

Editorial

Introduction to “Current Trajectories in Global Pentecostalism: Culture, Social Engagement, and Change”

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Abstract: This special issue of *Religions* assembles a talented group of international scholars from a variety of regions and disciplines to address contemporary developments within global Pentecostalism, a burgeoning movement that is changing the face—and interface—of religion and society today. A total of twelve articles (representing the work of thirteen authors) speak to issues surfacing along one of three overlapping trajectories: cultural expression, social engagement, and institutional change. The introduction briefly sets a framework for each article and calls attention to its wider connections and notable contributions. As a body of scholarship, these articles constitute a set of strategic soundings that refine our understanding of the texture and topography of global Pentecostalism. In addition to their substantive contributions, the authors, viewed collectively, also put on display the central attributes of a new era in Pentecostal studies, one distinguished by its productivity, diversity, range, and interdisciplinary ken.

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The twenty-first century has witnessed the rise of a new era in the once lightly-attended field of Pentecostal studies. One measure of that development is the sheer quantity of scholarship now being directed at the subject. A review of scholarly databases shows that academic output in the field grew exponentially over the second half of the twentieth century but has, in fact, experienced its greatest aggregate surge in the two decades since.¹ This growing body of scholarship represents

¹ In searches conducted on 8 November 2018, using “pentecostal(s)” and “pentecostalism” as heuristic search terms (yielding fewer false positives than “charismatic”), and years 0 to 9 to mark a decade, Google Scholar returned 439 articles for the 1950s; 1100 for the 1960s; 2770 for the 1970s; 3840 for the 1980s; 10,900 for the 1990s; 27,500 for the 2000s; and 28,600 since 2010. The figures for scholarly articles returned through ProQuest were 100; 285; 879; 964; 2177; 3656; and 3356, respectively. ProQuest results for dissertations—a uniquely revealing measure of scholarly interest—even more closely matched the Google Scholar profile, with 144 dissertations in the 1950s; 353 in the 1960s; 915 in the 1970s; 1375 in the 1980s; 3719 in the 1990s; 7250 in the 2000s, and 7234 since 2010. A search of the OCLC WorldCat database (restricted for heuristic purposes to books, articles, journals and magazines, newspapers, and encyclopedia entries) returned 811 items for the 1950s; 1529 for the 1960s; 3133 for the 1970s; 3886 for the 1980s; 5802 for the 1990s; 10,383 for the 2000s; and 16,561 items since 2010. These databases all show exponential growth from the 1950s through the 1980s, with a further surge in the 1990s. All but ProQuest articles point to a major additional spike in the 2000s. Google Scholar and ProQuest indicate a leveling off at that peak after 2010, while WorldCat shows yet another leap in the present decade. Also of interest is the fact that, according to WorldCat, the share of materials published in English dropped steadily from over 80% in the 1950s and 1960s to less than 70% in the 2000s.

a somewhat belated response to the continuing expansion (and evolution) of Pentecostalism and its corollaries, whose impact is being felt in every quarter of the globe and every sector of society. Where scholars of Pentecostalism once felt obliged to preface their works with a battery of statistics justifying their choice of subject, they may now expect its magnitude and importance to be readily conceded. Indeed, developments within global Pentecostalism have conspired with the resurgence of religious actors generally to ensure that an informed observer, if not the average lay reader, will recognize the movement's relevance to subjects ranging from electoral politics and human security to economic development and the formation of social capital.

However, the marks of a new era in Pentecostal studies are visible not only in the rising volume of scholarly production or the growing public awareness of its object; they are visible as well in the profiles of those working in the field and the nature of the work they produce while there. Today, historians, theologians, and religious studies scholars are joined by colleagues representing the full panoply of the social sciences. Furthermore, regardless of home discipline, scholars are now more likely than ever to adopt a multidisciplinary orientation. In addition, they hail from wider geographical and cultural provenances and address a more comprehensive range of subjects than any prior cohort. Indeed, scholars on every inhabited continent are employing an impressive array of tools to examine structures and textures, collectivities and individuals, pulpit and pew, street corner and statehouse. The result is a dynamic arena of critical inquiry devoted to examining and comprehending the movement and its wider implications.

These are heartening trends, and they reflect precisely the qualities needed if scholars are to meet the challenges of the day. Pentecostalism is a complex, rapidly expanding phenomenon marked by hybridity and fracture, glocalization and paradox. And, as with Pentecostalism, our disciplines are themselves changing, offering new tools and new perspectives with the potential to sharpen and deepen our vision. Certainly, new approaches are called for if we wish to assemble a fair portrait of the coterie of entities we house under the name of global Pentecostalism.

This special issue of *Religions* is a response to the developments outlined above. It showcases the most promising attributes of the current scholarship and illustrates the kind of global, cross-disciplinary conversation that is increasingly possible within Pentecostal studies. As an organizing principle, our issue prioritizes contemporary trends within global Pentecostalism, and contributors submitted work that speaks to questions arising from three overlapping trajectories:

Cultural Trajectories—How are Pentecostals construing or manifesting themselves via rhetoric and discourse, gender and sexual ethics, worship, music, spirituality, theology, or material culture?

Trajectories of Social Engagement—Where are the leading points of engagement between Pentecostalism and contemporary societies, and what are the effects of such engagement? How is Pentecostalism enabling (or disabling) the faithful—individually or collectively—in their efforts to influence society or negotiate the realities of modern life?

Trajectories of Change—What are the key dimensions of social or cultural change within Pentecostalism itself? How is Pentecostalism being transformed as it attempts to transform the world?

In demarcating the perimeter of our issue, we did not place emphasis on definition, and readers will find some variation in how the authors go about defining their subjects. In general, though, Pentecostalism was taken to encompass movements that place emphasis on baptism in the Holy Spirit; profess and practice “spiritual gifts” (including divine healing); endorse (and at least occasionally practice) glossolalia; adopt a “born again” view of salvation; and self-ascribe as Christian. All of the groups treated here would be considered “Pentecostal” both for these distinctive beliefs and practices and also for their direct or indirect relation to Pentecostalism as an organic historical movement.

The authors of this special issue, for their part, speak with voices that are diverse in their disciplines, points of origin, regions and topics of interest, and standing relative to the movement they

study. Some address areas of manifest practical relevance, such as the impact of Pentecostalism on political and economic structures, while others attend to its interior and interpretive dimensions—its belief structures and mindscapes, rituals and representation—or to the constructive dialectics at play in the movement's social embedment. What emerges is an exemplary conversation among leading scholars, one that yields profound insights while demonstrating the range and quality of contemporary scholarship on global Pentecostalism.

In "George Jeffreys: Pentecostal and Contemporary Implications," William K. Kay, Emeritus Professor of Theology at Wrexham Glyndwr University (Wales) and Honorary Professor of Pentecostal Studies, Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Chester (England), explores the life of early Pentecostal leader George Jeffreys and his fraught relationship with the denomination he founded and eventually broke from, the Elim Pentecostal Church. Throughout his distinguished career, Kay has embodied interdisciplinary inquiry, weaving methods and insights derived from history, theology, psychology, sociology, and education into his work. Here as well, what begins as an exercise in history ends up as much more. After narrating the events that eventually separated Jeffreys from his colleagues, Kay presses further, seeking to understand not just the schism that occurred but the particular form it took and the manner in which the precipitating dispute was conducted. Kay places his story in a double context comprised of, first, the institutional developments reshaping Elim and, second, the British social and legal culture within which those developments transpired. His account then extends Weberian and Troeltschian analysis into a reflection on the role that social embeddedness, including the pragmatic demands of institution-building and the enviroing context of legal structures and social norms, plays in setting the parameters of change. This is an important contribution. By turning our attention to the particulars—property, assets, contracts, social dictates regarding how decisions are to be made and conflicts handled—Kay reveals the paradoxical interplay of primitivism and pragmatism within Pentecostalism while also lending support to scholars who wish to move beyond generalities about institutionalization and routinization to a more precise understanding of how those processes work themselves out in specific situations.²

Our second article comes from Wolfgang Vondey, a theologian and scholar of Pentecostal studies at the University of Birmingham (England); in it, he interprets Pentecostal belief and practice through a theological lens keenly attuned to cultural performance. "Religion as Play: Pentecostalism as a Theological Type" builds a cogent argument for understanding Pentecostalism as a distinctive form of religion, but with religion interpreted through the frame of play. Vondey thus brings his subject into conversation with a long tradition of sociological and anthropological analysis that has elaborated on the ludic nature of religion and the concept of "deep play."³ Certainly, Pentecostalism is particularly well-suited to such analysis. Many Pentecostal lives are inscribed, at the broadest level, in the gripping narrative of dispensational premillennialism, and daily events are often enacted mimetically on an earthly stage framed by the stories of the Bible and replete with unseen agents malevolent and benign. Surely, Pentecostalism has a unique ability to fuse metanarrative with the drama of everyday life.⁴ Vondey, however, is not concerned merely with ritual analysis; he pushes toward a more fundamental level of interpretation in which gestures and their significations cohere within a defining frame of constitutive meaning. Building on the frame analysis of Erving Goffman, Vondey marks the distinction between literal act and assigned meaning and then charts their transcription as elements of a primary frame—play—whose efficacy and authenticity depend on its remaining unconscious of itself. Vondey's interpretation of Pentecostal theology as a type of play is sure to be provocative,

² On pragmatism and primitivism, see (Wacker 2001, pp. 11–14). For a case study of how the evolution of mundane entanglements, civic and economic opportunities, and creeping involvement in local affairs led eventually to political engagement, see (Nelson 1987). The political career of John Ashcroft, ex-governor of Missouri and former attorney general of the United States, can be traced directly to these developments.

³ For "deep play," see (Geertz 1973). For dramaturgical play and religion, classic works include (Harrison 1977; Turner 1982; Turner 1974).

⁴ On the drama of everyday life, see (Goffman 1959).

but equally thought-provoking is the precondition of that argument—namely, his prior claim that Pentecostal theology is grounded not in abstract intellection but in praxis: the actions, affections, and experiences of Pentecostal spirituality.

If Wolfgang Vondey gives us Pentecostalism as play, Ibrahim Abraham, a social and cultural anthropologist at the University of Helsinki (Finland), asks if that play is “sincere.” His article, “Sincere Performance in Pentecostal Megachurch Music,” is situated at the crossroads of ethnography, ritual theory, and the anthropology of Christianity, and it draws on those fields to examine how the moral category of sincerity, broadly internalized among Pentecostals as a core value of communal practice and individual integrity, meets the challenges of mass-mediated, consumerist, market-driven performance within Hillsong, the Australia-based network of megachurches. Grounded on interviews conducted in South Africa, the United Kingdom, and Australia, Abraham’s article illuminates precisely the kind of global, cross-cultural dynamics that are driving the growth of Pentecostalism and reshaping religious practice around the world. Along the way, he touches perceptively on topics ranging from architecture to cultural geography and offers a convincing demonstration of how “sincerity,” as a category of analysis, can shed light on contested understandings of religion and identity.⁵

Performance and Hillsong Church also take center stage in “Acknowledgment of Country: Intersecting Australian Pentecostalism Reembedding Spirit in Place,” by Tanya Riches, an anthropologist and Pentecostal studies scholar at Hillsong College in Sydney, Australia. Her methodologically innovative study employs ethnography, ritual analysis, anthropology, and normative theology in a multi-layered analysis of a potent ritual event: a Christianized Indigenous ceremonial welcome enacted at the 2017 Hillsong Conference. Hillsong’s aim was to incorporate Aboriginal Christians and their alternative conceptualizations of space and place into a shared Pentecostal community, and Riches mines that performance for intimations of transformational developments that may now be occurring within Pentecostalism. Applying a historical schema developed by theologian Nami Wariboko, Riches uses the Hillsong event to plot Australian Pentecostalism in relation to Wariboko’s “Charismatic City,” a decentralized communion, permeated by the divine presence, where social and psychological boundaries separating center and periphery, metropolis and heteropolis, have been dissolved. In addition to her perceptive analysis of the “Acknowledgement of Country” ceremony and its reception, Riches opens a window onto Pentecostal imaginaries in the twenty-first century, identifying potentialities unfolding within the global movement and revealing how many contemporary Pentecostals view their place in history.

A chief interest driving much of the current literature on Pentecostalism centers around its impact as an agent of change, and we frequently speak of the “Pentecostalization” of one or another sector of society or religion.⁶ In “Pentecostal Forms across Religious Divides: Media, Publicity, and the Limits of an Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism,” Marleen de Witte, a social and cultural anthropologist from the University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands), both applies and critiques this category of analysis. On the one hand, her ethnographic study of the interaction between Neo-Pentecostalism and the anti-Pentecostal Afrikania Mission demonstrates the profound effect of Neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana on the cultural parameters of mass mediation and self-representation, indeed, on the fundamental terms according to which a religious movement defines, positions, promotes, and represents itself. Yet she also demonstrates the constitutive role of conflict and antagonism in the processes of social construction and religious change in Ghana. Pentecostalism and its adversaries are mutually entangled in a shared and co-created cultural field, De Witte notes, and the movement’s positionality—its modes of differentiation, identification, and representation—are only properly understood within that wider field. Ultimately, De Witte’s article represents a trenchant call for scholars to more fully situate manifestations of Pentecostalism within the social matrices that frame them and to more fully

⁵ Abraham’s article nicely complements the work of Suma Ikeuchi. (Ikeuchi 2017) shows how Japanese Brazilian Pentecostals and secular Japanese each (de)value “religion” along an axis of relative sincerity, but in diametrically opposite ways.

⁶ For recent examples, see (Williams 2015; Gladwin 2015).

appreciate the importance of conflict in the negotiations through which a given field is formed and reformed. In short, she shows that we have much to learn about Pentecostalism by studying those who do not embrace it—indeed, by studying those who directly oppose it.

The complex relationship between Pentecostalism and economics, broadly conceived—long a subtext for historians—has emerged as a primary concern for social scientists as well.⁷ At the same time, scholars from a wide range of disciplines have pondered the equally complex relationship between Pentecostalism and gender.⁸ Many researchers today, however, begin with the presupposition that these are not really separate questions. Rather, together with other expressions of power and social hierarchy, gender and economics are viewed as closely interwoven variables in the lived experience of any community. An interdisciplinary perspective of precisely this kind guides the case study brought to us by Sara Gundersen, a development economist at Valparaiso University (Valparaiso, IN, USA). “Will God Make Me Rich? An Investigation into the Relationship between Membership in Charismatic Churches, Wealth, and Women’s Empowerment in Ghana” draws on social survey data to explore the named factors and examine the nexus between them. Divining the practical implications of Pentecostal affiliation as measured by indicators of economic prosperity and individual empowerment is a daunting proposition, particularly given the multitude of variables involved and the inertia of self-selecting social and demographic factors that correlate with religious identity. Yet Gundersen’s careful study allows her to reach balanced, judicious conclusions that challenge certain expectations within the field and show that all is not as it seems. Her analysis, furthermore, is directly relevant to the hypothesis of a Pentecostal gender paradox, that is, a social *modus operandi* whereby the affirmation of selected elements of patriarchy serves—consciously or otherwise—as a strategy for expanding women’s empowerment overall (and that with a concomitant restriction of male prerogatives).⁹ Whatever the final assessment there may be, it is clear that Pentecostalism is having an effect on norms and behaviors surrounding gender. The precise nature of those effects remains elusive, but this article makes an important contribution to the mapping of that terrain.

For Pentecostals, too, Gundersen shows, “the personal is political,” but the political in Pentecostalism today is increasingly structural as well.¹⁰ Around the world, Pentecostals are defying stereotypes and shaking off old apolitical leanings to enter the public square, emerging in some regions as core constituencies within mainstream political parties. An impressive body of scholarship is springing up alongside this striking development, but the relationship between Pentecostalism and party politics is impishly complex. Globally, Pentecostals present great variation along the political axis, and the threads connecting the sources, modes, outcomes, and consequences of their politicization are far from unraveled.¹¹ Fortunately, several of our articles take up the challenge of this conundrum.

In her article “Pentecostalism, Politics, and Prosperity in South Africa,” Maria Frahm-Arp, a religious studies scholar at the University of Johannesburg (South Africa), analyzes data from an extensive research project conducted in greater Johannesburg and discovers distinct patterns of social and political engagement that correlate with differences she observes among churches that, from a distance, appear quite similar. While Pentecostalism in general has played a notably salient role in South African politics, Frahm-Arp and her research group identified proponents of “prosperity gospel” teaching as uniquely politicized. However, they found that this brand of Pentecostalism is by no means monolithic. Close analysis of their data revealed distinctive models of theology and practice among these Pentecostals that could be linked to differing propensities for and modes of social and political engagement. These findings were further deepened by cross-referencing to social

⁷ For the economic angle in earlier historical works, see (Anderson 1979). Seminal works from the social sciences include (Martin 1990; Csordas 1992). See also (Mariz 1992).

⁸ For an early example from the social sciences, see (Gill 1990).

⁹ The key work here is (Martin 2001).

¹⁰ (Hanish 1970).

¹¹ For a brief overview of historical trends in the United States, see (Robins 2010, pp. 50–51, 108–19). Representative studies on corresponding trends globally include (Freston 1993, pp. 66–110; Maxwell 2000; Gifford 2004; Miller and Yamamori 2007).

indicators. Among the article's many contributions, two stand out. First, it represents an important effort to determine if unique combinations of socioeconomic, demographic, and personal conditions may interact with particular forms of religious ideation and practice to yield identifiable profiles of social and political engagement. Second, it adds to the ongoing attempt within Pentecostal studies to gauge the practical effects—socially, politically, and economically—of prosperity teaching and the institutions that embody and disseminate it.

In a similar vein, Henri Gooren, an anthropologist at Oakland University (Rochester, MI, USA), also examines forms of socio-political engagement within Pentecostalism, but in a comparative context that emphasizes diachronic change. His "Pentecostalization and Politics in Paraguay and Chile" illuminates a phenomenon of deep interest within Pentecostal studies: the transition over time, within many quarters of global Pentecostalism, from a largely apolitical posture to one that embraces political involvement as part of the church's social mission.¹² Here, Gooren moves beyond generic observations about upward mobility or sect-to-church evolution by identifying several discrete patterns of engagement, each with its own implications for the Pentecostal community in question. Moreover, this is a comparative study conducted within a set of asymmetrical contexts, and that methodology permits a number of intriguing insights. For example, the primary sites of data collection—Chile and Paraguay—share common traits but present a stark contrast in terms of the historical roots and growth trajectories of Pentecostalism in each. Furthermore, Gooren combines classical Pentecostal, Neo-Pentecostal, and Catholic Charismatic communities within a single purview, which allows him to spot modes of socio-political interface that might apply across the breadth of the "Renewalist" spectrum in South America.¹³ Like Frahm-Arp, Gooren shows that political engagement among Pentecostals may emerge along multiple pathways and lead to a variety of outcomes. Both studies enhance our understanding of the patterns of political activity now emerging within global Pentecostalism, and both should inspire further research to gauge the degree to which their findings might apply cross-culturally to forms of Pentecostalism found in disparate societies elsewhere.

A fine complement to these studies is found in "The Altars Are Holding the Nation in Captivity": *Zambian Pentecostalism, Nationality, and African Religio-Political Heritage*, which calls attention to the cultural and historical roots of such patterns of engagement and the often unexamined assumptions that shape them. Author Chammah J. Kaunda, a theologian jointly affiliated with the Human Sciences Research Council (Pretoria, South Africa) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Durban, South Africa), addresses these issues as they appear in the truly extraordinary situation unfolding in Zambia. With Christianity now constitutionally adopted as the state religion, Zambia stands as the only officially Christian nation in sub-Saharan Africa, and the prominent role played by Pentecostals in this development has left them with an outsized political standing unmatched anywhere in the world. Kaunda approaches his subject by contextualizing it, situating Zambian Pentecostalism within a broader cultural field that lies at the intersection of history, religion, ethnonationalism, and the state. This approach allows him to observe the continuities linking an emerging Pentecostal theology of nationality to traditional African ethnonationalism, whose ontocratic epistemology grounds political structures and assumptions in the foundational order of things. The result is a story rich in irony. Kaunda finds Pentecostalism perpetuating core elements of a pre-Christian culture that it intends to reject, and, in so doing, he sheds light on the complex reciprocity of Pentecostalism's interaction with indigenous cultures and cosmologies generally—a subject of intense interest in Pentecostal studies, particularly among anthropologists. We see Zambian Pentecostals simultaneously rejecting, transmuting, and perpetuating core elements of Bemba ethnonationalism, renouncing the old altars as demonic while

¹² Analyses of this and related transitions, such as those addressed by Kay, have often drawn on Weber and Troeltsch. See (Poloma 1989; Miller 2005).

¹³ "Renewalist" is a widely adopted term coined by David Barrett to embrace the full sweep of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians: (World Christian Database 2018, p. 18).

presupposing the power and centrality of the altar as such. In this case, at least, Kaunda reveals breaking and making, rupture and replication, to be flip sides of the coin of cultural change.¹⁴

This analysis is taken a step further in “Mobilising Religious Assets for Social Transformation: A Theology of Decolonial Reconstruction Perspective on the Ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs (MNGRA) in Zambia.” Here, Kaunda and co-author Mutale Mulenga-Kaunda—a scholar of gender and religion also based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal—address a critical question: If Pentecostals are to be part of a religious establishment that allows them to put their political theology into practice, what should the nature of that theology be? Zambian Pentecostals overwhelmingly supported their country’s adoption of Christian nationalism and have accepted a central role in Zambia’s governance. Indeed, the situation there may allow us to speak, for the first time, of a “custodial” or “magisterial” Pentecostalism. Such a development beckons scholars from ivory-tower analysis into the applied sciences, demanding both evaluative and prescriptive assessments of the principles that might guide policy-making in a Pentecostalized regime. And that is precisely what the authors offer here. How will Pentecostals govern? Will they stand as impartial arbiters framing policy for a diverse society comprised of religious and nonreligious citizens alike? Or will they pursue narrow policies that seek to make society in their own image? These are among the core questions at the root of this article. The authors’ immediate focus rests on policies issuing from Zambia’s new, Pentecostal-led ministry of religious affairs (est. 2017), which they view with some concern, given that similar bodies in other countries have shown a tendency to promote, if not enforce, the norms, ideologies, and material interests of the religious establishment. Drawing on decolonial studies, political science, theology, and philosophy, Kaunda and Mulenga-Kaunda argue that insights derived from decolonial reconstruction would allow Zambia to arrive at policies that are at once authentically Christian, informed by Zambia’s religious heritage, and supportive of democracy, social justice, and human rights for all Zambians, whether on the margins or at the center of their “Christian” nation.¹⁵

Our final two articles address understudied sociological phenomena pertaining to stigma, identity, and social boundary formation. In “Stigmatisation and Ritual: An Analysis of the Stigmatisation of Pentecostalism in Chile,” Wilson Muñoz, a social anthropologist jointly affiliated with the Collège de France, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris, France) and the research group ISOR, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain), and sociologist M. Esther Fernández-Mostaza, also a member of ISOR-UAB, explore the social opprobrium attached to Pentecostals in Chile, which has persisted despite decades of conspicuous success and upward social mobility. The authors combine historical methodology with insights derived from sociology, ritual theory, and anthropology—Erving Goffman’s work on stigma, in particular—to produce a penetrating analysis of the etiology and manifestations of this phenomenon. The authors argue that customary explanations for social stigmatization fail to fully account for the Pentecostal case in Chile, locating the true catalyst for stigmatization in the movement’s ecstatic ritual practices. In so doing, they open up a particularly rich field of inquiry: the sociological functions and consequences—the costs and benefits—of religious ecstasy in Pentecostalism. Ecstasy is a potent and protean social symbol, deployed to multiple effects,

¹⁴ Among the seminal works here are (Meyer 1999; Robbins 2004). Several studies have noted that local cosmologies and even specific agents within them are often incorporated and thus preserved in indigenous forms of Pentecostalism, though under a reassigned, “demonic” identity. See (Rio et al. 2017; Kim 2011; Bergunder 2011, chps. 13 and 14; Swanson 2013)—especially the articles on Korean shamanism. An intriguing question here is whether Pentecostalism in this guise, rather than disconfirming secularization theory, might be one of the forms that secularization is taking in the developing world. See (Togarasei 2015). In this view, Pentecostal cosmology—relative to preexisting traditional cosmologies—acts to simplify and partially compartmentalize the cosmos; shifts reliance away from technologies like shamanism and divination; unites adherents under a standardized cosmology shared by a global community; and promotes social values that comport with the pragmatic, individualistic norms that govern the secular global economy. At the very least, these qualities might be seen to advance what Rio, MacCarthy, and Blanes call the “metanarrative of modernity”: (Rio et al. 2017, pp. 7–18).

¹⁵ The validity of the authors’ concerns, and the urgency of their proposals, is underlined by recent studies that highlight the ambivalence of Pentecostalism’s political impulses, which appear to be simultaneously egalitarian and hierarchical, capable of promoting both democratic and authoritarian trends. See (Sperber and Hern 2018; Bampani and Valois 2018).

and the authors help us understand its role in the paradoxical dialectic of social demarcation in Chile. Ritual behaviors that transgressed Chilean social norms provoked disfavor, scorn, and exclusion, to be sure, but they also secured a form of social capital—or, perhaps better, “countersocial” capital—that proved central to the movement’s identity, cohesion, and long-term success.¹⁶

Whereas Muñoz and Fernández-Mostaza explore issues of identity and stigma relative to the environing society, our final article unveils parallel forms of social marking and ostracism within the Pentecostal community itself. In “Impossible Subjects: LGBTIQ Experiences in Australian Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches,” Mark Jennings, a religious studies scholar at Murdoch University and Wollaston Theological College (Perth, Australia), brings us compelling voices and moving life stories that represent what we can presume to be thousands of LGBTIQ Pentecostals in Australia. With a perspective tuned to the sociological, psychological, and theological dimensions of his topic, Jennings shows how LGBTIQ Pentecostals have negotiated matters of status, belonging, and role within a religious subculture that discountenances the essence of their identity and is wont to disfavor or exclude them. We hear from those who stayed and those who strayed, and learn of the vexing dilemmas, hard choices, and often painful consequences faced by all parties involved, but above all by Jennings’ subjects. This is an article full of nuance and surprise; lived realities intersect with institutional and doctrinal norms in often unexpected ways, and apparently hard structures are sometimes softened or inflected by personal relationships and communal ties. Both the author and his subjects offer perceptive analyses of the circumstances LGBTIQ Pentecostals find themselves in, as well as the array of options they face when locating themselves relative to Pentecostalism. On the strength of these elements alone, Jennings’ study would serve to challenge and inform theological reflection on the controversial issues that lie behind his subjects’ predicament, but he deepens this contribution by contrasting the rigid manner in which normative biblical texts are often interpreted here with the hermeneutical flexibility that Pentecostalism has historically shown relative to women in ministry. Our final article, that is to say, like others in this special issue, reflects the tradition of engaged scholarship and hopes to have a say in that paramount question, “Whither Pentecostalism?”

As should by now be clear, the authors in this special issue represent an emerging style of Pentecostal scholarship, one that has imbibed the adaptive, free-flowing spirit of the movement it studies. They are, in their own way, “comeouters,” forsaking disciplinary silos that have long constrained the historical and social sciences for mixed methodologies and hybrid perspectives that are diverse in their sources and expansive in their investigative reach. The results speak for themselves. The analyses presented here add precision and nuance to our understanding of global Pentecostalism, bringing into sharper relief the texture and topography of a movement that is altering the terms of what it means to be religious in the world today.

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¹⁶ Pentecostals globally have often been fierce provocateurs, flaunting norms and adopting a defiant posture of marginality vis-à-vis the mainstream. For social and class antagonism in early American Pentecostalism, see (Wacker 2001, pp. 184–202). For the role of religious ecstasy in boundary-marking and class-based oppositional identity among Radical Holiness precursors to Pentecostalism, see (Robins 2010, pp. 11–12; Robins 2004, pp. 33–34, 145–53).

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