

PENTECOSTALISM AND THE POSTMODERN WORLDVIEW\*

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The world is changing and so are the paradigms through which it is understood. We are said to live in a 'postmodern', 'post-industrial', 'post-Enlightenment', 'post-Christian', 'post-scientific', 'post-Newtonian' age. The old is giving way to the new: a new world order, a new economy, a new age, new forms of management, new styles of leadership, new avenues of communication, and a new hermeneutic. In virtually every arena of society it has become axiomatic to describe these changes as *fundamental paradigm shifts* and to attribute them to a change in the dominant *worldview*. What are these paradigm shifts and emerging worldview, and how are they producing changes in the way we perceive the life and mission of the church?

The purpose of this paper is to explore the interrelatedness of Pentecostalism and the so-called postmodern worldview. Some have observed characteristics of Pentecostalism which they conclude make it the probable dominant expression of Christianity in the postmodern age. At least one outside observer sees the movement as a prototype of the coming era and seems to be calling on it to provide more leadership in

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solving the problems of the world.<sup>1</sup> Inside the movement, scholars have focused on the connection between postmodernism and Pentecostal hermeneutics.<sup>2</sup> While there is not a consensus in approach, these Pentecostal scholars are calling for the movement to utilize its growing influence by helping to shape the pattern by which Christians interpret the Scriptures.<sup>3</sup> It is the position of this paper that both visions are premature because they ignore broader issues in the relationship between Pentecostalism and postmodernism. What follows is an attempt to provide a broad basis for understanding the place of Pentecostalism in the postmodern world.

The first section of the paper constructs a model for understanding the concepts of worldview and postmodernism, critiques a leading theory of the emergence of a postmodern worldview (the one offered by systems science), and projects a probable description of the systemic worldview which is emerging. The second section of the paper attempts to describe the dominant characteristics of a Pentecostal worldview and

1. H. Cox, 'Why God Didn't Die: A Religious Renaissance Flourishing Around the World—Pentecostal Christians Leading the Way', *Niemun Reports* (The Nieeman Foundation at Harvard University) 47.2 (Summer 1993), pp. 6-8, 47-49. Elsewhere Cox has written, 'At its best, Pentecostalism attacks not only the demonic political and economic systems that keep God's children in bondage, but the core of distorted values and mishapen worldviews that sustain these oppressive structures', 'Some Personal Reflections On Pentecostalism', *Pneuma* 15.1 (Spring 1993), p. 31. See also his extensive personal observations and conclusions found in *Five From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twentieth-Century* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

2. Murray Dempster stated that 'In the annual meetings of the Society for Pentecostal studies over the last decade, no topic has been investigated with greater frequency or intensity than the topic of hermeneutics'. Notice the title of his introductory article 'Paradigm Shifts and Hermeneutics: Confronting Issues Old and New', *Pneuma* 15.2 (Fall 1993), p. 129. Some of the conference papers were printed in the society's journal. In fact, *Pneuma* published at least seventeen articles on hermeneutics during its first sixteen volumes (1979-1994). The Fall 1993 issue was devoted to the topic, with four response articles being offered in the Spring 1994 issue. Timothy Cargal's article made explicit the issues behind the interest in the topic, 'Beyond the Fundamentalists—Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and Hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age', *Pneuma* 15.2 (Fall 1993), pp. 163-87.

3. It should be noted that this effort to relate postmodernism to Pentecostal hermeneutics is not without its critics. For an insightful debate consider R.P. Menzies' response to Cargal's article, 'Jumping Off the Postmodern Bandwagon', *Pneuma* 16.1 (Spring 1994), pp. 115-20.

its correlated paradigm of reality, and offers a comparison of the emerging systemic worldview with that of Pentecostalism.

#### *An Emerging Worldview*

There is an emerging worldview which will dramatically affect the way coming generations perceive reality, and construct their world. The changes may be as dramatic as the ones that accompanied the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. No aspect of Western civilization was untouched by the Renaissance as it opened the eyes of the human soul to the romance and beauty of creation. Likewise, the Enlightenment harnessed reason and the so-called 'scientific method' as tools for controlling nature, and thereby moved the West from an agrarian world order to one of industry and science. The currently emerging worldview will likewise generate new patterns of thought and emotions, new philosophies, new sciences and new social structures.

A worldview may be thought of as a disposition toward a perception of reality. It is that system of a priori assumptions with which an individual interacts with and interprets his or her universe. Worldviews are based upon what Milton Rokeach describes as 'primitive beliefs'.<sup>4</sup> These are beliefs that are so foundational to a society or individual that they are simply taken for granted.

As used in this paper *worldview* is not synonymous with *ideology*.<sup>5</sup> Ideologies are consciously constructed belief systems. They are cultural paradigms which offer theoretical solutions to societal problems. However, to the degree that an ideology is internalized it becomes a part of the relevant worldview. The collapse of communism in Eurasia provides one example of the distinction between an ideology and a worldview. Marxism was a powerful ideology which shaped the social structures of the former Soviet Union, but it was never fully internalized by the masses.

Gregory Bateson referred to the concept of worldview as 'mind'. He described the individual mind as a 'pattern which connects'.<sup>6</sup> He called

4. M. Rokeach, *Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values: A Theory of Organization and Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1968), pp. 6-11.

5. It should be noted that some theorists, especially within the social sciences, often do not make this distinction.

6. G. Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), p. 8.

the collective mind a 'metapattern'.<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Boulding chose to express this concept with the word 'image'. An *image* is the structure that provides a method of organization and interpretation of the world.<sup>8</sup> This structure is complex, dynamic and organic. Each part of the image is interdependent with all other parts and with the whole.<sup>9</sup> Further, there is a single 'pattern which invades the whole'.<sup>10</sup> Value systems flow out of the image so that the image governs the behavior of the imager.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Sowell used the term 'vision' as a near synonym for worldview.<sup>12</sup> Building on the work of Bertrand Russell, he suggested that a vision is a 'pre-analytic cognitive act':

It is what we sense or feel *before* we have constructed any systemic reasoning that could be called a theory, much less deduced any specific consequences as hypotheses to be tested against evidence. A vision is our sense of how the world works. For example, primitive man's sense of why leaves move may have been that some spirit moves them, and his sense of why tides rise or volcanoes erupt may run along similar lines. Newton had a different vision of how the world works and Einstein still another. For social phenomena, Rousseau had a different vision of human causation from that of Edmund Burke.<sup>13</sup>

An individual's worldview might be thought of as being comprised of a matrix of visions which interact to form the whole.<sup>14</sup> The significance of this is that individuals may share a general worldview but have conflicting visions of how specific aspects of the world work. For example, the Enlightenment represents a worldview which supports two competing visions of human nature: one gave rise to capitalism and the

other to socialism.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, George Albert Coe and John Dewey were early proponents of a progressive worldview centered around the emergence of democratic societies, but they differed greatly in their visions of the place of religion within society.<sup>16</sup> Dewey perceived the church as an anachronism, while Coe held firmly to a belief that Christianity must serve as an integrating core and guide for democratic societies.

*Worldviews* are like the matrix of windows through which we view the world. They mark what we see and what we do not see.<sup>17</sup> *Visions* are like the individual windows which help us focus on a particular segment of the view. Worldviews and visions thus interact in a way that determines the questions that we ask and, perhaps more significantly, the ones that we do not ask. Worldviews and visions are the a priori assumptions which lie behind *paradigms*. Paradigms are analytic cognitive acts which offer explanations of the phenomena seen in the windows of the worldview. Paradigms are attempts to structure an approach to the interpretation of the world or a specific aspect of the world.

*Models* are derivatives of paradigms which offer theoretical solutions to specific problems. Thus models offer orderly explanations for specific questions raised by or within a paradigm. In this construct paradigms represent what we think we understand and models represent what we hope to understand in light of what we think we already know. A *simulation* is a demonstration of a model. Simulations are attempts to move from the theoretical to the concrete. They are thought to demonstrate the validity of a model which in turn defends the validity of the paradigm, vision and worldview that generated the model. Following the above construct, the Enlightenment represents a worldview (one that assumes reason is the primary ingredient in the solution of problems); a

7. Bateson, *Mind and Nature*, p. 12.  
 8. K.E. Boulding, *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1956), p. 17.  
 9. Boulding, *The Image*, p. 175.  
 10. Boulding, *The Image*, p. 42.  
 11. Boulding, *The Image*, p. 54.  
 12. Thomas Sowell is an economist. His theory of visions emerged as a sub-theme in a series of speeches and writings beginning in 1980. In 1987 he published his first full volume on the social role of visions, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: Quill-William Morrow, 1987).

13. Sowell, *Conflict of Visions*, p. 14.  
 14. The concept of worldview being comprised of a matrix of visions is my own construction. Worldviews are a complex integration of beliefs, values and affections. I will argue below that Godly affections serve as the integrating center of the Pentecostal worldview.

15. Sowell demonstrated the presence of two conflicting visions during the 'Age of Reason' in the works of William Godwin and Adam Smith. Godwin's *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) represented what Sowell calls an 'unconstrained vision' of human nature. Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (c. 1779) represented a 'constrained vision'. The former is the ideological basis for socialism and the latter is the ideological basis for capitalism.

16. J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916); G.A. Coe, *A Social Theory of Religious Education* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917).

17. I am using the concept of sight metaphorically to represent all perceptions of reality. The windows should be thought of as port-holes of engagement.

constrained view of human nature is one vision within that worldview<sup>18</sup> (an inclination to believe humans are bent toward evil); capitalism (the right to own and freely exchange property) is an economic paradigm consistent with a constrained vision; the free market is a model; and the local flea market is a simulation.

#### *How Do Worldviews Emerge?*

According to General Systems Theory,<sup>19</sup> worldviews are the products of revolutionary changes in paradigms. Worldviews change because new paradigms emerge which challenge the prevailing worldview. New paradigms are constructed because a crisis challenges the old paradigm.<sup>20</sup> Thomas Kuhn described this as a change of gestalt. Through a new paradigm individuals see 'new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before'.<sup>21</sup> The new paradigm forces a structural shift in the way individuals approach reality. This revolution gradually affects all of society. Once established the new worldview supports the paradigm and its extension through 'normal science'.<sup>22</sup> *It should be noted that in this theory the preanalytic is transformed by the analytic; the affective by the rational.* Reason has primacy.

18. 'The constrained vision sees human nature as essentially unchanged across the ages and around the world, the particular cultural expressions of human needs peculiar to specific societies are not seen as being readily and beneficially changeable by forcible intervention. By contrast those with the unconstrained vision tend to view human nature as beneficially changeable and social customs as expendable holdovers from the past'; Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions*, p. 34.

19. General Systems Theory has emerged in this century as 'a new paradigm for contemporary thought'. It reflects an attempt to think holistically and systemically. I do not espouse the philosophy upon which it is based. I do believe it is the paradigm of thought that will dominate the institutions of social influence in the coming century. I am indebted to Timothy Lines for introducing me to General Systems Theory when we were both doctoral students at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. See his *Systemic Religious Education* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1987). For a technical introduction see E. Laszlo, *Introduction to Systems Philosophy: Toward a New Paradigm of Contemporary Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

20. Lines, *Systemic Religious Education*, pp. 35-36.

21. T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 110.

22. 'Normal science' is Kuhn's term for 'research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements' (i.e., a new paradigm); *Scientific Revolutions*, p. 10.

Another theory suggests a more complex and gradual evolution of worldviews and paradigms. John C. Greene critiqued Kuhn's theory in light of the history of evolutionary ideas. He demonstrated that Darwin's revolutionary (in effect) paradigm was not the result of a crisis but rather the extension of an ongoing conflict of approaches to (visions of) natural science. Indeed, an evolutionary paradigm had been constructed by Tournefort, the Count de Buffon, in the mid-eighteenth century. Buffon was not responding to contradictions in an established paradigm. Instead, he made a conscious attempt to introduce into natural history concepts derived from the seventeenth-century revolution in physics and cosmology (that is, a law-bound system of matter in motion). Greene further demonstrated how the evolutionary paradigm had developed alongside of the more prominent paradigm of systematic/static natural history.<sup>23</sup> He also observed that:

The eventual emergence of the theory of natural selection in Britain seems to have owed a great deal to the influence of the competitive ethos that pervaded British political economy and British mores generally.<sup>24</sup>

In other words, the British worldview of the early nineteenth century contributed greatly to the gradual development of the Darwinian theory. *It may be concluded that worldviews and paradigms have a more interactive, symbiotic relationship than one of unidirectional cause and effect.* Affective transformations may precede rational ones.

#### *The Classical Scientific Worldview*

Worldviews are not universal. Every individual has a unique worldview comprised of his or her own matrix of visions, the whole of which reflects a larger societal worldview. At all times there are multiple societal worldviews competing for dominance. History may be viewed from the perspective of transitions of dominant worldviews.<sup>25</sup>

The dominant worldview during the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is often referred to as Newtonian in honor of Isaac Newton (1642-1727). However, the Newtonian worldview is much broader than the thoughts of Newton himself. A better

23. J.C. Greene, *Science, Ideology, and World View: Essays in the History of Evolutionary Ideas* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 30-59.

24. Greene, *Science, Ideology and World View*, p. 54.

25. Alvin Toffler divided history into three metaphorical waves; agricultural, industrial, postindustrial: *The Third Wave* (New York: William Morrow, 1980).

designation is the *classical scientific worldview*.

The classical scientific worldview grew out of the attempts of Northern Humanism and the Reformation to harness classical learning for the reign of God. What emerged was what Thomas Payne called the *Age of Reason*, which placed the responsibility for social order squarely on the shoulders of human ability. Deism was a necessary ingredient in the transition toward the scientific worldview. The vision of God was relegated to an inconsequential window in the total matrix of this worldview. God was an option. Those who retained him (the deists/ creationists) structured their paradigms to include him as the transcendent designer of the universe. Science, or, more precisely, the scientific method, became the supreme arbitrator of truth.

Timothy Lines has outlined eight characteristics of the classical scientific worldview.<sup>26</sup> It was *mechanistic* in analogy (the universe is like a machine), *reductionistic* in method (anything can be understood by breaking it down into its parts), *disciplinary* in research (disciplines are needed to focus on the different parts of the universe), *deterministic* in outlook (what will be is being determined by what has been), static in perception (the closed universe allows only rearrangement, not development), entropic in direction (availability is always decreasing), *dualistic* in practice (mind and body exist in different realms), and *positivistic* in determination of truth (science is the sole arbitrator of truth). This worldview is generally credited with the great medical, industrial and social developments of the past four centuries.

#### *The Emerging Systemic Worldview?*

The classical scientific worldview is losing its dominance. Many theorists believe it is being replaced by some form of systemic worldview. But there is much disagreement as to the exact form the new worldview will take. It is generally agreed that Einstein's *theory of relativity* served as a catalyst for the change. If time, space and matter in motion are all relative, the universe cannot be viewed as a closed system controlled by deterministic laws.

Alfred North Whitehead<sup>27</sup> was one of the first to grasp the implications

26. Lines prefers the terms 'classical scientific worldview' in order to preserve the concept of science within the emerging systemic worldview; *Systemic Religious Education*, pp. 89-97.

27. A.N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925); *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

of Einstein's theory for restructuring the way scientists think. Many others from a variety of disciplines have followed. General Systems Theory was developed by theorists from the so-called hard sciences. At the forefront was Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a biologist, who first theorized about open systems during the late 1920s.<sup>28</sup> Thomas Kuhn's seminal work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, made the basic concepts of worldview and paradigm shifts a part of American academic thought.

General Systems Theory proposes that the emerging systemic worldview is the product of the Open Systems Paradigm. Although the design of the paradigm itself is not yet settled, it is generally agreed that open systems are those which have *boundaries* or *interfaces* through which they receive *input* and have *output*. Furthermore, they have structure, function and purpose.<sup>29</sup> Structure refers to the pattern through which input and output flow at any given time. *Function* refers to the dynamic aspects of a system including all transformation processes by which inputs are changed to outputs. *Purpose* refers to the ability of a system to alter itself or the conditions within which it exists in order to reach a predetermined state.

Lines has identified eight properties of the Open Systems Paradigm. Of primary importance to all systems is *holism*, which states that the system behaves as a whole. All elements are interdependent and constitute a unified and integrated entity. *Differentiation* refers to the distinctive characteristics of system components which address the existence of subsystems and suprasystems. *Boundaries* distinguish a system from its surrounding environment. In open systems boundaries are permeable and are therefore thought of as points of interface between sub- and suprasystems. In closed systems boundaries are barriers between systems. Open systems are characterized by *dynamism*. There is continual interaction with the environment. *Equifinality* refers to the ability of an open system to reach a predetermined state from differing initial conditions and through different means. *Feedback* is the guidance process through which a system monitors its functions. *Homeostasis* refers to a system's ability to maintain its own structure and functions under a variety of circumstances. Finally, open systems are characterized by *growth*.<sup>30</sup>

28. L. von Bertalanffy, *General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications* (New York: George Braziller, rev. edn, 1968).

29. Lines, *Systemic Religious Education*, pp. 46-48.

30. Lines, *Systemic Religious Education*, pp. 48-54.

Lines follows the model of General Systems Theory and accepts the Open Systems Paradigm as the foundation for a systemic worldview. Thus, for him, a systemic worldview has eight characteristics. It is *organismic* in image (in contrast to mechanistic), *relational* in approach (the meaning of the part is derived from its relationship to the whole), *pluralistic* in understanding (integration of the various disciplines into a dialectic synthesis), *stochastic* in progress (the universe is an open system into which random variables will be added making the future unpredictable; the idea of chance), *dynamic* in relationship (all structures are in process of dynamic change), *negentropic* in development (increase in order and complexity), *holistic* in nature, and *cybernetic* in direction (teleology is determined by a process of feedback and movement within the system).<sup>31</sup>

It should also be noted that the General Systems Theory is sometimes referred to as General Systems Science. It is understood to be a new form of science. Thus the Open Systems Paradigm and the Closed Systems Paradigm share an epistemology that is rooted in positivism. Knowledge is brokered through reason. Science is the method of truth. Reductionistic/deterministic positivism and holistic/stochastic positivism share the fundamental assumption (an epistemological vision) that there is an unbridgeable distance between the knower and the known that can only be narrowed through reason.

#### *Philosophical Antecedents of the Systemic Worldview*

Many of the characteristics of the systemic worldview were present in the visions of noted philosophers prior to the twentieth century. In the mid-eighteenth century David Hume (1711-1776), a British empiricist, challenged the whole concept of causality. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the father of theological liberalism, developed a hermeneutic that stressed the interrelationship of the part to the whole and the whole to the part. Georg Wilhelm F. Hegel (1770-1831) foreshadowed the language and concepts of open systems. The central concept in Hegel's thought was the Absolute, which he saw as a developing organism constituting the universe as a unified whole. Every part of the Absolute Spirit derives its reality from its relation to the whole Spirit. All knowledge is about the Absolute Spirit and therefore like the Absolute Spirit forms a system. It is only as science or system that knowledge is actual. For Hegel the Absolute is always in progressive motion, moving cyclically

31. Lines, *Systemic Religious Education*, pp. 98-115.

through the stages of the dialectic: thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

In the late nineteenth century pragmatism introduced many of the components of a systemic worldview. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) began the pragmatic movement with the publication of an article titled 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear'. Peirce argued against Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason<sup>32</sup> and Kant's principle of causality.<sup>33</sup> For Peirce chance is a pervasive antithesis to causality. Spontaneous occurrences create new laws and habits, making null any law of determinism. Meaning is therefore derived from effects, not causes. William James (1842-1910), a close friend of Peirce, transformed Peirce's pragmatic maxim to include beliefs as well as scientific concepts. Truth is what is good. Truth is what works for us. John Dewey (1859-1952) popularized the pragmatic philosophy and used it to shape a progressive social vision. Pragmatism used the scientific method as a tool for problem-solving rather than the method for discovering absolute truth. Thus the seeds of an open system were planted before the hard sciences challenged the worldview of the Enlightenment.

#### *Conclusions*

In conclusion, a systemic worldview has been emerging for some time and will probably become the dominant worldview of the next century and beyond. It is evident that many key elements of the classical scientific worldview were being challenged prior to the twentieth century and that many of the elements of a systemic worldview were present in those challenges. The exact nature of the emerging worldview is not yet known. Greene's critique of Kuhn's paradigm suggests that the emerging systemic worldview will not be built from a single paradigm. The emerging worldview will no doubt generate a host of competing paradigms.<sup>34</sup>

32. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1647-1716) divided truths into two categories; those of reason and those of fact. Every truth of fact is true because of a principle of sufficient reason. In this principle experience and reason work together.

33. Hume had demonstrated that the principle of causality is not analytically derived. It is not a truth of reason alone. Kant demonstrated that neither is it derived from experience. He claimed it was an a priori synthetic judgement. Not grounded in reason or experience, the principle of causality was true because it was a necessary application to sense experience.

34. Open and closed systems may not be the only options. For example, a closed system paradigm would have most of the characteristics of the open system paradigm if it contained multiple layers of open subsystems. Such a closed system would have

The systemic worldview will no doubt approach the universe as an organic, dynamic system comprised of an ever-changing array of interacting subsystems. Emphasis will be placed on perceiving how systems are structured, how they function, and how they purposefully interface. Systemic thinking will be holistic and pluralistic. The degree to which the systemic worldview will be positivistic is yet to be determined. Reason will no doubt be a primary arbiter of truth.

#### A Pentecostal Worldview

At the same time that pragmatism and Einstein were challenging the assumptions of the scientific worldview,<sup>35</sup> Pentecostalism was born outside of the dominant theological visions of the Christian world: nineteenth-century liberalism and reactionary fundamentalism. This observation gives rise to questions concerning interdependence. How is Pentecostalism related to the classical scientific worldview and more particularly to the vision of liberalism and fundamentalism? How does Pentecostalism relate to pragmatism?<sup>36</sup> Does Pentecostalism have a worldview, and if so is that worldview compatible with the emerging systemic worldview?

Harvey Cox has recently written that in his opinion Pentecostals are 'leading the way' in the current worldwide religious renaissance that simply refused to let God die.<sup>37</sup> In fact, Cox sees Pentecostalism as a potential bridge into the 'postmodern' era of human history (provided it is properly decoded). He raises the question, 'Do the Pentecostal movement and the global religious stirring of which it is undoubtedly a part signal something larger and more significant that is underway?', to which he responds,

holism, differentiation, boundaries, equifinality, feedback and homeostasis. Dynamism and growth would be limited to the subsystems. It would therefore represent an alternative systemic worldview. Likewise, if entropy (an assumption of the scientific worldview) is eliminated as a necessary characteristic of closed systems, those systems without entropy would function like open systems. The absence of entropy (a-entropy) does not require the reverse of entropy (negentropy).

35. Einstein's first and perhaps most significant papers were published in 1905 in a German physics journal.

36. John Sims has attempted to demonstrate the dependency of Pentecostalism on pragmatism. See his *Power with Purpose* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1984).

37. Cox, 'Why God Didn't Die', pp. 6-8, 47-49.

My own answer to this question is at least a qualified 'yes'. Having pondered the Pentecostal movement for several years and in many different countries I have a strong hunch that it provides us with an invaluable set of clues, not just about the wider religious upsurge but about an even more comprehensive set of changes. Further, I believe these changes are not just religious ones, but they add up to a basic cultural shift for which the overtly spiritual dimension is not just the tip of the iceberg, but also the stream in which the iceberg is floating. I do not see this change as the beginning of the Last Days, as some Pentecostals do. I do see it however as a major reconfiguration of our most fundamental attitudes and patterns of perception, one that will ultimately alter not just the way some people pray but the ways we all think, feel, work and govern.<sup>38</sup>

If Cox is correct, Pentecostalism is more an impetus for than a consequence of an emerging dominant worldview. Pentecostalism should then be viewed as a part of the mainstream that is forging the postmodern era. A number of factors mitigate against subsuming Pentecostalism within any dominant worldview and thereby suggest that Cox is at least partially correct.

First, Pentecostalism may indeed represent a particular worldview and/or vision, but it clearly is not the product of a scientific paradigm. Pentecostalism emerged simultaneously among a variety of peoples around the world. There were no theorists who constructed Pentecostalism as a plausible response to the failure of other systems. Indeed, Pentecostalism took the world, especially the academic world, by surprise. Indications are that it took its early participants by surprise as well. Pentecostalism simply lacks the key ingredients of a paradigm. It is not at its core a theoretical response to an established paradigm. But this is not to say that it is not in itself paradigmatic or systemic.

Secondly, it has been thoroughly demonstrated that Pentecostalism is rooted in the holiness movement of the late nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup> While I am unaware of any studies comparing that earlier movement with the classical scientific worldview, it seems readily apparent that Pentecostalism emerged out of and as an expression of a counterculture. Persons of the holiness revivals and early Pentecostalism existed outside of the dominant cultural vision. They reacted to the 'modern' theological model of liberalism with preanalytic rejection of its unorthodox beliefs.

38. Cox, 'Why God Didn't Die', pp. 48-49.

39. V. Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); D. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

There was nothing in the new doctrines for them seriously to consider as anything but heresy.

This is not to say that Pentecostalism emerged as a reaction to liberalism, as did fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is clearly an expression of the classical scientific worldview.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, Pentecostalism and the holiness movement from which it came reflect an alternative worldview, one that springs from the insights of John Wesley.<sup>41</sup> Their vision of religion is incompatible with liberalism and fundamentalism. Appearances of compatibility with fundamentalism confuse shared doctrines with shared sources for those doctrines. Fundamentalism holds tightly to reason as the basis of faith. Wesleyans and Pentecostals hold to Scripture, church tradition, reason and experience as authoritative guides to faith while God alone serves as the basis of faith. Hence, they were experiencing God in ways William James could only imagine and John Gresham Machen and B.B. Warfield would not dare dream possible.

#### *A Vision of the Pentecostal Worldview*

No individual can comprehensively describe a worldview. Worldviews are preanalytic images that defy comprehensive analysis. Nevertheless, worldviews beg for description. I shall therefore suggest a core image within the Pentecostal worldview and extrapolate from it specific visions of reality within Pentecostalism. This core image relies heavily upon the belief that the early years of Pentecostalism in this century represent the heart of the movement<sup>42</sup> and that the heart continues to beat strong in most regions of the world.<sup>43</sup>

40. Timothy B. Cargal, in an attempt to show that Pentecostal scholars tend to operate out of a fundamentalist paradigm, has recently demonstrated that the fundamentalists and modernists operated out of the same epistemological presuppositions, 'a positivistic philosophical paradigm which took history as the dominant category of meaning': 'Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', pp. 163-87.

41. It is interesting to note that Wesley was one of the first theologians to incorporate insights from the Enlightenment but that he was careful to integrate them with an orthodox understanding of the Scriptures and church tradition. His famous quadrilateral further balanced reason with experience.

42. I am in agreement with Hollenweiger and Land that the first decade of Pentecostalism represents the heart of the movement rather than its infancy. S.J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (PPTSUP, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 13.

43. I am especially indebted to my wife, Cheryl Bridges Johns, for her research and insights into our shared heritage in Pentecostalism. She was the first to uplift for

At the core of the Pentecostal worldview is affective experience of God which generates an apocalyptic horizon for reading reality. In this apocalyptic horizon the experience of God is fused to all other perceptions in the space-time continuum. The fusion holds all things in a dialectic tension between the already and the not yet.

Steven J. Land saw in the early Pentecostal movement a recovery of the primitive eschatological vision. Founders of the movement reasoned that believers today 'can, should and must evidence the same longing and power as the first Christians, if they are to be in eschatological continuity with the beginning and end of the church of Pentecost'.<sup>44</sup> He elaborated:

The outpouring of the Spirit in the post-Easter community created and sustained that eschatological tension and vision which characterized the early church and the early Pentecostals. Now everything was considered from the standpoint of the imminent parousia. In the transcendent presence of God-categories of time and space were fused; and, since Jesus was near, so was the end. The Spirit who raised Jesus, made him present in salvation, signs and wonders, and showed things to come. The Spirit who burned as intense hope and energized witness, superintended the ongoing mission. To live in the Spirit was to live in the kingdom. Where the Spirit was present in eschatological power, there was the church of Pentecost.<sup>45</sup>

This was a vision of living in the last days in which each believer received a sense of transforming hope which 'gave a sense of belonging, dignity and power to many who had seen themselves as victims'.<sup>46</sup> 'With one foot in creation and the other in the age to come, the Pentecostals hoped for the salvation of the lost and longed for Jesus to come'.<sup>47</sup> They shared an urgent passion to be Christ-like witnesses in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit.<sup>48</sup>

Margaret Poloma's monumental study of the Assemblies of God me the affective, relational aspects of Pentecostalism as being central to the manner in which the people of the movement 'read their world'. I had the privilege of gleaning from her work throughout its development in dissertation form beginning in 1984. See her *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the Oppressed* (PPTSUP, 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

44. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 60.

45. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 64.

46. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 71.

47. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 65.

48. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 97.



indicates that the experiential dimension is still very much intact. She wrote:

*The instrumental rational reasoning process so characteristic of science and bureaucracy are absorbed into a more dominant sacred Weltanschauung within the Pentecostal perspective. It is God who is credited with providing modern medicine, advanced technology, and higher education, as well as personal benefits of a particular job, safe travel, and even parking places. This sacred worldview attributes all things to God rather than relegating the sacred to a particular time slot on Sunday mornings! Such attribution makes adherents skeptical about the powers of pure reason and its cousin, bureaucratic authority.<sup>49</sup>*

She understood the ongoing experiential nature of Pentecostalism to be a form of resistance to modernism. However, she concluded that Pentecostals are able to 'incorporate their belief in and experience of a personal and active God with a decidedly modern worldview in a manner that actually enriches the spiritually impoverished one-dimensional man'.<sup>50</sup>

#### *Characteristics of a Pentecostal Worldview*

Several characteristics of a Pentecostal worldview may be extrapolated from these statements by Land and Poloma. First, the Pentecostal worldview is God-centered. All things relate to God and God relates to all things. This fusion of God with the phenomenological does not collapse God into creation. Instead, it is a predisposition to see the transcendent God at work in, with, through, above, and beyond all events.

A second characteristic of the Pentecostal worldview flows out of its God-centeredness: it is holistic. Pentecostals are inclined to think systematically, as is evidenced in their eschatology. They have historically subscribed to a dispensationalism that emphasizes a progressive unfolding of revelation and the interrelation of the ages.<sup>51</sup> All events, past, present

49. M.M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), p. 8. It is Poloma's thesis 'that the Assemblies of God is currently experiencing vitality and growth because of its ability to encourage personal participation in charisma without jeopardizing its organizational structure' (*Assemblies of God*, p. 11).

50. Poloma, *Assemblies of God*, p. 8. It should be noted that Poloma's study did not consider eschatological aspects of faith and practice in the Assemblies of God. But there can be little doubt that the apocalyptic horizon has lost its focus for many Pentecostals.

51. F. Arrington, 'Dispensationalism', in S.M. Burgess and G.B. McGee (eds.),

and future, are related to a single master plan of God that will be consummated at the second coming of Christ.<sup>52</sup> Thus, for Pentecostals even time is viewed as a whole.

It may also be inferred from these writings that the Pentecostal worldview is transrational. Pentecostals do not limit truth to the realm of reason. For them the spectrum of knowledge includes cognition, affection and behavior, each of which is fused to the other two. Hence, Pentecostals are concerned with *orthopathy* and *orthopraxy* as well as orthodoxy. Faith, practice and feeling are to be worked out together with the affections, serving as the integrating center.<sup>53</sup> Cheryl Bridges Johns has linked Pentecostalism with 'affective conscientization', arguing that in the Pentecostal environment the Holy Spirit 'unveils reality in a manner which incorporates but supersedes human praxis'.<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere she and I have proposed the Hebrew understanding of *yada* as a Pentecostal approach to knowledge.<sup>55</sup>

Land's emphasis on the apocalyptic must not be overlooked. Premillennialism emerged in the nineteenth-century holiness movement.<sup>56</sup> Eschatological themes were of central significance to the development of early Pentecostal thought.<sup>57</sup> Theirs was not primarily an apocalypse of the end, but rather one of consummation and fulfillment. For them all things were being brought together in Christ.

The apocalyptic of early Pentecostalism grew out of a primitivism inherited from the holiness movement. This primitivism remains a substantial vision within the Pentecostal worldview. The early Pentecostals

exhibited three kinds of primitivism, two of which were carried over from the nineteenth century: Their ecclesiastical primitivism led them to be suspicious of 'man made' creeds and institutions. Their ethical primitivism

*Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), pp. 247-48. See also Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, pp. 79, 198.

52. For an early systemic approach to Pentecostal thought especially as it relates to this subject see D.W. Faupel, 'The Function of "Models" in the Interpretation of Pentecostal Thought', *Pneuma* 2, 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 51-71.

53. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, pp. 32-47.

54. Johns, *Pentecostal Formation*, pp. 111-40.

55. J.D. Johns and C.B. Johns, 'Yielding to the Spirit: A Pentecostal Approach to Group Bible Study', *JPT* 1 (1992), pp. 109-34.

56. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*.

57. D.W. Faupel, 'The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought' (PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1989).

called them to an all-consuming passion for holiness... But it was the experiential primitivism which catalyzed the other two and directed everything toward the soon coming of the Lord.<sup>58</sup>

Poloma's work reveals the results of all three forms of primitivism to be present in the Assemblies of God, but she warns that they are in real danger of losing their commitment to holiness.<sup>59</sup>

#### *Other Characteristics of the Pentecostal Worldview*

Scripture holds a special place and function in the Pentecostal worldview. Pentecostals differ from evangelicals and fundamentalists in approach to the Bible. For Pentecostals the Bible is a living book in which the Holy Spirit is always active. It is the Word of God, and therefore to encounter the Scriptures is to encounter God.<sup>60</sup> In my analysis the Scriptures serve at least three functions. First, they function as a primary reference point for communion with God. Pentecostals encounter God in the Scriptures. Secondly, they serve as the template for reading the world. It is in the light of Scripture that the patterns of life are recognized and woven into the divine-human narrative. In this manner the Scriptures facilitate the formation of visions (preanalytic, affective dispositions) within the believer which are perceived to conform to the character of God. Thirdly, the Scriptures function as a link to God's people and God's presence in the world throughout the ages. In this they facilitate the primitivistic and futuristic purposes of the people of God and thereby maintain the apocalyptic emphasis.

Other characteristics of the Pentecostal worldview need mentioning. Pentecostals are inclined toward action more than reflection.<sup>61</sup> They are

58. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 60.

59. Poloma, *Assemblies of God*, pp. 238-40.

60. R. Hollis Gause, 'Our Heritage of Faith in the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible', in R.H. Gause and S.J. Land (eds.), *Centennial Heritage Papers 1986: Presented at the 61st General Assembly of the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: Parkway Press, 1986), pp. 33-37.

61. Speaking of Pentecostal mission theology, Grant McClung wrote, 'It has been more experiential than cognitive, more activist than reflective, more actualized than analyzed'; 'Salvation Shock Troops', in H.B. Smith (ed.), *Pentecostals from the Inside Out* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), p. 86. In the same volume Gordon Anderson wrote, 'Pentecostals tend to favor action over contemplation and study' ('Pentecostals Believe in More than Tongues', p. 56). Poloma stated that 'Pastors and adherents thus stress the importance of affective action within an organization that is decidedly modern' (*Assemblies of God*, p. 11).

resistant to bureaucratic authority.<sup>62</sup> They demonstrate a paradoxical view of power, having an ideology that stresses both personal power to control one's destiny and loss of power to the omnipotent control of God.<sup>63</sup> They have a strong sense of needing to be separated from the world, which is seen as 'an interlocking system—socio-political, economic and spiritual—that is passing away'.<sup>64</sup>

#### *Toward a Pentecostal Paradigm*

As discussed above, paradigms are theoretical constructions which serve the purpose of providing structure and order to a worldview. They function to provide a means of (sense of) understanding the world. Models are theoretical solutions to problems within a paradigm. It was argued above that the worldviews of General Systems Theory and Pentecostalism may each be described as systemic but that the two require distinct visions of reality. Consequently, a Pentecostal paradigm must be seen as an alternative to the paradigm of General Systems Theory.

Above, I partially described the Pentecostal worldview as follows:

At the core of the Pentecostal worldview is affective experience of God which generates an apocalyptic horizon for reading reality. In this apocalyptic horizon the experience of God is fused to all other perceptions in the space-time continuum. The fusion holds all things in a dialectic tension between the already and the not-yet.

The Pentecostal worldview is transrational. Pentecostals do not limit truth to the realm of reason. For them the spectrum of knowledge includes cognition, affection and behavior, each of which is fused to the other two. Hence, Pentecostals are concerned with *orthopathy* and *orthopraxy* as well as orthodoxy. Faith, practice and feeling are to be worked out together with the affections serving as the integrating center.

From these statements a theoretical construct of Pentecostal reality may be derived.

A Pentecostal paradigm must find its structure, function and purpose in the knowledge of God. This knowledge is the knowledge of encounter

62. Poloma, *Assemblies of God*, p. 8.

63. L.P. Gerlach and V.H. Hine, *People, Power, and Change: Movements of Social Transformation* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), pp. 160-78.

64. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 103. Land refers to this as a spirituality of fusion.

and relationship, *yada*. To begin at this point is to build on an epistemology which is based upon personal revelation and response.<sup>65</sup> All knowledge is covenantal in nature. The knower and the known must experience, honor and respond to each other according to the true nature of each. Truth is an expression of being and since God is the ground of all that is, he is the ground of all truth. God is thus the witness and guarantor of all knowledge.

Furthermore, *yada* focuses on being in time rather than simply *being*. Time has its beginning and ending in God so that in God time and all it contains find union. The apocalyptic nature of Pentecostalism calls forth an eschatological construct in which all of creation which flows out of God is on the threshold of returning unto God. To know God in the power of the Holy Spirit places the individual in a system that functions in but transcends time. It is to share presently in the coming final state. At Pentecost the believer comes truly to know Easter and the Parousia because it is there that the resurrected Christ fulfills the promise of the Father and fills the believer with the Holy Spirit. This emphasis on time suggests that the Pentecostal paradigm should include a time-sensitive metaphor along with the ontologically sensitive metaphor of 'organism', 'pilgrimage' or 'journey' would reflect this sense of destiny.

The Pentecostal paradigm recognizes the need for total transformation of the believer as a downpayment on the total transformation of creation. This is reflected in the early fivefold gospel; Jesus is Savior, Sanctifier, Spirit Baptizer, Healer, and Coming King. While considerable attention was given to physical healing as a provision of the atonement and therefore a sign to unbelievers, the real test was in the affections. With John Wesley it was affirmed that the transformation of the heart is the center of authentic Christianity. The one who knows God loves, for God is love.

Pentecostals are concerned with truth, but not just propositional truth. In their paradigm orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopathy form the purpose, function and structure/essence of truth. Orthodoxy, in both the sense of giving glory to God and in the sense of correct belief,<sup>66</sup> is the

65. Rationalism and empiricism and any combination of the two are rejected as adequate sources of knowledge. However, *yada* does not negate reason nor sensory experiences. Rather it accepts them for what they are, characteristics of human existence designed to function as facilitators of knowledge but distorted by sin so as to make them unreliable to the point of deception.

66. Orthodoxy takes its meaning from a time in church history when faith was

*purpose* of knowledge. It is that toward which the church must always be moving. Glory will be given to God most purely when we are finally transformed in entirety so that our being, behavior and beliefs conform fully to the truth intended for us.

Orthodoxy is also purposive; it is a qualifying facilitator of the two other forms of knowledge. Doctrinal constructs such as the creeds cannot serve as a primal source of the knowledge of God. They may by their very nature (as abstract propositions) serve as a barrier to transforming encounter with God. However, sound doctrine must always be a dynamic element in all quests for truth.

Orthopraxy is 'right reflection/action' and constitutes the *function* of knowledge. To encounter God is to know oneself as a subject and object in history.<sup>67</sup> It is to respond in faithful obedience and consciously to join in the ongoing mission of the Holy Spirit. But reflection/action as a human activity cannot transcend the ontological barrier between subject and object; humans cannot initiate knowledge with God. Without the integration of orthodoxy and orthopathy all praxis will degenerate into sinful praxis.<sup>68</sup> Wholeness is achieved through an ongoing interaction with the Spirit, the Word, the community of the Spirit and Word, and the world.

Orthopathy refers to right affections which provide the *structure/essence* for a Pentecostal paradigm. It is through sanctification that the believer's character is transformed into the image and likeness of Christ. This transformation forms the integrating center of the knowledge of God. It brings together the Spirit-led processes of orthopraxy and the Spirit-accomplished orthodoxy. This is not a balancing of the three, but rather an integration, an affective understanding and behavior which is essential to the knowledge of God.

The transformation of the affections is three-dimensional.<sup>69</sup> First, it is grounded in repentance, literally a change of mind. This is a transformation of attitudes and dispositions which takes place at the very core of an individual's worldview. The transformation originates in the grace of God as the Spirit calls the sinner to repentance. Often the drawing of the

equated with creed and confession of the creed was the purest form of worship. Hence, the literal meaning of 'right glory' is changed into 'right belief' as appropriate worship.

67. Johns, *Pentecostal Formation*, p. 115.

68. Johns and Johns, 'Yielding to the Spirit', pp. 121-22.

69. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, pp. 134-36.

Spirit first strikes the affective chords of the unconscious mind. (Godly sorrow worketh repentance.) The individual responds to the Spirit's wooing with a volitional/rational act of faith and confesses Christ as Lord. This initial orthopraxy is a twin moment in which God knows the person as justified in Christ and the individual knows God as redeemer. The individual is regenerated and a new vision is formed at the core of her or his worldview. A process of reconstruction begins, one in which the old core vision, which was a disposition toward self, wars with the new core vision, which is a disposition toward God and others. Sanctification has begun.

In sanctification Christ is known as the power of God unto salvation and the suffering servant (orthodoxy). The love of God springs forth as a fountain of love and inclines the believer toward a life of responsible action (orthopraxy). However, a crisis event may be needed to break the power of the old, sinful core vision and remove it from the defining center of the believer's mind. Once broken, the template of old core vision remains within the memory of the believer. Powerless, the old is known for what it is, a law which is unto death.

Secondly, the transformation of the affections is objective.

To say the Christian affections are objective means that affections take an object. In this case the object is also the subject: God is the source and object of Christian affections. . . . What God has said and done, is saying and doing, will say and do is the source and telos of the affections.<sup>70</sup>

The objectivity of the affections binds them to the dimension of reason and understanding. Thus the paradigm by which the believer lives must continually be shaped by Godly affections.

Thirdly, the affections are relational. Their transformation alters the manner in which the individual relates to God, the church and the world. The altered worldview and paradigm move the focus of problems from selfish desire toward the needs of others. Thus, the model of the affections is community, the *koinonia* of the saints. The significant role of the affections within the Pentecostal paradigm suggests the need for yet another metaphor, perhaps 'story'.<sup>71</sup>

70. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 134.

71. I am using the term 'story' in the sense of 'myth' but only in the technical sense of a story, or any symbol, that embodies the a priori beliefs, affections and values of a society. The observation that an idea is a myth is not a statement about its historicity or verifiability.

The following chart demonstrates the distinctive structure of a Pentecostal paradigm in relation to Systems Theory. It suggests that the primal structure for Pentecostal knowledge is rooted in the affections and should flow out of the symbolic/actual story of Pentecostalism (that is, the Scriptures) and find expression in the traditions and rituals of the movement.

*The Structure of a Pentecostal Paradigm*

Truth 'System'	Essence & Core of Knowledge	A Priori Metaphor (domain of truth)	Foundation of Understanding to Truth (what we think we know)	Primary Approach ('normal' method of finding truth)
Systems Theory	Reason & Positivism/ Cognitions	worldview	paradigm	model
Pentecostalism	Yada Covenant Encounter/ Affections	story/ revelation	tradition	community rituals

In other words, the paradigm of Pentecostalism is Pentecost. The Pentecost event embodies the values, beliefs and affections of the movement. It consummates the covenant established in the Easter event and projects those realities into the eschaton. The story of Pentecost is the story of divine-human encounter, which guarantees the final union of all believers with Christ. The story of Pentecost is inseparable from all of divine revelation.

The story is made 'incarnate' through the traditions that flow out of it. These traditions represent all that is to be passed on to the next generation. They include the telling of the story, codes of conduct, and shared practices. The traditions of Pentecost are clearly identified at the end of ch. 2 of Acts. The tradition gives rise to rituals which provided structure and meaning to the daily lives of the early Christian community. Finally, it should be noted that the Pentecostal paradigm may subsume the General Systems paradigm with little distortion. The reverse is not true. The affections may serve as an integrating center of all knowledge; skepticism cannot. The story-based metaphor of revelation contains a worldview but systems theory (in that it is stochastic) cannot integrate time into a unified whole. Likewise, traditions and rituals are more open to paradigms and models than the converse.

### Conclusions

It may be concluded that Pentecostalism as a movement has many similarities with the emerging systemic worldview. Both are holistic, systemic and purposive. Each is characterized as growth-oriented, organic, relational, dynamic and open to change. Pentecostalism may indeed be a part of the stream that is ushering in the postmodern era.

However, there are divergences and it would be a mistake to marry Pentecostalism to the systemic worldview or any of its emerging paradigms. Of special concern is the Open System Paradigm of the universe. Some form of process theology is an inescapable outgrowth of the paradigm. Openness to 'God-talk' and to the 'supernatural' does not equate with biblical theism.

If it is to be true to itself, Pentecostalism must maintain a radical commitment to the presence and sovereignty of God. It must further reclaim an apocalyptic vision which fuses it to primitive Christianity as a single eschatological community living in the hope of the Parousia. Pentecostalism must remain a contrast culture, one which lives out the present realities of the kingdom of God as it waits for final consummation of all things.

Pentecostal scholars need to consider carefully the distinctiveness of their own worldview and its implications for the postmodern era before they buy into the paradigms and models of the emerging worldview. If they do not the resulting marriage may prove far more detrimental to the movement than the fading courtship with evangelicalism. Pentecostal models of ministry must flow out of Pentecostal paradigms of truth.

### CAN CLASSICAL PENTECOSTALS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS ENGAGE IN COMMON WITNESS?

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What shape, if any, would common witness take between two traditions which are either in the initial stages of ecumenical relationships, or belong to denominations which are uneasy about any form of ecumenism? Is it even possible for Christians of different traditions to express their faith together in natural ways without committing themselves to structural reunion? Is it possible to engage in common witness while rejecting ecclesiastical reunion as an ideal? Are there no more limited choices between organic reunion on the one hand, and no common witness whatsoever on the other hand? Can we cooperate in mission and common witness in some concrete manner, even if only to a limited degree? Can Christians of differing theological views witness together without compromising their distinctive witness?

#### *Experience of Jesus Christ as a Point of Departure*

We can begin to look at these delicate issues by stating the presuppositions to common witness in the context of Classical Pentecostal-Roman Catholic relations as expressed in the international dialogue. This international dialogue has repeatedly asserted that it does not have as its goal structural reunion. Rather its goal is the death of mythologies, the

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