many ways relies on and exemplifies a modernist epistemological approach. If doctrines are ultimately expressions of holy mysteries, then the privileging of empirical evidence would need to be replaced with an operative vision of the Spirit baptized life that involves growth, ignorance, and struggle (see Castelo 2017, 126–77). Finally, and most importantly, claiming the mystical within discussions of the theology–spirituality interface places God front and center of all that is said and done. This claim may sound overly pious to some and blatantly obvious to others, but it is fundamental and should not be taken for granted.

Conclusion

Pentecostal theology cannot be undertaken and understood apart from Pentecostal spirituality. Much more could be said in this chapter about this claim by way of examples and elaboration, but the larger point would remain the same: casting Pentecostal theology as a kind of spirituality communicates some of the prominent features of the Pentecostal ethos—features that both significantly contribute to the understanding and development of Pentecostal theology and that can have a profound impact on the theological academy as a whole. As Pentecostal scholarship becomes more widely known, the approach to view Pentecostal theology in the terms of Pentecostal spirituality is poised to play a significant role in discussions related to theological method, epistemology, and praxis.

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