

PENTECOSTALISMS, PEACEMAKING  
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE / RIGHTEOUSNESS  
IN CANADA AND ABROAD

GUEST EDITORIAL

MARTIN WILLIAM MITTELSTADT

Over recent decades, a growing contingent of Canadian Pentecostal scholars has come to occupy the Society for Pentecostal Societies (SPS). During our annual Canadian dinner we talk about our lives, our careers, and our shared Canadian Pentecostal heritage. Inevitably, the conversation follows a predictable pattern. Although we undoubtedly benefit from SPS, we share frustration. Our commentary runs something like: “Parham, Seymour, and Azusa Street do not represent our primary story,” “North America sure seems tilted to the south,” “Canadians are not just like the Americans,” and “Canadian Pentecostals are not simply carbon copies of American Pentecostals.” But, in fine Canadian style, we never consider a coup; instead we conceived of a Canadian Pentecostal symposium (not restricted to Canadians) within SPS in order to investigate the unique dynamics of Pentecostalism north of the border and around the globe. This Canadian symposium now seven years old was followed with a vision for this journal, a site to publish the papers typically presented at the annual symposium.

The major essays of this issue come out of the 2012 annual meeting at Regent University (Virginia Beach, Virginia). Under the leadership of Paul Alexander, we found presenters from four different countries in concert with the conference theme, “Pentecostals, Peacemaking and Social Justice/Righteousness.” Peruvian Dario Lopez Rodriquez and South African Johan Mostert offered riveting stories reminiscent of Pentecostal testimony regarding their respective journeys of peace and justice. Canadian Murray Dempster and American Zachary Tackett produced more conventional presentations that traced the confusing historical relationship between Pentecostals, peace, and war. It was my privilege to experience these presentations firsthand and now serve as a guest editor for this issue. Three of the four presentations are published here.

Although Dario Lopez Rodriguez was unable to present an essay for this issue, Rodriguez's SPS presentation warrants commentary. Rodriguez, who serves in numerous capacities, including pastor among the urban poor in Lima, National Bishop of the Church of God of Perú, and President of the National Evangelical Council of Perú, presented from his publication, which was recently revised, *The Liberating Mission of Jesus: The Message of the Gospel of Luke*.<sup>1</sup> He argued that authentic Peruvian Pentecostals must reflect the Lukan Jesus and live among the fragile members of society: the poor, outcasts, tax collectors, Samaritans, women, and children. According to Rodriguez, if Luke writes for "the exiled of the earth, for the 'human refuse' ... condemned to social ostracism and the basement of history by those who hold political and economic history,"<sup>2</sup> there can be no better template for pastoral work than the marginalized neighbourhoods of Villa Maria del Triunfo on the south side of Lima. Much to my delight, I realized that Rodriguez meets a specific lacuna in Pentecostal scholarship; I had previously called upon Pentecostal scholars of Luke-Acts not to focus upon Acts at the expense of the Third Gospel.<sup>3</sup> Rodriguez' socio-economic context surely impacts his interest in the most "social" Gospel. In sum, whether in south side Lima or Chicago, the streets of Toronto or Winnipeg, evangelists of the Lukan Jesus must offer justice and dignity for the disinherited.

In this issue, Murray Dempster describes the turbulent journey of various Canadian Pentecostal denominations that maintain a pacifistic position throughout their history and others who gave up their early heritage. Dempster, with Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada roots in rural Saskatchewan, laments the latter; he traces the movement away from pacifism from WWI to WWII. His historical material includes accounts of Pentecostal conscientious objectors who experienced severe punishment from Canadian officials. I recall Dempster's presentation at Regent University and could hardly believe the torturous abuse endured

---

<sup>1</sup> Translated from Spanish by Stefanie D. Israel and Samuel Escobar, Pickwick Publications, 2012 Pentecostals, Peacemaking and Social Justice Series, 6. Rodriguez shared through interpreter Rick Waldrop of Quito, Ecuador and the Latin American Social Ministries Coordinator for the Church of God (Cleveland, TN).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>3</sup> Martin William Mittelstadt, *Reading Luke-Acts in the Pentecostal Tradition* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010) 167.

by my Pentecostal forefathers of Winnipeg on a street only a few blocks from my first school. In an account reminiscent of atrocities at Guantanamo Bay, Dempster tells of Pentecostal conscientious objectors perpetually doused with cold water; some endured, others gave in, and still others died. I could not believe that such activities took place in the city of my birth! This essay should elicit motivation for further research into further atrocities suffered by Canadian Pentecostal pacifists.

Zachery Tackett offers a historical account as he examines the various responses of first generation American Pentecostals to WWI. Although the young Assemblies of God, and most other Pentecostal bodies, adopts a bold pacifist position in 1917, Tackett demonstrates that first generation Pentecostals adopt one of three responses based upon the interface between pacifism and American patriotism: 1) absolute pacifists such as Frank Bartleman, Arthur Booth-Clibborn and A.J. Tomlinson adopt a prophetic and counter-cultural approach that prioritizes heavenly citizenship to nationhood; 2) others such as E.N. Bell and G.F. Taylor vacillate. Although generally opposed to warfare, their pragmatism leads to the view that participation in war might serve the cause of evangelism; and 3) a final group including C.H. Mason and Stanley Frodsham endorses non-combatant, and some combatant, roles in order to declare patriotic commitments.

Finally, Johan Mostert, a psychologist by training, applies the seven-stage model of “White Cultural Identity Development” from Derald Wing Sue and David Sue and situates his transformation from racial bigotry and segregation against the larger backdrop of Pentecostalism in late twentieth century South Africa. Mostert tells riveting accounts of personal interaction with fellow Pentecostals and government officials, both white and black, that help to breakdown his theological inconsistencies and socio-cultural programming. I marvel at Mostert’s ability to produce his Pentecostal testimony through convergence of the complex theological history of South African Pentecostalism and racial identity theory. If the larger story of South Africa provides a national model for racial reparation without civil war, so also the story of one man provides a concrete example of the anticipated barriers to be broken down by the Spirit of Pentecost. As Mostert rises to a position of influence, his Pentecostal journey takes many twists and turns. I pray that his testimony may prove paradigmatic for people of the Spirit over and over again.

In conclusion, I must point out the limitations of this effort. First, SPS conference and journal limitations leave room for only three major papers, which in turn limits the scope of our international endeavours. Although the coordinators of this symposium sought presenters from the SPS community, we were well aware of the limited global representation available to us. However, it is my hope that these essays will inspire a more thorough edited volume on the peace and justice traditions among Pentecostals around the world.<sup>4</sup> Over the years, I have heard stories of Pentecostal pacifists from Russia, Germany, and Croatia. On a recent trip to Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in the Philippines, my students probed me on pacifism. When students from Korea and Singapore challenged me concerning their required military service, I probed them for examples of their citizens who may have rejected such responsibility due to conviction; a number of students informed me privately that they had indeed heard stories along this line. I believe stories from around the world require publication in order to rejuvenate fresh conversation on peace and war, conflict and resolution.<sup>5</sup> I trust the essays in this issue contribute to the conversation.

---

<sup>4</sup> For a step in this direction, see the new release edited by Jay Beaman and Brian Pipkin entitled *Pentecostal and Holiness Statements on War and Peace*. Pentecostals, Peacemaking, and Social Justice 6 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Whereas Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori (*Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Renewal* [Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007]) have set an inaugural standard for the convergence of global Pentecostalism and justice, I am not aware of a similar work on Pentecostals and pacifism from global perspectives.