RENEWING THE PENTECOSTAL IMAGINATION  
By Monte Lee Rice (November 2010)

Deep in our bones a fire burns, shut up within; we are weary from holding it. This raging flame, many waters cannot quench. Just grant us Lord this day, a voice—not barred; give us the freedom. To lift it up without shame. Brokenhearted—to them you are near, and you save the crushed in spirit. Our soul—to you, we lift it up. Make bright its depths, with the light of your face.

Over these past years I have become certain that I am obliged by God’s mercy that I am to always represent and minister—from the basis of His gifting me within the Church as a Pentecostal. I once embarked on steps towards becoming more identified with another tradition. But I came to see that this is the tradition God made me part of, and it is a calling. I am therefore also certain that what I am to do, no matter how small of a way it may be, is to represent this tradition to the rest of the Church and the world, and from this gifting, help envision and point this world to the new world that is God is crafting out of this present order. During this same season I have been working on a project titled, “Pentecostal Spirituality and the Prophetic Imagination.” In that work, I am proposing a renewed Pentecostal imagination, identity, spirituality and ethos in response to emerging challenges of the 21st century. What follows, are extracts reflecting some of the themes I am pursuing in that work.

I strongly believe with the upmost conviction—that Pentecostalism was birthed through a sovereign “latter day” outpouring of God’s Spirit. Having received a prophetic consciousness through encountering Jesus as the Baptiser in the Holy Spirit, we Pentecostals have thus been spirituality gifted “for such a time as this, to manifest a revolutionary ethos in our personal and congregational way of life, as a perennially prophetic and apocalyptic witness to the coming Kingdom. Pentecostalism is a spirituality that therefore prophetically contributes to witness of the Church Catholic throughout history and the world. Pentecostal spirituality helps the Church remember that she is to question the legitimacy of this world’s prevailing realities, and demonstrate and proclaim through the power of God’s Spirit, an alternative vision of God’s new world. By the power of the Spirit given through the pentecostal experience of Spirit-baptism, we thus speak forth liberation to all humanity, and even to the whole creation.

Pentecostalism emerged and is distinctively gifted within the greater Christian Church, as a unique Christian spirituality—a prophetic-type spirituality. I moreover believe that the emerging challenges of our age reveal that if we are to be faithful to the revolutionary roots of Pentecostalism, we must again discover that God raised up Pentecostalism as a communal gifting for the edifying of the entire Catholic Church in the prophetic consciousness. This consciousness comes through the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism.

I believe then that our core giftedness and calling as Pentecostals, even within the greater Christian Church calls us towards a two-fold rhythm that should always characterise our distinctive Pentecostal spirituality. This is a rhythm that directly arises from the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism, which grants us a seminal gateway into the prophetic tradition and thereby also, into the prophetic imagination. On one hand this prophetic consciousness calls into question the prevailing consensus and status quo. On the other—it envisions a better dream arising from the new world God is building out of the present order. As the Spirit renews our encounter with Jesus, we are discovering that the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism is therefore an important and seminal gateway to the prophetic imagination.

Now with the passing of the first decade of the 21st century, we have come to a moment in history that enjoins us in a fresh way, to allow the Spirit to renew our prophetic imagination so that we can again faithfully critique the prevailing norm around us. Hence, we must allow the Spirit of prophesy to deconstruct our personal and communal paradigms, our values our
practices and behaviour, and our aspirations. We must allow the prophetic imagination of God’s Spirit to thus help us insure that these are not scripted by the story-worlds of our surrounding culture, but rather by the story-world of Jesus. Then second, as we allow the Spirit to reveal the radical disjunction between what is and what should be, we cry out to God that He would pour out His Spirit— endowing us to speak a better dream of the new world He is bringing to pass, even as the Spirit baptises us into the story of Jesus.

In order to therefore forward move towards and into the new world of God’s future for us in this new century, we need to thus allow the Spirit to renew our imagination, thus again opening our vision towards the broad moral and ethical contours of life in God’s kingdom. With such a renewed and thus rightly nurtured imagination— we again are thereby endowed with a salient prophetic imagination that is able to look beyond existing norms and affectively grasp in all its beauty— the promised coming of God’s new age and new humanity as God’s “co-creator” of this new age.

VISIONEERING A NEW KIND OF PENTECOSTAL CHURCH FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

I am visioneering a new kind of Pentecostal church for the 21st century. It is a vision arising in response to challenges that have emerged and continue to do so at the beginning of this new century. Moreover, the pluralistic fragmenting of human and spiritual identity which arises from our 21st globalised setting, enjoins Pentecostals towards a renewed re-imagining of Pentecostal self-identity. The challenge we face is that our missiological impulse must be at this point in history tempered by a renewed identity of what our “centre” should be as distinctive spirituality within the Christian Church. These challenges therefore enjoin us towards a renewed Pentecostal spirituality, ethos and ministry philosophy that is:

1. Firmly grounded in the soul-nourishing “roots” of the “latter day” Pentecostal outpouring.
2. Sensitised as much (if not more) to the marginalised as to the affluent around us.
3. Faithfully-responsive to emerging 21st century challenges of a market and consumerist-driven world order— countering its false hopes by demonstrating through the Spirit’s power, the full spiritual and socially redemptive vision of Jesus as Saviour, Healer, Coming King and Baptiser in the Spirit.
4. Centred as a “prophetic” spirituality in the pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism.
5. Ecumenically-engaged and open to the greater Christian Church.

Pentecostal Formative Ethos and the Prophetic Imagination

God’s rest the Church not yet enters; but at war the Church now is; at war with falsehoods and powers in high places. Triumphant is the Church through the power of Jesus’ Spirit—who gives us visions of the new world. To us who stand and kneel in the presence of His Kingdom, this power comes as His Spirit possesses with joy— set before us in the light of His Face.

One of the most critical challenges facing Christianity today, which is particularly challenging the integrity of Pentecostal spirituality, is the formative power of 21st century global market forces along with their consumerist vision for human life. The revolutionary and prophetic giftedness of Pentecostalism as a Christian spirituality is even now becoming jeopardised through the threat then of assimilation into the identity-forming stories of 21st century globalization. At the root of these stories is a consumerist vision of human life that is currently propagated through what we may define as the global dominant culture and thereby also sustained to serve the interests of the 21st century globalisation. This newly emerging story world is now scripting and defining the worth of human life not only according to how much we can measurably achieve but even more— according to how much we can consume. Given the formative-power these forces have towards scripting the “shape” of human behaviour, we can no longer make “cultural relevancy” our primary posture towards our cultural setting.
Moreover, too often on account of our “localising” giftedness and evangelistic passion, and thus also pragmatising impulse towards ministry, numerical growth and retention, it is easy for us to lose our primary “prophetic” calling as a “prophetic-type of Christian spirituality. We must therefore consistently assess how well our evangelistic philosophy, strategies and objectives are centered on the true essence of the Church, remembering that that the “very existence of the Christian community” is above all else, to be “a sign of the kingdom of God.” We must therefore again recall that the kingdom of God comes to break down all walls of alienation and remake us into one new humanity— not just in spirit and ideal, but in actual manifestation of how life is meant to be within the kingdom of God.

I would also add that in spite of the seminal 20th century missiological contribution Pentecostalism has made towards the worldwide catholicity of the Church, it has now reached a critical historical point, which threatens its movement’s sustained viability as an authentic “latter-day” renewal movement of the Holy Spirit. One major problem we face is the fragmenting of our Pentecostal identity, which is arising from a unique interface between globalisation and Pentecostal indigenisation. This interface is too often shaping Pentecostalism as a Christian spirituality, albeit in manners and directions that signify a movement away from an ethos, which I believe, comprises, or should comprises, the most enduring distinctives of Pentecostalism— particularly for the 21st century. This problem now emerges because the context of 21st century globalisation tends to prompt varied centres and streams within the Pentecostalism— to hybridise, reconfigure, refashion and evolve in reaction to the constant fluidity that is and will continue to characterise and link diverse communities within the 21st century. The challenge we face is that our missiological impulse must be at this point in history, be tempered by a renewed identity of what our “centre” should be as a distinctive spirituality within the Christian Church.

Therefore, the time has now come for us to be “faithfully-responsive” to this emerging 21st century challenge. We must now counter the prevailing status quos of this present evil age. To do so, we must construct a congregational ethos that is formatively and visibly counter to the formative power of the consumerist-driven story-worlds and vision for human life that now characterises our greater cultural setting. Therefore, our visible life-existence as Pentecostal missional communities must call into question the prevailing culture and world we live within. We must ensure that the world will come to know us more— as counter-cultural alternatives to its predominate consensus, social conventions and values, rather than as congregations which are “culturally relevant” to our immediate setting.

This re-imagination of Pentecostal spirituality for the 21st century therefore infers then that if Pentecostal churches are to be faithful to our calling as a prophetic spirituality within the greater Church of God, just as this tradition emerged through the latter outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they will desire cultivating a congregational ethos and spirituality that is visibly counter-cultural to the predominate status quos of the present evil age. This visible counter-cultural ethos arises as Pentecostal spirituality creates personal, communal and congregational movements towards God’s dream.

While our prophetic consciousness calls into question the prevailing consensus and status quo, let us rest assured that the Spirit also helps us it envision a new world order. Even then as we move towards this vision of many bound together by the Spirit of fellowship, this same Spirit shall nourish us with prophetic hope and speech, wherein He speaks, envisions, inspires and evokes in us better realities and futures reflecting God’s dream for creation— a better dream arising from the new world God is building out of the present order.
Empowering the Weak to Dream a Better World

“The poor and needy seek water, but there is none. So for them, I the Lord will provide. I will pour out my Spirit and their sons and daughters will prophesy. Upon you and your descendants will I do this; You who did not bear children, will spread out— when I restore the fortunes of those whose inheritance was lost along the way.”

As earlier mentioned, the Spirit who renews our encounter with Jesus is reminding us that the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism is a gateway to the prophetic imagination. As the Spirit again fills with a renewed sense of prophetic perception into the coming of God’s kingdom, we discover that the revolutionary power that comes through encountering Jesus as the Baptiser in the Spirit is especially evident when the weak and marginalised are now empowered to dream of a better future for the world and meaningfully contribute to its coming fullness— as well as ourselves when we too share in experience of marginalisation caused by oppressing status quos. Through the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism we thus find ourselves endowed with a capacity to dream of a better future for the world, particularly for those who have suffered under yokes of material, social and spiritual oppression.

The Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism thus grants entry into a “new world order;” wherein the “last” of any given social setting now receive an empowering grace to become the “first.” In this new order of life, the Spirit grants both the “first” and the “last,” the affluent and working class, the marginalised voice and the majority voice, a common tongue signifying the inclusive broadness of God’s eschatological “household” (oikoumene). A robust pentecostal spirituality will therefore nurture within Pentecostal communities a particular concern towards empowering the weak to also dream and thereby move towards the new world, illustrated through their own entrance into the prophetic imagination that arises from the pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism.

From Zion now come the latter rains. Open then your heart and mouth; open wide that from your mouth He shall spring forth His righteousness upon the earth, and visions of a new world. No earthly tongue can utter its glory; but through groans of his Spirit, you may speak its mystery: the mystery of love— we who are many are now one in Christ; and through His Spirit we speak the language of love.

To reiterate then, as we therefore allow God’s Spirit to form through us this counter-culture, “Jesus-centred” ethos, we will thereby visibly manifest before the world, an alternative community that is inclusively embracing and reconciling diverse peoples and populations into a heterogeneous community shaped by the love of the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. On account of the concrete prophetic witness of inclusive, heterogeneous pentecostal communities, the world shall therefore indelibly identify us as communities more visibly sensitised to the socially marginalised, than to the socially affluent, powerful, privileged, elite, and secure— even as the Spirit unites people of every social strata and background into one community of Love.

Returning to our Roots of as a Prophetic Witness to a Better World

Into its depths the earth pulls us, making us one with the promise of our roots. The soil beneath us calls forth words from another age: “Son of Abraham! Like Eden I make deserts, and the wastelands I make a garden. So to you I give a new name. Hear now the mystery of the wind from which I call you.” “Speak Lord; thy servants listen.”

For the 21st century, Pentecostalism has much more to offer as a prophetically gifted spirituality within the greater Christian movement and in the world. At the dawn of the 20th century and from many early centres around the world such as through the Azusa Street Revival, Pentecostalism emerged as a prophetic “voice,” both within the universal Church.
and to the world. It has existed as a voice that is congruent to a peculiar ethos, story-world, and value-system, which arose from its distinctive experience of the Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit, through “latter day” outpourings of the Holy Spirit. The future of Pentecostalism hinges on whether we can once again recover our “prophetic imagination.” To envision a renewed emergence and manifestation of this “prophetic imagination,” through the renewing of an authentic Pentecostal ethos and spirituality, thus partly defines the intent of this discussion.

Yet for too long we have forgotten our prophetic calling. We have forgotten our prophetic consciousness, through which the Spirit has equipped us to call into question the prevailing consensus and status quo. We have forgotten our calling to offer an alternative vision of reality that is radically counter-culture to this world’s prevailing norms. We have forgotten that God’s dream and vision is far grander than the world’s dreams and visions for self-gratification. We have exchanged gold for bronze because we think that bronze is gold. We have brought into the lie that to be effective as a church we must be at the “cutting edge” of whatever is relevant. So we have replaced the stories, symbols and narratives of the Bible for the stories, symbols and narratives of the world. We had failed to know that in doing so, we have allowed the world’s symbols to shape our thinking and behavior, more so than the symbols of the Scriptures. So we have become, as so also have become Christians of other traditions, “fat cows of Bashan” who are far too at home with the first-world middle class yet very oppressive value system. It is indeed an oppressive value system because it defines human worth according to monetary and material capital, and encourages Christians to see salvation as a ticket to heaven, and a ticket to consume whatever brings pleasure to our tummies. In view of all I have thus said this far, I have come to believe that the problem with virtually all of us today is that we have forgotten who we are. We have lost our identities. We have lost our identities because we have lost our roots. We are thus now rootless people.

The giftedness of Pentecostal spirituality as a viable spirituality within the greater Christian Church, is dynamically derived and must therefore be continually anchored to its historical roots. In these roots we find our true heart and identity as a gifted spirituality for all the Church; at the heart of our identity is “an apocalyptic horizon for reading reality,” which comes to us through the pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism. This “apocalyptic horizon” is as I have consistently here stressed, the “prophetic imagination” made operative in us through the experience of Spirit baptism. Through the Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Sovereign Lord thus unveils to us a new reality, as we begin to see the radical disjunction presently between the prevailing order and the order that is even now breaking into the present—, which is the kingdom of God.

Therefore, the way forward and into the future, will also only come if we are willing to evolve into a living yet matured tradition that is faithful to our perennial calling and purpose. The spiritual DNA, which has already provided the true essence of Pentecostalism and thus defines its distinctive calling and gifting within the greater Christian tradition, is derived from its early ethos in and through its initial historical emergence. We must therefore know that as we return to our roots, so will we return to rich reservoirs of revolutionary gifting and calling, and thereby move towards an even greater service towards the Church of Christ in the 21st century, postmodern world. Our roots are thus pointing to us the way forward, if we are to go towards that future where the Spirit has always wanted us to go, and flourish and bless the whole Church and the world through a new Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
Ecumenically-engaged with the greater Christian Church

I must also confess that as a Christian spirituality, I recognise Pentecostalism is too often marred by so many vicissitudes which betray its revolutionary and ecumenical role within the greater Church and world. Therefore, like all other spiritual traditions within the Church, we Pentecostals must perceive ourselves as weak earthen vessels. Yet we are filled with a distinctive gifting, that we may contribute our gifting back to God as part of the Spirit’s manifold activity throughout the entire Catholic Christian faith—and thus the breadth of Christian spirituality. We also thus offer ourselves so that we may also receive gifts from the enduring wisdom and depth already entrusted within the greater Church. The Spirit that thus enjoins us to offer our gifts to the whole Church, thus also enjoins us to nurture an openness to hear and receive other gifts found within other traditions, which to some extent may find at least a small niche within our own Pentecostal spirituality. Yet I also most strongly believe with the upmost conviction—that Pentecostalism was birthed through a sovereign “latter day” outpouring of God’s Spirit. Having received a prophetic consciousness through encountering Jesus as the Baptiser in the Holy Spirit, we Pentecostals have thus been spirituality gifted “for such a time as this, as a perennially prophetic and apocalyptic witness to the coming Kingdom.

Renewing the Centre of Pentecostal Spirituality: Jesus the Baptiser in the Holy Spirit

To those He loves, He grants sleep; there they come to a place where dreams are born.

Central to the Pentecostal message is Jesus as the Baptiser in the Holy Spirit—who is restoring to us our true historical calling and prophetic destiny, as God’s co-creators in the making of His coming new world and thus calling people back to Himself as the New Humanity. I believe that encountering Jesus as the Baptiser in the Spirit grants us a glimpse into God’s own heart—His dream towards creation. As we enter into His heart, God endows us with a “prophetic imagination” that causes us to see a radical disjunction between the prevailing order and the order that is even now breaking into the present— which is the kingdom of God.

There are times moreover that through new challenges the Sovereign Lord calls us towards Himself for “fresh baptisms” in the Spirit. In doing so, He thereby calls us onwards into the life journey of Jesus Himself. We must thus remind ourselves that it is indeed through the baptism in the Holy Spirit, that we take a radical step into Jesus’ life-story, whereby God is further re-creating and restoring us into His likeness. God is creating in us His own likeness, which He has revealed to us through the person of Jesus Christ. He is creating it through His Spirit by the presence of Christ’s life in us. God has thus called us to imitate Jesus as the Perfect Man who lives in and by the Spirit of God’s presence, power, life, and love. Jesus came, lived, and died to provide us the example of how we are to live. For in Jesus we see who God is, and we also see the true revelation of authentic humanity.

As we follow Jesus, He sanctifies us, and conforms us to His likeness. He thus calls and creates in us anew, the summons to follow Him. This He does through the embrace of His life as our guiding model and script for the outcome of our life journey. It is highly important therefore, that we re-capture a way of life that is pre-eminently lived out of the Gospels of Jesus, allowing the life of Jesus to script the direction and manner of our life as God’s prophetic people for the shaping of world history. It is imperative then, especially in view of the alternative “stories” which compete for the narration of our life story, that we prioritise the Gospel story of Jesus as our “core-framing” story, along with the continuation of His story through the Acts of His Spirit upon and through His people.

The Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism is therefore a baptism into God’s love—the inner life of the Triune God. Through Spirit-baptism the Lord also therefore heightens our
intuitive grasp of God’s own suffering heart—that is, His pathos, for the redemptive liberation of all creation from its present suffering. We thereby become divinely commissioned as a prophetically endowed witness to the Christian gospel. The Sovereign Lord thereby also baptises us into the biblical prophetic tradition and its vision for a new world. Through this encounter with the very inner life of God, the Spirit thereby creates in us a divine summons; hence, a prophetic call beckoning us towards God’s empathy and mission towards creation, even as He endows us with a new dream of His new world. Spirit baptism thus also creates in us “a passion for the kingdom.” This “passion for the kingdom” thus in turn creates in us an “eschatological longing” for the in-breaking of God’s new world, even as the Spirit is now leading us into this new world order.

Consequently, through this Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism, the Sovereign Lord creates in us a new sense of history. Through this encounter with Jesus, the Spirit thus creates a heightened eschatological awareness of God’s involvement in our life and that His involvement in us unites us to His involvement in shaping the entire historical direction of human history. He thereby awakens us by granting us conviction that our life now possesses a providential-orchestrated and ordained destiny towards the shaping of God’s world. We are thus becoming restored to our true human vocation as God’s co-creator upon the earth. As the Spirit restores in us our true face, our true voice and our true humanity, we discover that our life has historical purpose as we meaningfully contribute to the final consummation of God’s new world.

Through Spirit baptism, we are therefore also experientially baptised into the biblical story—which comprises a literal and existential baptism into biblical story-world. We thereby interpret our identity as a people living out the vision of the new world projected through the Biblical story of God’s redemptive purposes. In so doing, we thus now interpret our personal and corporate identity as members of the biblical story—the story of God’s people journeying towards the biblical vision of God’s new world. This story has the power to script to our own life story, as a people delivered out of Egypt, journeying now through this present age by the Spirit’s presence, as we march to a new world order, the Zion of God, where justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

So it is through each new shattering experience of Spirit baptism, that our Lord Jesus Christ disciples us through radical and new re-evaluations of so much we take for granted. Filled with the Spirit of prophesy, we become more attuned with God’s dream for the full manifestation of His Kingdom throughout all creation. Jesus empowers us to question the prevailing consensus, and prophetically proclaim through word and deed, a new future for the world around us.

The Role of Tongues in Renewing the Prophetic Imagination

Wearisome all words are; none utter the primal longings. Yet in His divine embrace come tongues of fire. Kindled from Eden’s distant shores—now burn raging flames of love. From a lost world come primeval sounds; sighs too deep for words—cries for liberation; groanings; dismantling walls of alienation; echoes of birth pangs from the Heavenly Dove; speaking forth with all creation—the birthing of a new world.

I want to briefly point out here a few important reasons for a continued and perhaps greater nuance on the historical personal and congregational practice of tongues speaking, as a salient discipline for 21st century Pentecostal Spirituality. I believe that that the past historical nuance on tongues within much of world Pentecostalism and its perceived role in perennially signifying the pentecostal experience and Spirit baptism, the themes I have here developed on Pentecostalism and the prophetic imagination, ongoing philosophical discussions on tongues as a unique form of linguistical discourse, and the biblical data pertaining to this unique charism of the Spirit, altogether sufficiently demonstrates a key
relation of this practice to the renewing of the prophetic imagination operative within Pentecostal spirituality.

I believe that we should incorporate in this renewed envisioning of Pentecostal spirituality for the 21st century, an emerging thesis that that the Pentecostal practice of tongues speech comprises a distinctive generative power in the nurturing of the Pentecostal, prophetic imagination. With this theme in mind, we can therefore enter into a new appreciation for the pentecostal practice of tongues as a spiritual discipline, and even moreover, as a restored linguistical expression of a primal power deeply integral to our true humanity, and human vocation as bearers of God’s likeness.

Through the practice of tongues, we are therefore discovering a restored linguistical element to our true human vocation as co-creators with God in the remaking of creation. For as one unique yet true form of prophetic speech, the practice of tongues enables believers to function as God’s co-creators in the renewing of creation, through prophetic speech-acts of linguistically envisioning and speaking forth qualitatively moral, social-ethical, aesthetic and spiritual realities that are so counter to the existing prevailing orders of our day, that it necessarily involves the imaginative creating— of “new tongues.”

Tongues therefore functions as a “language of resistance” to prevailing norms. Yet also through the act of tongues speaking, the Holy Spirit encourages believers in prophetic “speech-acts” that imaginatively dramatise, the creating of God’s new world order, thus signifying the Spirit’s work in restoring our primal “prophetic” role as God’s co-creators in the renewing of creation. As such, our prophetic imagination is nurtured through the creative power of tongues speech as we engage in imaginative vocalising of “new languages.” Through the practice of tongues we are thereby practicing in cooperation with the Spirit in a most transrational, aesthetic and artistic manner, a crucial bodily and oral nurturing of our prophetic imagination. For in doing so, the Spirit thereby thus evokes within us alternative realities and futures reflecting God’s dream for creation. Through this distinctive pentecostal practice we are therefore thus dramatically and linguistically enacting the prophetic hope of God’s new world and hence the in-breaking of God’s kingdom into our present age.

I should point out that given its generative power towards envisioning a new world order, the personal and congregational practice of tongues conveys a distinctive pentecostal moral vision ethic, ethos which Pentecostal spirituality should distinctively manifest in the world in its role as one but highly relevant type of Christian spirituality for the 21st century. The distinctive congregational practice of tongues within the gathered Pentecostal worshiping community, visibly and orally thus signifies salient revolutionary and social ramifications of the Pentecostal worship service. For from the perspective of the prophetic tradition, we can thus appreciate how the congregational experience of tongues empowers every believer into full immediate and vocalised participation within the gathered community.

It is for these reasons that within some early historical centres world Pentecostalism, this congregational practice of tongues functioned as the perennial sign of God’s reconciling purpose, which He significantly executes through granting us the pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism. People are thereby corporately and vocally empowered in forming this mutual worship gathering and event through a sharing in a common form of speaking that transcends our linguistical, racial, social-economic and educational differences.

The congregational practice of tongues therefore indeed signifies, the reversal of Babel — as the Spirit reconciles us of different “tongues,” into a common tongue through this shared oral giftedness. We thereby experience and orally dramatise the miracle of social and racial inclusiveness, and hence the reconciling of varied peoples into one common tongue of the Holy Spirit—thus also dramatically and prophetically visioneering through our gathering, God’s remaking of this present order into the moral and ethical likeness of His coming new world.
The 21st Century Pentecostal Outpouring of the Spirit

Poor and needy we are; so with tender mercy, renew in us a faithful spirit; steadfast and not divided. Open to us the mysteries of your love and the embrace of your Spirit. Open wide our mouth. From the fount of your wounded side, fill us with living waters. Fill us with living waters flowing from the wounds of your broken body. In the breaking of bread, make known in our hearts—the fire of your love.

As we seek to preach the gospel of Christ from renewed encounters with Jesus the Baptiser in the Spirit, we will seek and anticipate a new outpouring of His Spirit upon the entire Catholic Christian Church. The place to begin is in prayer. We can pray for a new Pentecost. We can pray for an “open heaven.” We must pray for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In times like these, we must also pray for a new Pentecost because the paradigmatic narrative of Luke-Acts exhorts us to this kind of prayer. As many Pentecostals well know, the Luke-Acts story fully integrates the Pentecostal theology of Spirit-baptism with a distinctive theology of prayer. So again, we should pray for an “open heaven,” seeking a new “latter day” outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostalism itself needs a new “Pentecost.” There is a need to turn and see again the flame that burns so brightly in the bush where at the altar of new beginnings the Spirit says, “Remove your sandals for where you now stand is holy ground.”

Let us pray for this outpouring that when it comes, all the world may know that the kingdom of God is now dawning upon us. So shall they know that the kingdom is still breaking into this present evil age, countering the prevailing realities and empowering the poor of the earth towards their complete redemption into the riches of God’s kingdom. This redemption, which Christ availed to us through the cross, He is now making visible through eradicating every social, racial, economic and demographic barrier that separates people from one another. Let us therefore recognise that God’s purpose for every Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit is that He wholly and visibly reconciles us and all of God’s lost children to one another in Christ—as the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. And from within us, shall they see a blazing fire—and they will shout, “God is among you.” For the glory of the new house will be greater than the glory of the former house. And satisfied shall be the belly of the poor, for those who seek the Lord shall be filled; their faces shall not be shamed, but unveiled. Lit from flames of love—from heaven to earth they fall; lit from the altar on high.

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