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Author Meets Critics

Responding to Daniel Castelo's Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition

1 Review of Castelo's *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystic Tradition* by Kyle Smith

Daniel Castelo begins *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* by providing a brief purview of the debate surrounding pentecostal theological methodology. He notes that there is a perceived need to remain faithful to Pentecostalism's unique attributes, such as an emphasis on the Spirit and encounter.¹ However, many scholars are concerned that overly emphasizing spirituality and encounter within pentecostal theology will lead to an increase in anti-intellectualism among the movement (11). To alleviate these two concerns it has been asserted that Pentecostals should understand spirituality and theology to be opposite ends of a spectrum (13–15). Consequently, Pentecostals should seek to remain in the center of the spectrum, incorporating equal amounts of both theology and spirituality into the movement.

Castelo utilizes *Apostolic Faith* and other historical documents to argue that Azusa Street Pentecostals believed that “experience opened up theological horizons” and that theological effort was necessarily dependent upon something “greater than intellectual prowess and creativity” (21). Based on this historical analysis, Castelo argues that modern pentecostal theologians have diverged from their historical roots. They have accepted the paradigm that theology and spirituality are two separate categories (15). Castelo believes this divergence occurred as a reaction to the need to legitimize early Pentecostalism.

¹ Daniel Castelo, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 7. Further references to this book will give page numbers in the text.

This tension within Pentecostalism has led many to question if it is even possible for Pentecostalism to create a unique systematic theology (25 and 28). This question arises because many pentecostal theologians sense the tensions that exists between the two elements within Pentecostalism. To expound upon this point, Castelo notes that there are two “streams” or “strands” within Pentecostalism (28). The first strand was centered around testimonies of God experiences, the second was theological. Many scholars have argued that Pentecostals kept these two strands separate even as it is acknowledged that the first strand was what made Pentecostalism unique.

Castelo disagrees with this trend. According to Castelo, the two streams within Pentecostalism never were and cannot be separated. He argues, “Narrative and testimony are legitimate and productive theological categories in and of themselves” (30). The experiences are, in a sense, supposed to be the theology. Once this fact is acknowledged, “Pentecostalism starts to appear more like a Christian mystical tradition and less like a movement that can be conveniently circumscribed by any systematic theology” (32).

Chapter 2 begins with a list of scholars who have either explicitly referred to Pentecostalism as a mystical tradition or have implied it in their work. The list includes James Smith, Dale Coulter, Simon Chan, Daniel Albrecht, and Harvey Cox (39). The term *mystic*, however, can mean various things. For instance, mysticism is often defined as “a search for and experience of immediacy with God” (44). According to Castelo this is a “curious” definition as it says nothing about God. The word *God* thus becomes ambiguous, a mere placeholder for whatever concept the reader would project into the sentence. The definition is subsequently applicable to a wide range of religions. This understanding is also in line with works by Rudolf Otto and many other secular scholars of religion who believe that humanity is necessarily religious/mystical and consequently desires contact with the divine.

This is, however, an unacceptable definition for most Pentecostals. Thus, when the adjective *mystical* is ascribed to Pentecostals, something else is being implied (46). This becomes readily apparent when pentecostal testimonies are examined. These self-narratives are not ambiguous descriptions of some unknown other but, rather, pointed descriptions about “who God is and what God is doing” (47). Thus, Pentecostalism is not a mystical religion in the religious studies sense, but rather in that it proposes and adheres to a God who is mystery and yet self-reveals. With this self-revelation God becomes more than simply a “projection of one’s desire”; God becomes a “truly self-subsistent Other” (54). This is revelatory mystery, not an investigative mystery in which humanity discovers God through its own efforts.

At this point Castelo returns to a question he asked at the beginning of the chapter: “Can Christianity be understood to be at its core a mystical faith?”

(38). With a specifically Christian definition of mysticism Castelo references early developments of Christianity and answers this question affirmatively. Early Christianity was a “revealed religion”; consequently, there was necessarily a mystical element to the movement. Almost immediately after Christianity spread throughout Europe, however, it developed a need to express itself in intellectual terms. This, as Castelo argues, was originally a necessary and a beneficial development. The intellectualization of Christianity allowed Christians to enter public dialogue with the non-Christians around them. During the early developments of this trend, theology and spirituality, which Castelo defines as the practices that have mystical encounters as their goals (55), were separated.

Many scholars trace this divide between spirituality and theology to the Enlightenment era. Castelo, however, argues that this divide began during the Scholastic era and was only furthered by the rationalist movement. This desire to create a completely rational version of Christianity culminated in Ockham’s statement that belief and knowledge are two matters that should be kept entirely separate. Modern theology has followed this stream of thought, seeking to create an intellectual theology that can exist apart from a God who self-reveals. As this development was occurring, spirituality became increasingly privatized. Spirituality, or the practice of encountering God, became something one participated in privately and individually.

Castelo argues that Pentecostalism can reverse this trend. “What primarily makes Pentecostalism a mystical tradition of the Church catholic is its persistent, passionate, and widespread emphasis on encounter” (80). Within Pentecostalism, “God presents Godself” (81). Thus, “Encountering God ... serves as the epistemological grounding for pentecostal theological methodology” (81). By embracing this part of its identity Pentecostalism can reintroduce the idea of theology being intrinsically linked to the practice of spirituality, mysticism, and encounter.

Castelo begins chapter 3 by asserting, “Whereas I have made the case here that the Christian life on the whole trades on holy mysteries, the American evangelical movement, although citing Scripture as its one true authority, has significantly failed to account for the mystery-laden qualities of this life” (84). Evangelicals, even when they promote the idea of mystery, feel a need to assert that reason still plays a role within the mystery of God. It is argued that this high emphasis on reason is also exemplified by the humanity disciplines within academia as a means of establishing legitimacy within the context of modernism (84).

Castelo utilizes the works of Timothy Weber and Robert Weber to define Evangelicals as Christians who are bound together by “a certain epistemological paradigm that secures truth in a very particular way ... they typically rational-

ize the Christian faith in such a manner that leaves little room for a mystical sensibility” (89).² In this epistemological framework biblical inerrancy takes on a very specific “epistemological militancy.” This epistemology is implicit and unquestionable in most evangelical communities. To build this argument, Castelo reviews the work of prominent evangelical theologians and focuses specifically on the works of A.A. Hodge and Carl Henry. Examining their works, Castelo notes that Hodge perceives the experience of mystics as subjective, and thus Hodge believes that mystics reject the objective truths concerning God (98 and 99). Furthermore, Henry perceives the God of the mystics to be both self-contradictory and paradoxical (107).

This analysis allows Castelo to assert, “The theological methodology at work in the fundamentalist/neo-evangelical lineage is precisely one that cannot be accommodated to Pentecostal identity when it is significantly marked by its mystical orientation” (91). Admittedly, some scholars believe that Pentecostalism can be understood as existing as a subset within Evangelicalism. In many ways the pentecostal interaction with Scripture looks similar to the evangelical method. Pentecostals read Scripture “at face value” and interpret it in the “plain sense” (111). Nevertheless, Castelo believes, “The willingness of Pentecostals to allow their theology to be interpreted by charismatic experience ... makes their approach unique” (112). He continues, “Broadly ... Pentecostals read Scripture not so much to encounter the facts or truths of the Christian faith as to encounter the living God of Christian confession ... Pentecostal hermeneutical orientation is relation and experiential at its core” (112).

In Chapter 4 Castelo examines the theology and practice of tongues. He gives special attention to the narrative surrounding the rise of tongues and works with other scholars to delineate truth and myth surrounding the genesis of tongues. If I understand Castelo correctly, however, I found the most interesting part of the chapter to be his insinuation that the reason Pentecostals have so faithfully adhered to the theology of tongues as an initial sign is that it was epistemologically “convenient” (141). Castelo argues that having a visible sign of an encounter with God allowed Pentecostals to readily identify each other. But more important, utilizing tongues as an empirical verification of a spiritual event was conducive to the “philosophical climate of positivism” (142). It is for this reason that terms such as “initial,” “physical,” “sign,” “proof,” and “evidence” are so heavily used in reference to the experience of tongues.

Thus, even though Castelo argues that Evangelicals were overly influenced by rationalistic tendencies and that Pentecostalism is uniquely positioned to

2 Note that this is Castelo's summary of the work of Timothy and Robert Weber.

provide some desperately required theological innovations, he admits that Pentecostalism was also influenced by the modernistic impulse. What is unique about this admission is that tongues is frequently identified as the defining characteristic of Pentecostalism. To argue that this characteristic is modernistic seems to undermine Castelo's primary thesis. However, Castelo makes several specific distinctions that I think allow him to avoid this seeming contradiction. First, Castelo's thesis is that Pentecostalism should not be defined by the practice of tongues, but instead as a mystical tradition. Thus, while the role played by tongues within Pentecostalism is important, it is not the defining feature. Second, Castelo is not arguing that tongues itself is modernistic, but rather that utilizing tongues as initial evidence is modernistic. He believes that the understanding of tongues as evidence and the mystical element within Pentecostalism creates a tension within the movement. For this reason, most of the chapter is directed toward creating a new theological framework for tongues within the pentecostal tradition.

In chapter 6 Castelo expounds upon this point by implicitly pointing out that there is a tension between the modernistic and the mystical tendency within the practice of tongues itself. Tongues defy "logo-centric parameters" (176) and represent a recognition that words are insufficient to describe God (175). Castelo notes, "When Pentecostals speak in glossolalic tongues, they do not know what they are saying, and that is very much an appropriate epistemic space to occupy. In some sense, *they do not need to know*" (176).

The chapter, and the book, conclude with Castelo arguing that Pentecostalism's strong emphasis on the power of the Spirit leaves it vulnerable to spiritual gluttony in which the adherents look for spiritual satisfaction or pleasure through religious experience. Castelo argues that this concern is validated by the manner in which tongues are described as being primarily about the encouragement and edification of the practitioner (176). What is required, according to St. John of the Cross and Castelo, is for a dark night to serve as catalyst causing the pentecostal movement to enter into a state of maturity.

Castelo's presentation of Pentecostalism is more than a description; it is a vision for what Pentecostalism could be were it to fully claim its heritage. Pentecostalism is a mystical tradition, but more specifically it is a Christian mystical tradition. Consequently, the church catholic will best be served when Pentecostals remain faithful to their heritage.

The concern I would like to address to Castelo is that it seems that, despite the difference between Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, they have inhabited a similar place for many decades and have consequently greatly influenced each other. Often, when I read pentecostal and evangelical literature it seems obvious to me that the evangelical theologians have had a greater influence on

pentecostal thinkers and adherents than vice versa. My concern is that Pentecostalism has been so heavily influenced by evangelical thought that even if Pentecostalism once was a mystical tradition, it can no longer be considered such because of the dominant influence of evangelical thought.

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2 **Review of Castelo's *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystic Tradition* by Leah Payne**

Daniel Castelo's *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* is a theological monograph, but, like the movement he seeks to categorize, Castelo's work transcends traditional disciplinary lines. As a historian, my comments aim to show what Castelo's categorical work does for historians seeking to explore and understand the movement. My response analyzes the categories present within Castelo's title and explicated throughout the book: Pentecostalism, Christian mysticism, and tradition.

2.1 ***Pentecostalism***

There are many ways to define Pentecostalism. Questions about what it is and whether or not the movement should be understood historically, sociologically,³ ethnographically,⁴ theologically,⁵ and so forth abound in literature about Pentecostals and Pentecostalism. In my own work, I have argued that Pentecostalism is not best understood theologically, at least not in the way the term *theology* is usually employed. Pentecostalism is not guided or propelled by what Protestants typically think of when they think of theology—an intellectual

3 See, e.g., William K. Kay, *Pentecostalism* (London: SCM Press, 2009); Arlene M. Sánchez Walsh, *Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Margaret M. Poloma and John C. Green, *The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

4 See, e.g., Peter Marina, *Getting the Holy Ghost: Urban Ethnography in a Brooklyn Pentecostal Tongue-Speaking Church* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013).

5 See, e.g., Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000); Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (New York: T & T Clark, 2008); Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

principle or set of principles that shapes beliefs and practices. I think of Pentecostalism as a practice⁶—a set of practices,⁷ really—that contain within them a plethora of theological meanings.

Many systematic theologians chafe at the thought that there is not a T.U.L.I.P. or Quadrilateral or catechism or Book of Common Prayer or any particular governing theological principle holding the movement together. Some Pentecostals do, too. In this first century of the movement, certain theologians and practitioners perpetuated the idea that pentecostal theology is best done as a kind of evangelical theology plus tongues. This amounted to creating theology that any conservative, Billy Graham-esque Evangelical could endorse, along with an emphasis on the remarkable works of the Holy Spirit depicted in Acts 2. In many cases, this meant adopting a version of fundamentalist, pre-millennial dispensationalism.⁸ The irony, of course, is that for most fundamentalists, speaking in tongues occurred only in the initial birth of the church and is ruled out of legitimate Christian use in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In Chapter 1, “The Challenge of Method,” Castelo discusses attempts made by many Pentecostals to create a kind of theology and even a theological family tree that takes on a similar structure to that of evangelicals or fundamentalists. He critiques categories of theology (including such words as “systematic”) when they are applied to Pentecostalism. Instead, Castelo uses the practice (and theologies present within that practice) of pentecostal testimony to explain what pentecostal theology is as well as what it is not:

I would argue that, when Pentecostals share their testimonies, they do so not out of random, willy-nilly, happenstance conditions. One senses a logic to their testimonies, but such a logic is not based on an integrating principle per se. The logic of Pentecostal testimonies rings true only when one catches a glimpse of *who* the God is whom Pentecostals proclaim—and this glimpse involves a number of registers (including a cognitive one,

6 Leah Payne, *Gender and Pentecostal Revivalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 12.

7 William H. Cooper, *The Great Revivalists in American Religion, 1740–1944: The Careers and Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPherson* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010), 32; Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 295.

8 Gerald T. Sheppard, “Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The Anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 6, no. 2 (1984): 5–33.

but certainly not exclusively so). Pentecostal testimony does not receive its coherence from being structured around a rubric or integrative principle, nor does it make sense only when it is pushed into some broader mechanism of meaning. Ultimately, when Pentecostals testify, they are bearing witness to something beyond their (and their hearers') cognitive grasp or comprehension. Their testimonies are an implicit invitation to enter into that reality, to feast on "the good things of God," to experience a baptism of love that almost kills with its sweetness.

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For historians, the benefits of thinking about Pentecostalism as a nonsystematic, but still coherent, theological movement that comes out of practice are many. First, it allows historians to recognize the diversity within the movement and the many strands that create it without trying to "push" it into a single, artificial theological story. The fluid manner of the pentecostal theological project(s) means that it cannot be categorized in the manner of the common Protestant myth of the lone conscientious theological man of European descent. Neither can it be categorized neatly as a populist movement of the "disinherited." The movement is grassroots. The movement is top-down. It is revolution and also reform. It resists and also upholds social norms. It makes claims about God through traditional theological means (such as creeds, biblical interpretation, rituals, church governing bodies, and so forth) but also through a creative use of media, and through the famous pentecostal aesthetic of glitz and godliness. It does all of these things at once.

Castelo's use of testimony as guiding theological engine does not make historians beholden to a particular origin story, which has long been a conundrum for historians of Pentecostalism. Many histories of Protestantism are told as a story of one mythic hero or heroine (such as Luther, Zwingli, Simons, and so forth) who rebels against "incorrect" theology (indulgences or transubstantiation, for example) and goes on to create some new community of Christians. This narrative may work for many forms of Protestantism, but it poses several challenges for Pentecostals. For one thing, there are many mothers and fathers of the pentecostal movement whom historians may identify as the original pentecostal founder. Candidates include (but are certainly not limited to) Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati, William Seymour, Agnes Ozman, Charles Parham, and Maria Woodworth-Etter. In addition, the geographical location of the movement's origins could be traced to Los Angeles, California, Topeka, Kansas, New Quay, Wales, Pune, India, or other places.

In 2015, I was a respondent on a Society for Pentecostal Studies Annual Meeting Diversity Committee panel "Pentecostal Beginnings: Azusa Street and/or

Polynucleate Origins,” wherein Estrela Alexander and Michael McClymond discussed and debated whether historians of Pentecostalism ought to understand the movement as having single point of origin (Seymour’s Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, for example) or multiple points of origin (such as a series of revivals in Wales, India, the U.S., and so forth).

The argument can be (and has been) made both ways; in each telling and retelling, historians create a distinct portrait of Pentecostalism that shapes the way the movement’s trajectory is interpreted. For example, if we consider William Seymour to be the founder of the movement, we see Pentecostalism as a now global movement birthed out of the American Black Church and influenced by its theologies and practices. If we argue that Pentecostalism was, from the outset, a global phenomenon/phenomena, we see it as an international movement shaped by global theologies and practices. The same could be said for recognizing other figures whom we count as the movement’s founders. Historians often argue with one another about who bears the true DNA of the movement.

Of course, historians can never get beyond the idea of origins, but Castelo’s work invites historians to consider how our work might benefit from bracketing concerns for historical beginnings and concentrating on such practices as testimony. If historians see the movement through the lens of testimony, we may find creative ways to avoid the traditional Protestant way of seeing our history as the result of an inciting incident in the form of a particular person(s) or event(s). Perhaps we would gain more insight into the populist impulses, the grass-roots character, and the figures and groups who don’t fit the “heroic solitary man” archetype we expect in traditional theological narratives. Castelo’s framework of Pentecostalism as a theology that resists modern Protestant categories and instead relies of the theologies embedded within longstanding pentecostal practices goes a long way toward helping historians think creatively about the movement’s origins and trajectories.

Castelo further distances Pentecostalism from traditional Protestant theological classification by categorizing it as a form of mysticism. “Pentecostalism can be identified as a mystical tradition within the church catholic,” he argues, “but only if we recognize the mystical features of Christianity that hold the knowledge of God to be both intellectual and relational. Once we do so, we can recognize that Pentecostals implicitly operate out of mystical sensibilities in the ethos they sustain regarding worship and how it in turn reflects their belief that God engages and encounters those who thirst after God. The ultimate goal is a sense of the divine that is, in short, transformative” (82).

Although Castelo rightly shows the complications of “mystical” as a category in religious studies when applied to Pentecostalism, if we consider Pentecostal-

ism to be “mystical,” historians can utilize the extensive body of literature that analyzes the tradition theoretically. Two examples of historical and theoretical work around the category of mystic/mystical demonstrate how conceiving of the movement in this way might enrich histories of Pentecostalism. First, in, Grace M. Jantzen analyzes the relationship among institutional powers, gender, and mysticism in the “sacred canopy” of the medieval Western mystical tradition. Jantzen argues that, long before the birth of the pentecostal-charismatic movement, mystical power was in competition with institutional authority structures. Because of the expansive potential of this power, the definition of a “mystic” was heavily regulated and many times excluded women.⁹ So, while women might report such encounters as visions, dreams, and prophetic encounters, they were significantly less likely than a male counterpart to be understood as a mystic.

If we consider Pentecostalism to be Christian mysticism in the way that Jantzen defines the term, we can expect to find that who counts as an “anointed” minister or official mystic to be likewise filtered through the lens of gender. We can interrogate how ministers were received by their congregations, denominations, and so forth, and we can expect to find that gender played a role in whether or not their ministry was seen as mystical, or Spirit-filled, to use pentecostal parlance. We can also explore how gender shapes mystical experience and vice versa. For example, what sorts of metaphors do women use to discuss their encounters with the divine? Aimee Semple McPherson’s intimate, bridal metaphors are certainly distinct from those of her male counterparts. How are those metaphors communicated? How are they received? By including Pentecostalism as a mystical movement, we can explore its development with some helpful comparative literature.

Second, Richard King’s *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and the Mystic East* explores how Eastern philosophical/theological contributions are relegated to the private sphere and their intellectual contributions are ignored by Western thinkers because they are categorized as “mystical.”

King argues that mysticism has been understood as part of a binary system inherited from the Enlightenment¹⁰ wherein the world is divided into discrete brackets such as:

9 Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

10 Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and ‘the Mystic East’* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 13.

Philosophical	Mystical
Male	Female
Public	Private
Society	Individual
Science	Religion
Secular	Sacred
European	non-European
Rational	Irrational/Non-Rational ¹¹

If historians look at the category of mystic as a part of a larger set of categories that privatize, feminize, individualize, and irrationalize the kind of direct access to the divine that at least appears to remove the middleman of official authorizing structures, traditions, genders, race/ethnicity, class structures, and so forth, we can see why and how Pentecostals have been excluded from larger theological conversations. And we can see how they were marginalized. We can also critique this way of understanding encounters with the divine.

Jantzen's and King's works do not speak directly to the history of Pentecostalism. The theoretical underpinnings of the discourse about mysticism, however, can be applied in many profitable ways to the movement. Castelo's work situates Pentecostalism alongside helpful conversation partners in the study of mysticism.

2.2 *Tradition*

Finally, Castelo invites historians to embrace Pentecostalism as a tradition. In his postscript, Castelo outlines the aim of his work: "to facilitate a theological exercise of rethinking Pentecostalism in light of mystical categories for the sake of deepening the connections of this movement within wider Christianity and also as a way of differentiating it from forms of reasoning typically associated within American evangelicalism" (178).

For many pentecostal practitioners, claiming Pentecostalism as tradition of any sort is scandalous. The movement, whose practitioners typically prefer to be called "movement" rather than "denomination," "sect," or certainly not "tradition," is notorious for rejecting "cold/formal religion" and traditionalism. It is important to note that this move is based in anti-institutional, sometimes anti-Catholic sentiment and is largely rhetorical. In reality, Pentecostals are just as traditional as the next group of people. Just ask West Coast Pentecostals to give

11 Adapted from King's table on the dichotomies of Enlightenment thought: King, *Orientalism and Religion*.

up their historic love of hippie culture or Keith Green, or ask East Coast Pentecostals to give up revival meetings and televangelism. It is unlikely that either group will honor such a request.

As a historian, I am in favor of thinking about Pentecostalism as a tradition. For one thing, it goes a long way toward curing historians (especially historians who are themselves pentecostal) of the tendency to see Pentecostalism as a *sui generis* movement. Pentecostal theologies and practices are distinct (some might even say, *weird*), but they were not created *ex nihilo* in the twentieth century. Pentecostalism is indebted to hundreds (thousands, even!) of years of Christian (and extra-Christian) theological and philosophical developments. If we are to think of Pentecostalism as it is—a movement that is dynamic, in constant motion, but also a movement that pulls several theological, social, political, and historical strands together in a distinct way—then “tradition” is a helpful term. Many historians of Pentecostalism think of the movement as a tradition already, but most situate it in Protestant Evangelicalism of the late nineteenth–early twentieth centuries. Castelo wants to claim ties to an older tradition.

Castelo’s work—articulating a theology of Pentecostalism as a form of Christian mysticism—goes a long way toward claiming that Pentecostals are both distinct and at the same time not that different from other Christian groups. Perhaps his most significant effort is to encourage readers to view the tradition as having theological roots more expansive than only in nineteenth-century Evangelicalism. In this current climate, wherein “evangelical” has become a much-deployed term in political analyses and Pentecostals are often folded in as a subfield/subgenre/subsect of Evangelicalism, Castelo opens the door for historians to question this assumption and even to question whether or not the movement is even Protestant. If it is, as he claims, a Christian mystical tradition, then Pentecostalism is older and much more expansive than historians usually imagine it to be.

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3 **Review of Castelo’s *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystic Tradition*
by Sammy Alfaro**

There’s a sense in which all theological affirmations begin as theological hunches. Before all academics write in-depth meaningful treatises about any

particular topic, as minute or far-reaching as they might be, a eureka moment of intellectual discovery occurs and *sometimes* this results in an essay or the birth of a book. I dare say that many of us academic types have the spiritual gift of suspicion, and sadly we all continue to participate in the intellectual game of daydreaming up works we might never publish, such is the nature of the theological conference. I mention this because Daniel Castelo's book *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* responds to several theological hunches some of us in the pentecostal academy have had concerning the mystical nature and practice of our faith. In what follows, I want to affirm Castelo's work as a true primer for reorienting the understanding of our mystical pentecostal faith.

Growing up as a Latino Pentecostal, I remember responding to my call to ministry by sensing the need to prepare intellectually through reading spiritual works. Before I had received any formal theological direction, I would visit the local Christian bookstore and devour any book related to the topic of the infilling of the Spirit. Having no sense of theological categories or boundaries, I read Madame Guyon's *Intimacy with Christ*, Andrew Murray's *The Spirit of Christ*, R.A. Torrey's *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, and Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God*, among others, without the slightest suspicion that these and other authors were outside of my Christian tradition.¹² These devotional classics resonated with my pentecostal experience in ways in which other theological writings did not even come close. In my late teens, embarking on a journey of autodidactic ministerial preparation, these writings quenched my spiritual hunger for knowing God. It was less a desire to learn about who God was as an intellectual exercise, and more a quest for encountering and experiencing God himself.

Reading Castelo's book took me back to those formational years when my young pentecostal faith was being nurtured by the writings of some of the great modern mystics and spiritual giants. Unlike my juvenile uncritical appropriation of mystical and spiritual devotional writings, Castelo offers a much-needed

12 In recent rereadings of some of these spiritual classics, I was overwhelmed by the resonances between their experiential and spiritual insights and the hermeneutical musings by the typical Latina/o churchgoer who testifies or the layperson who preaches. The commonalities between the sort of spiritual exegesis of the mystics and pentecostal biblical interpretations are certainly worth studying. One can certainly convincingly argue that pentecostal hermeneutics has more in common with Madam Guyon's approach to Scripture than with Wayne Grudem's biblicist fundamentalism. For a good sampling of these spiritual classics, see Madame Guyon, *Jeanne Guyon: Selected Writings*, ed. Dianne Guenin-Lelle and Ronney Mourad (New York: Paulist Press, 2012); Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God: The Best Rule of a Holy Life* (New York: Revell, 1895); and R.A. Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (New York: Revell, 1897).

thorough examination of the contours of mystical theology and its natural connections to the pentecostal tradition. Indeed, the book is a primer for anyone interested in understanding the mystical orientation of pentecostal faith and thought.

Instead of the often-employed plug and play approach to theological methodology, Castelo takes on the painstaking work of reframing Pentecostalism “as a modern instantiation of the mystical stream of Christianity recognizable throughout history,” that is, “*a mystical tradition of the church catholic*” (xvi). For all of us who have struggled to find the proper methodological paradigm for thinking theologically about our pentecostal spirituality, this work is a much-needed contribution. Rather than fall into the temptation of conceptualizing pentecostal beliefs through an alien academic grid that somewhat negates the spirituality of the movement, Castelo dares us to embrace the mystical features that give Pentecostalism its characteristic ethos. Could it be that the potential to deliver a truly pentecostal theology begins with abandoning previous “evangelical theologies plus” methodologies that characterized some early and even recent approaches, and adopting a method grounded in the mystical tradition? In addition, we might ask whether more recent novel approaches to wedding pentecostal theology to foreign theological constructs from Barthian thought to other philosophical frameworks are also less productive academic exercises than the seemingly more natural coalescence with the mystical tradition.

Reflecting on the prospect of approaching pentecostal theology in the vein of mystical theology, I was also reminded of the beginnings of my ministerial education in the Bible Institute. One of my professors was the Mexican pentecostal pioneer and educator Rev. Hiram Almirudis.¹³ I fondly remember his love for Scripture and desire to instill in his students a passion for the Greek text and a genuine pentecostal experience. He was the first I heard to accuse budding pentecostal exegetes of having “*el don de sospecha*” (the gift of suspicion). In hindsight, I now suspect his in-class impromptu Bible and theology teaching moments had many more connections to mystical thought than perhaps he would have publicly admitted.

While in San Antonio, Almirudis studied at St. Mary’s University with Father George Montague, a Marianist priest specializing in pneumatology and Paul’s theology of spiritual growth. Almirudis would often quote Montague during lectures and reflect on the profound spiritual comprehension this nonpente-

13 A recent book focusing on Latin American missionaries and educators provides a glimpse into the life, ministry, and theological contributions of Hiram Almirudis. Angel D. Santiago-Vendrell, *Tales of Mutual Influence: Biography as Missiology in Latin American Pentecostalism* (Cleveland, TN: Centro de Estudios Cristianos Publicaciones, 2017), 65–96.

costal Catholic had of the life of the Spirit.¹⁴ Furthermore, I have vivid memories of class time and jam sessions at his house when a guitar and classic Latin American pentecostal hymns were his tools of choice for engaging in theological reflection. Once a week, a group of select students would gather at his house to sing together and hear him tell stories of the early days of Pentecostalism in Mexico. Reminiscing on these moments of communal experiential reflection could best be explained in the words of Harvey Cox, who describes the pentecostal way of doing theology as

imbedded in testimonies, ecstatic speech, and bodily movement. But it *is* a theology, a full-blown religious cosmos, an intricate system of symbols that respond to the perennial questions of human meaning and value. The difference is that, historically, pentecostals have felt more at home singing their theology, or putting it in pamphlets for distribution on street corners. Only recently have they begun writing books about it.¹⁵

It was this time of joyful worship-infused heartfelt theologizing that made the greatest impact on my life as a young pentecostal Bible Institute student. Why? Because, more than simply learning about theology, we were participating in Spirit-filled communal encounters with God.

Although my time in the Bible Institute certainly gave me a taste of the academic study of the Bible, it was these moments of experiencing God's presence through worshipful meditation that made my ministerial formation more pentecostal. Though at the time I was unaware of the theological categorizations of the mystical tradition, together with other students I imbibed God's presence as a modern-day mystic during daily chapel services and prayer gatherings. In my experience this confirms what Castelo asserts when he writes, "Pentecostals implicitly operate out of mystical sensibilities in the ethos they sustain regarding worship and how it in turn reflects their belief that God engages and encounters those who thirst after God" (82).

Surprisingly, though, there was yet another mystical component of this formative period that made a deep and continued impression in my devotional life. One day after Almirudis sang and exegeted one of his favorite hymns, "Cordero, que bajaste del cielo" (Lamb, who descended from heaven), he broke out into a recitation from the Spanish literary master Miguel de Unamuno's *El*

14 A work often mentioned in Almirudis's published writings is George T. Montague's *The Spirit and His Gifts* (New York: Paulist Press, 1974).

15 Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 15.

Cristo de Velázquez,¹⁶ a book length poem dedicated to examining the depth of Diego Velázquez' 1632 portrait of Christ crucified.

¿En qué piensas Tú, muerto, Cristo mío?
¿Por qué ese velo de cerrada noche
de tu abundosa cabellera negra
de nazareno cae sobre tu frente?

Of what do You think, Christ, after your death?
Why does that veil of blackest night
formed by your thick Nazarene hair
fall down over your forehead?

This somewhat strange juxtaposition of theological canvases was an attempt to bring together seemingly disparate spiritual reflections, albeit without a methodological construct. For a hunch to develop into a full-blown theological contribution, however, theological method is needed.

In my opinion, this is one of the main contributions of Castelo's book. It delivers a thorough analysis of the pros and cons of connecting Pentecostalism to a more natural theological precursor. In a sense, Castelo takes us on a journey of deconstructing the strange relationship pentecostal theology has endured with evangelical theology in order to pave the road toward reconstructing it as a mystical theology; or, one might liken it to the expert hands of a surgeon working to detach an organ from one body and attach it to another, Castelo effectively argues that pentecostal theology should stop trying to recapitulate evangelical theological models that run against the grain of the pentecostal ethos on account of the epistemic differences between the two. Castelo argues: "The act of making Pentecostalism 'theologically respectable' has sometimes led to impoverished accounts of its own ethos, given that the terms assumed for doing so were themselves limited and not fitting to the task" (74). To me, this is a wonderful invitation to fully redefine, once and for all, what it means to be pentecostal and to do pentecostal theology in an unashamedly pentecostal manner.

But this does not entail a wholesale emulation of the mystical tradition, for Castelo warns that this is to be done "within [Pentecostalism's] own context and theology" (77). It is in the ebb and flow of two traditions in dialogue where we may find a way forward to developing truly genuine global pente-

16 Miguel de Unamuno, *El Cristo de Velázquez* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1963).

costal theologies. As I read Castelo's work, I could not help but envision the possibility of overcoming categorical and institutional limitations for thinking about the baptism in the Spirit from our very localized and diverse pneumatological experiences. Whereas an inferiority complex led previous generations of pentecostal scholars to attempt to legitimize pentecostal theology by proving they could work with the same tools and methods of the academy to develop evangelical "pentecostal" theologies, the prospect of a locally experienced and globally aware theology is worth imagining.

Returning to my brief anecdotal test cases for gauging the validity of Pentecostalism as a mystical tradition, Castelo truly goes to great lengths to establish the ties that bind pentecostal theology to mysticism. Perhaps my pentecostal Bible Institute professor would have found in this book the tools to embrace the mystical tradition in a manner that more congenially contributed to his theologizing. Instead of the default evangelical and biblicist approach that characterizes his academic writings, Castelo paves the way for the emergence of a theology more attuned to his embrace of the mystical tradition. Rather than embracing the typical fundamentalist orientation of many early pentecostal theologies, a more experiential approach can emerge.

Thinking through the main viewpoints Castelo espouses in this book, more challenging questions arise: How am I teaching and writing as a pentecostal scholar? Am I simply paying lip service to my pentecostal heritage, or does my theology truly depart from a pneumatologically robust experience of God? What happened to that young budding pentecostal minister who went off to study at the Bible Institute with a deep sense of God's calling in his life and a lived pentecostal experience to back it? Have I opted to tame or domesticate the experience of the Spirit by listening to the very evangelical notion that it is possible to be pentecostal without speaking in tongues? Is there a difference between being a scholar of Pentecostalism and being a genuinely pentecostal scholar? In short, the answer is yes, for what makes theology pentecostal is not merely its pneumatological orientation, but more so a pentecostal encounter with God through his Spirit. It is not about a thematic or topical focus on pneumatological concerns, but rather it aims at reflective discourse based on the God known and encountered through the practice of life in the Spirit.

As Castelo confirms, scholarship like that of Steven Land¹⁷ resonates with pentecostal scholars because it helps to make sense of the pentecostal experience of God through a pentecostal lens and requires a change of tools and

17 Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010).

paradigm to a more spiritual, or call it mystical, approach to doing theology. In this vein, the reality is that we still have work to do in order to take back pentecostal theology and make it our own. Here are two theological hunches to follow up on.

Given the globalizing nature of a one-size-fits-all approach to doing theology, I worry about the tendency to package and distribute the pentecostal mystical experience as being experienced the same everywhere. There is no one pattern for being a mystic across the history of the church; no cookie-cutter mold for replicating mystical Christian spirituality. As Castelo rightly notes by providing a good variety of examples of ancient and modern Christian mystics, we should not seek theological uniformity, but rather mere “family resemblance” (77). If as a pentecostal body of believers we have tapped into the constant stream of Spirit-filled life that has flowed throughout church history, then we cannot expect a uniformity of mystical pentecostal experience. That urge to seek conformity is a vestige from our inherited evangelical fundamentalist upbringing we could now fully shed.

Some critical questions for the author: Is it possible that the mystical approach would liberate us to be able finally to fully accept and learn from authentic experiences of the Spirit in the global pentecostal community? Can we finally be set free from the missional tendency only to export Americanized ways of experiencing the Spirit and, instead, actually import some pneumatological experience from the Southern Hemisphere? What might be some helpful pointers for overcoming the rigid and deep-rooted tendency to seek objectivity and biblical correctness when assessing mystical experiences of the pentecostal kind? Castelo is definitely doing this when he declares, “Pentecostalism cannot subscribe to the deep-seated methodological impulses inherent in American evangelicalism” (76). But I wonder if this appeal can be made more explicit. Put more bluntly, how do we inform pentecostal academicians trapped in the fundamentalist way of doing theology that we are free to play the game with the rich resources of the mystical tradition?

As we seek to repair the great divide that exists between academic and spiritual theology through a mystical approach to reorienting pentecostal theology, I wonder if we can also deal with another great divide: the split between explaining the *content* of Scripture and addressing the *context* that theology seeks to transform. There are definite points of contact where the book engages with the contextual divide in a way that is helpful and forward looking. For example, Castelo eloquently affirms:

When *in this context* African-Americans and other nonmajority racial and ethnic groups are sometimes used powerfully in a society dominated by

Anglo-Saxon privilege or when *in this context* women sometimes manifest gifts of Christian leadership within a society dominated by patriarchy, the eccentricity, the unconventionality, or the distance is celebrated by some quarters today (and detested by others) but, all the same, rarely fully appreciated.

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In addition, Castelo's desire to engage with the mystical writings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross reveals more than just a place where mystical experiences may overlap. The tales of mystics of this caliber, along with Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and others, represent a formidable corpus of theological works that were often marginalized not just for their mysticism, but also because of the identities of its authors. Why do the Catholic academic summas of such "theological giants" as Thomas Aquinas continue to eclipse the spiritual mystical works of women such as Teresa of Avila? Is it only a question of the so-called lack of theological rigor, or is her body of work categorized as mystical and practical because of her gender? Perhaps our mystical pentecostal theologizing could use a good dose of another type of mysticism—liberationist spirituality.

It is no secret that since its inception liberation theology developed as an expression of Latin American spirituality. Time does not permit a full analysis of the spiritual roots of this movement, but perhaps the title of Gustavo Gutiérrez's modern spiritual classic serves to make the point: *We Drink from Our Own Wells*.¹⁸ The spirituality of liberationist theologies, however, might be more adequately labeled as mysticism in search of liberation. As such, it voices the cry of the marginalized and oppressed peoples of Latin America. Might this liberating spirituality be yet another dialogue partner for pentecostal theology? What is the potential not only for freeing up pentecostal theology to be authentically pentecostal, but also for it to champion the struggles of people from the majority world who have opted for Pentecostalism? Truly, much work lies ahead.

This book challenged me to return to the beginnings of my pentecostal spiritual formation and ask why I have moved away from this reservoir of mystical experience. I have been challenged to be more receptive and inclusive of non-

18 Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003). See also, Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward a Political Holiness* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988). Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 677–700.

pentecostal forms of mystical theology. And lastly, I feel more emboldened than ever to make greater use of this spiritual legacy as I teach, speak, and write from my Latino pentecostal perspective. Gracias, Daniel.

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4 **Response to Critics**

I wish to thank those who have organized this roundtable around my recent book *Pentecostalism as a Mystical Tradition*, and I also wish to thank the panelists for their work in attending to the arguments of the book. One never knows how a book will be received and read, but I can say that on the whole these panelists have taken the care that I would have liked to see, and so for this, I thank them.

This book has been in a gestational period for some time. Ultimately, it is a labor of love on behalf of a tradition that is repeatedly misunderstood by outsiders and that is insufficiently critically engaged by insiders. As to the former, I still find that people outside of the movement often do not know how to take it all in. I find many students of mine who are theologically and philosophically “open” to the things Pentecostals and Charismatics affirm, but exploration is one thing and it is quite another to openly seek and practice it. The latter is difficult to accommodate because Pentecostalism is such an intellectual challenge to modernist thought-forms. Pursuing pentecostal ways of living into the Christian life can be scary, unpredictable, and overall disorienting, and how many people, after all, are willing to actively pursue something like that?

As for insiders, I continue to believe that Pentecostals often operate out of an inferiority complex, not so much among themselves but with others, thereby making the identity precarious to a certain extent. One may ask: If outsiders are prone to criticize Pentecostalism, why, then, should insiders go on and do the same? My response to this is that the two criticisms are not the same activity, at least not necessarily. For those who are insiders to the tradition, there is a place for a kind of criticism that I call “tradition negotiation.” Insiders who love the tradition should criticize the movement for the sake of having an active role in seeing it grow, mature, and respond adequately and faithfully to emerging challenges. Reification of the past is a kind of requiem, an announcement that the tradition has given up on vitality, creativity, imagination, and surprise

(all things, mind you, that are very much pneumatologically central). Such a move, if pursued, will ultimately spell its demise. The fact that Pentecostals in the pew (and maybe even some in the academy) sometimes do not differentiate between various kinds of criticisms represents an impoverishment of both mind and spirit. Frankly, it spells a failure of intergenerational faithfulness—of passing along something that can inspire the next generation. When one loves a tradition, criticizing it is an act of sanctification, both in terms of the tradition being “purified” and “tested” and of the self undergoing the same.

My search for categories and paradigms that could help this situation led me to land on the category of “mysticism.” I make it clear in the book that this was not an original idea of mine. Plenty of people have appealed to the category in some fashion or another as a way of making sense of Pentecostalism. But appealing to the category is one thing; making the category do the work that I thought needed to be done is another. And so, ultimately, casting Pentecostalism as a mystical tradition of the church catholic does two broad things for me.

First, it forces non-Pentecostals to come to terms with the ancient Christian language of mysticism. The move essentially asks, Do you consider someone like St. John of the Cross theologically serious? Why or why not? And if you do, then you must take a movement like Pentecostalism seriously as well, for there is a paradigm at work that connects the two. Put another way: If St. John of the Cross is not simply some kind of esoteric figure from the past but an exemplification of something intrinsic to a manner of being Christian across the centuries, then that manner of being Christian has been picked up on the contemporary scene by Pentecostals and Charismatics. Pentecostalism is really not that different or unique after all, which might be painful for some Pentecostals to accept if they operate out of a kind of exceptionalism. But the purchase of such a move means that the God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever has not given up on the world, and in turn has done wondrous things among those who are willing to take a chance to give God their all in worship, praise, and devotion.

The second thing that casting Pentecostalism as a mystical tradition of the church catholic does relates to insiders of the movement. If Pentecostals generally agree to use this language for themselves, then we will have a paradigm in place to which Pentecostals must hold themselves accountable as they reflect and pursue their collective identity across time. One has to ask, Would a Hildegard of Bingen or a Gregory of Nyssa “fit” within our contemporary pentecostal settings? Why or why not? And perhaps even more damaging, we must ask, could a Hildegard or Gregory emerge within such contexts for the sake of the gospel’s future in our world? Such questions guide the process of identify-

ing what makes Pentecostalism what it is and tending to that over time. The impact of this work can be the provision of a kind of compass or barometer as the tradition is pushed and pulled in different directions by a variety of forces.

Through these opening remarks, then, I hope you can see why I have labeled this book a labor of love. I doubt it will really do much for me in terms of my academic “career,” but I wrote it out of what I believe is obedience to a calling to do it. That is my testimony regarding this book in particular. I care for this tradition deeply, and I would like to see it thrive. That is why I wrote the book, and I hope that spirit comes across in the book’s pages.

Let me now interact formally with the contributions of the panelists.

4.1 *Kyle Smith*

I wish to thank Mr. Smith for his extensive review of the book. I believe he covered many of the main arguments I sustained in the book itself, and his elaboration provided a helpful synopsis.

The remark that I believe that “Pentecostals should seek to remain in the center of the spectrum incorporating equal amounts of both theology and spirituality into the movement” is a bit of a miscasting. I want to steer from quantification here and simply say that I believe that the manner in which God-knowledge has been cast over time in the West has created this spectrum with two poles, theology being dominated in terms of the academy and spirituality in terms of the church. I would like to see this spectrum broken down, and if we keep these two terms, *theology* and *spirituality*, then they must serve in terms of an interface: Theology cannot truly be itself without spirituality, and vice versa, and this because of the kind of knowledge that God-knowledge is.

On this matter I should also add that this is not a spectrum, and so a problem, that Pentecostals created. This spectrum is something that Pentecostals were bequeathed by the Western intellectual and theological tradition; therefore, when Pentecostals went about trying to make sense of their experience and confessions, they could not help but fall into the dominant patterns of thought. But in doing so, yes, I believe that Pentecostals were limited in their ability to account for what they knew at an experiential and intuitive level. Perhaps less romantically, in doing so, Pentecostals introduced some uneasy tensions into their life that they were ill-equipped to resolve. That is what Mr. Smith is referring to when he mentions the “two strands.”

So, for instance, the prominence of the Scofield Bible in various pentecostal settings is in many ways self-defeating of a pentecostal approach to Scripture. “But if Pentecostals use the Scofield Bible, then it must be legitimate for Pentecostals,” someone may assert. I would reply: One thing is a practice, another

thing is sustaining a tradition over time. In my opinion, reliance on the Scofield Bible will complicate the pursuit of pentecostal identity over time in certain particulars.

Another example of this, one that I pursue extensively in the book, is the question of systematic theology. Some may not have any problem at all with what the idea of “systematic theology” can mean, but let me just say this: There is a reason why Pentecostals have persistently had difficulty answering the question, “Is there a pentecostal systematic theology?” and the reason is not so much with Pentecostalism but with the limits of the category “systematic theology” itself. Again, Pentecostals sometimes fail to raise the adequacy of the terms used to describe all that accounts for the pentecostal experience, and this because of the dominant frameworks at play in a given social location. This happens with all kinds of cases, such as “inerrancy,” “initial evidence,” “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” and yes, “systematic theology.” Are there self-claimed “pentecostal systematic theologians?” Yes, quite a few these days when compared to the past, and many of them are good friends of mine! But I am willing, and I find it necessary, to question this particular framing itself and this for the sake of communicating and transmitting the tradition. What does Pentecostalism gain and give up in order to have a “systematic theology”? Those answers rely largely on what kind of category is systematic theology and if it is itself adequate to account for its subject matter. All these matters contribute to why I spend so much time talking about methodology and epistemology in the book.

Part of the questioning dimension of this book also relates to my treatment of “initial evidence reasoning.” I believe we have to be honest and forthcoming about how this kind of reasoning fits within a certain intellectual paradigm, one that is at face value not mystical in its orientation. I know that this is quite controversial to say, given that so many Americans and their spawned denominations have claimed that tongues as the initial evidence of Spirit-baptism is the distinguishing marker, doctrinally and experientially, of Pentecostalism. I would simply observe that this construct is maintained by a particular intellectual paradigm that is traceable to a particular social-intellectual-cultural world, one that is exceedingly revivalist, American, positivist, and modernist. I would also add that it has created quite a bit of difficulty on several levels, not the least of which would be practical and historical. Practically, tongues has been cast as a marker of pentecostal identity to the point that many have felt judged for not demonstrating it; historically, the way this construct lifted off the ground was partly a result of selectively choosing only parts of Charles Parham’s legacy, which in turn has placed a significant eschatological and missional complication within perpetuated pentecostal identity.

Now as for the remaining remarks by Mr. Smith, I do believe that there is a long tradition of evangelical and pentecostal cross-pollination. One might even say that Pentecostalism emerged within evangelical culture and has been influenced by it significantly over time. Again, I want to be honest about the origins and the aftermath and not engage in a romanticizing of the past. There is not a “lost innocence” to be retrieved. But what I am asking for is “tradition negotiation.” It has been my experience that Pentecostals often believe that if one just has a special experience with God, this will be enough to perpetuate the movement. There is a beauty to this reasoning because there is a truth here: As Pascal long ago noted, “the heart has its reasons.” But I have been increasingly convinced that the perpetuation of a movement like Pentecostalism requires many aspects, including hard work, deliberation, discernment, and sacrifice. And so, I would say in reply to Mr. Smith that there are places where the barriers between Evangelicals and Pentecostals in this country are difficult to detect. In my experience, these settings are often white ones and they are often accommodated on a number of variables. On the American scene, we may just have to look at immigrant and nonmajority experiences to then expand the possibilities.

4.2 *Leah Payne*

I now turn to the remarks of Payne, who points out that she is a historian but not a theologian. I should point out the reverse for myself: I am a theologian and not a historian. There are limits throughout the text due to these limitations of mine, but I should also add that this text could not have been possible were it not for serious and sustained efforts by trained historians. For instance, I have been deeply influenced by James Goff’s work on Charles Parham, and his assessments of the evidence proved to be an important counterpoint to the upbringing I had, which smoothed out too many rough edges, some of which had to do simply with the matter of the sequence of events and others with the complex matters of race and power.

I wish to affirm Payne’s remarks related to Pentecostalism being a kind of embodied logic that is not systematic and all that this could imply for the study of Pentecostalism moving forward. I hope that the good work by historians continues, work to push through and question hagiography as well as to account for nondominant and avoided voices and perspectives. This embodied logicality based on narrative and testimony is something I have learned to articulate through the work of Steve Land, Ken Archer, and Jamie Smith. I wish it were a point picked up more consistently, especially in certain settings.

I do not push this matter significantly in this particular book to the degree I do elsewhere, but part of the rationale for hailing mysticism as a viable category

for Pentecostals is precisely what Payne has pointed out in terms of binaries or dualities by which we structure our world. Mysticism, spirituality, and pneumatology generally question power structures and arrangements, something that I find intrinsic to the gospel itself. And of course, power structures and arrangements have their real-life consequences on the level of embodiment quite literally, that is in terms of human bodies. Race and ethnicity are a big part of this for sure, but when speaking of Christian mysticism, gender has to be quite prominently on the table. So many of the prominent women from Christian antiquity have had mystical tendencies. Some have dismissed mysticism as a kind of feminine dimension of Christianity that is available to only the noneducated and powerless, but I believe that the mystical dimensions of Christianity have often served as the Holy Spirit's judgment of patriarchy. Plenty of work is to be done here in terms of Pentecostalism itself, as Payne has suggested. Part of the evangelicalizing of Pentecostalism that Mr. Smith refers to has the concomitant effect of making Pentecostalism less friendly for women, particularly women called to preach.

As for the language of "tradition," I too was raised in a pentecostal environment that highlighted the language of "movement." That environment also avoided quite adamantly the language of "creeds." I would simply just say that when a community sets itself persistently as "opposed" to another group (in this case, nominal Christianity), the obsession can lead to inadvertent imitation or similarities. Part of my call in this book is for Pentecostals in particular and Christians generally to rethink the conventional ways certain terms get defined. That is hard work, and sometimes I wonder how successful that work can be. Back to the term at hand, is "tradition" (with its Latin roots related to "handing over") never a possibility for describing ourselves? After all, movements finally wear out, so I do not think that even that term is helpful for the long haul, especially for a group that claims to be close to 120 years old. But as I have alluded to now several times, the purchase for me with the language of "tradition" involves other terms, including, "deliberation," "memory," "continuity," "discernment," and the like. We are part of a living conversation that should be passionately, meticulously, honestly, and carefully perpetuated. That is what is stake for me with the term *tradition*.

4.3 *Sammy Alfaró*

Finally, I come to the remarks by Alfaró. I appreciate deeply the way he reflects on his formation and development, especially as it relates to his call and preparation at a Bible Institute. Hiram Almirudis is a family friend, but I never knew he studied with Father George Montague. What a rich experience from which to draw the possible connections between Pentecostalism and Roman Catholicism, especially as they relate to pneumatology and mysticism.

Yes, this book began with some theological hunches, and I hope that it can inspire many more. I am convinced that Pentecostals and Charismatics should be at the forefront of revitalizing the mystical dimensions of Christianity in academic settings. There is simply so much to do here, and I think this tradition is especially equipped to make that intellectual contribution. But, of course, it requires hard work and so the avoidance of “plug and play” theological methodological shortcuts. What a wonderful turn of phrase!

I appreciate very much the call to go local and global, and this is partly where I would hope to see further work develop. I am quite sure that much of what is driving my perspective in this book with “tradition negotiation” is the reality I inhabit by being part of different, and often cast as rival, sociocultural traditions. I’ve come to realize in my experience as a Mexican-American that there is more than one way to do or say just about anything. Surely, then, there is more than one way to think about theological methodology and life in the Spirit. I would firmly agree that “there is no cookie-cutter mold for replicating Christian spirituality.”

Alfaro asks, “What might be some helpful pointers for overcoming the rigid and deep-rooted tendency to seek objectivity and biblical correctness when assessing mystical experiences of the Pentecostal kind?” And further, “How do we inform Pentecostal academicians trapped in the fundamentalist way of doing theology that we are free to play the game with the rich resources of the mystical tradition?” I think his reference to a quote I make as well as his allusions to St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and liberationist spirituality point in a helpful direction. When I wrote the lines that Alfaro quoted, I thought to myself, “Oh, wow, there is so much to be done here.” Because really, we are not simply talking about mystical encounters per se. We are talking about mystical encounters that take place in the contingencies and particularities of embodied existence. And bodies *do matter* for Christian mysticism. After all, the great Christian mystery is the incarnation. When I say bodies matter, I am trying to highlight that the implications and effects of mystical encounters must always be considered within the framework of embodiment. Back to the points originally raised by Alfaro: the rigid and deep-rooted tendencies embedded in one way of thinking about Pentecostalism is typically registered by certain kinds of bodies who have power, influence, voice, and privilege in a given arrangement. It seems to me, then, that a major step in overcoming something like a theological methodological tendency is to problematize a social arrangement that, in turn, has intellectual and theological consequences. That is what is threatening about something like liberationist spirituality: it calls into question power arrangements while at the same time staying true to the resources of the tradition. In that sense, it is threatening and yet orthodox. I am glad he raised this

particular example, because if the witness is threatening of an arrangement of privilege and yet orthodox, how can one critique it without seeming to be in favor of the power arrangement? Those are the directions I would suggest need to be pursued for subsequent phases of the trajectory of thinking that Pentecostalism is a mystical tradition of the church catholic.

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