

GLOBAL PENTECOSTALISM AND THE SPIRIT

THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Introduction

Why did I choose this encyclical at this time? I chose it because Global Pentecostalism is in serious trouble; they have a deep misunderstanding of how the *strategic Spirit* works. With their theology based on Western missions systems, 90% of Africa's pastors are untrained. There is 70% attrition in India. Most churches in the Global South remain at a “signs and wonders” infant stage of how the Spirit works, failing to mature in their understanding of how the strategic Spirit works in maturing their churches and networks and impacting their cultures. How can the Church in Africa—now believed to be over 50% Christian—have almost no impact on their culture?

This encyclical will initially be hard to grasp for many of you because you are not familiar with the term *Global Pentecostalism*. Whether we like it or not, it is fast becoming the key term for describing the next Christendom, which is the Global South. In the first major section of this encyclical, I will attempt to help define the parameters of this term, but a simple description can be found in this quote from *The Rise of Network Christianity*:

“The fastest-growing movement in Christianity, both in the West and in the Global South, is now led by a network of dynamic independent religious entrepreneurs, often referred to as “apostles.”¹

¹ *The Rise of Network Christianity: How Independent Leaders Are Changing the Religious Landscape* by Brad Christerson and Richard Flory, (Oxford, 2017), p.2.

The authors define three key reasons for this massive movement:

- Globalization
- The digitalization revolution
- The rise of networks and the decline of bureaucracies²

Peter Wagner identified the core of these massive movements in his book, *The New Apostolic Churches*:³

- Africa Independent Churches
- Chinese house churches
- Latin American grassroots churches

Today we can add India Church-Planting Movements (CPMs), especially in North India. These four movements make up the heart of what I am referring to as *Global Pentecostalism*.

The size of these movements is enormous. Listen to David Hart, a former Duke and University of Virginia professor:

“Given the speed with which Christian conversions are occurring in the Global South, moreover, it would be somewhat absurd to speak of such practices as either anomalous or eccentric; they are rapidly becoming—in statistical terms—

² Ibid. p. 15.

³ *The New Apostolic Churches: Rediscovering the New Testament Model of Leadership and Why It is God's Desire for the Church Today* by C. Peter Wagner (Regal, 1998), p. 17.

dominant expressions of Christian faith. At the beginning of the 19th century, in all of Africa there were perhaps no more than ten million Christians; today the number is around 390 million, and tens of thousands are added to that number every month. In Latin America—as a result of fairly robust birthrates, as well as of the success of Catholic renewal movements (many of them Charismatic) and of Evangelical and Pentecostal missions—there are over 500 million. And in Asia, there are perhaps 350 million⁴.”

In contrast, Christianity in the United States is declining at an unprecedented rate as revealed by a new study by the Pew Research Council last Thursday, and the percentage of Christians in the country has hit an all-time low.⁵

“In just ten years the percentage of U.S. adults that identify as Christians dropped by a remarkable 12%, Pew found, from 77% to just 65%, the lowest point in the nation’s 243-year history. In absolute terms, the number of religiously unaffiliated adults in the U.S. has grown by almost 30 million since 2009. The increase of the religiously unaffiliated has been most acute among young adults, resulting in a markedly less religious generation. Fewer than half of Millennials (49%) describe themselves as Christians...”

4 *The Story of Christianity: A History of 2000 Years of the Christian Faith* by David Bentley Hart (Quercus, 2009).

5 “PEW: U.S. Christian Population in Freefall, 12% Drop in Ten Years” by Thomas D. Williams (Breitbart, October 10, 2019).

This means the next decade will be more of the same, with the Millennials under 50%.

So Global Pentecostalism is a massive movement of the Spirit in the Global South, which burst on the scene like Pentecost, has spontaneously expanded like the churches in Acts, and is led by independent apostolic leaders and their networks—not by Western Christendom’s establishment institutions—thus forming a whole new Christendom as the Western church is in steep decline. The era of Western Christendom is over.

Why is this encyclical so important?

I have written “Global Pentecostalism and the Spirit” because I believe most of these Global Pentecostal networks have a very significant misunderstanding of how the Spirit works to stabilize and mature their movements. They know how the Spirit works to birth their movements, like Pentecost, but not how to stabilize and mature their networks and movements.

And the Western church needs to rethink its whole paradigm—denominations, mission agencies, theological institutions, and parachurch/NGO systems—and return to “the way of Christ and His Apostles,” if it expects to reverse its steep decline. This includes mainline, evangelical, and classical Pentecostal churches. How about Europe? Let me give you one example—Kosovo. Remember Paul’s phrase, “I have preached the gospel from Jerusalem to

Illyricum” (Romans 15:19)? Kosovo is at the heart of Illyricum. It has 38 churches. In 1999, it had 220 mosques; twenty years later, Muslims have planted 1000 more mosques, all over the country! Europe and all the West need to pick up where Paul left off almost 2,000 years ago.

This encyclical, as the others, has been in development in my mind for a long time. The entire outline burst into my mind December 18, 2018, and within twenty minutes it was completely formed and sketched into Notability with my Apple Pencil on my iPad. I specifically began formally writing the paper on my recent trip—first in Uganda, the bulk in Shanghai, and finished in Nairobi.

I have talked many times, all across the Global South, about a new movement of the Spirit that began in the last half of the 20th Century and will reach full impact in the first half of the 21st Century, changing the entire landscape of Christianity from the West to the South. This movement is referred to in

research now as *Global Pentecostalism*.⁶ Look at some of the publishers: University of California Press, Cambridge Press, Oxford University Press, Regnum. They are all scholarly publishers and all published in the first twenty years of the 21st Century. I could list twenty more books and at least one scholarly dissertation. What is going on here? And, more specifically, why is it referred to as “global pentecostalism”?

6 There have been a series of books, which are scholarly in nature, written in a rather short window of time. That is unusual in light of the “unscholarly” nature of the movement. Here is a list of what I consider the “core works”: *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: Religion Made to Travel*, edited by Murray Dempster, Byron Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Regnum, 1999); *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* by Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori (University of California Press, 2007); *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* by Allan Heaton Anderson (Cambridge University Press, 2014); *The Many Faces of Global Pentecostalism*, edited by Harold D. Hunter and Neil Omerod (CPT Press, 2016); *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, edited by Allan Anderson, Michael Beergunder, Andre Droogers, Cornelis Van Der Laan (University of California Press, 2010); *Global Pentecostalism: Church of God of Prophecy Jamaica’s Response*: edited by Hyacinth Campbell (2018); *Current Trajectories in Global Pentecostalism: Culture, Social Engagement and Change*, edited by Roger G. Robins (mdpi AG, 2019); *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* by Candy Gunther Brown (Oxford University Press, 2011).

I was first alerted to the significance of this phenomenon at an Overseas Ministry Study Center (OMSC) forum December 7, 2001.⁷ The forum was entitled “Global Pentecostalism” and was based on the book *Globalization of Pentecostalism: Religion Made to Travel*.⁸ The forum consisted of several well known missions leaders writing responses to the book followed by discussion, leaders such as Harvey Cox, Byron Klaus, and Douglas Petersen. I took good notes on the forum and identified 8 key issues, which I have been pursuing over the last almost twenty years.⁹ The biggest take away for me was that

7 OMSC, located across the street from Yale Divinity School, conducted these forums two times a year as sort of a missions “think tank” experience, which I participated in for about ten years. It greatly helped deepen my understanding of global trends in missions. OMSC publishes *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research*.

8 See footnote 1.

9 I identified eight key issues from the 3-day discussion:

1. Even though most pastors argue to separate from the world, is there a public impact?
2. Is the shallow “name it and claim it” emphasis going to have a long-term effect on the ability to deal with the real cultural issues of inequality? Will it, therefore, take away the opportunity?
3. Are salesman techniques ruining the movement?
4. Should there be a broad-based cultural impact? De Tocqueville referred to the need for “habits of the heart” as a basis for large-scale cultural impact with the poor.
5. How can we keep this movement vital and alive?
6. Does the catechetical need require serious ordered learning?
7. What needs to be done in the public (political) realm, since the number of Pentecostals has become so large?
8. “By-product” versus “intentionality” as far as social involvement: Is there a middle ground? Has intentionality really had less effect than by-product? Is just the gospel important, not transforming culture—the poor?

the entire movement of Global Pentecostalism did not grow out of “classical pentecostalism.” I have seen this very clearly in India. The large-scale movements in the North did not grow out of the classical Pentecostal churches in the South. They had been “western institutionalized.” But in spite of that institutionalization, visionary leaders from the South left those institutional roots and went north with the gospel.

Byron Klaus, one of the editors of *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, was at the Global Pentecostal forum. He was then President of The Assembly of God Seminary in Springfield, Missouri. He came up to me at the forum and said he had been using my paradigm papers in his classes and noticed I used a lot of Roland Allen’s work. He wanted me to know that Allen’s work shaped the Assembly of God’s mission strategy. The strategy was based on a series of three articles written by a missionary, which were based on Roland Allen’s work. They were featured in the Assembly’s publication, *The Evangel*. Those articles had a significant impact on the emergence of Global Pentecostalism.¹⁰

¹⁰ The series of articles were entitled “Paul’s Missionary Methods.” They were written in 1921 by an experienced missionary, Alice E. Luce, to help their Pentecostal missionaries get a clear vision of Paul’s methods of evangelization. The *Evangel* Editor noted: “The Pentecostal people are peculiarly missionary, and the growth of the Pentecostal Movement is due largely to this missionary spirit. We shall all find these articles profitable, and when Paul’s methods are put into practice we can look for apostolic results to follow.” These three articles can be downloaded from the Assembly of God website.

Out of this forum I could clearly see into the future. Western, market-driven, “sales-driven” church growth organizations and donors would take control and fund “numbers of converts and churches,” per investments of U.S. dollars, to reach the goal of reaching the world, so Christ could return. They would take no thought of establishing churches, training leaders, or impacting culture to show the watching world Christ’s grand strategy—the Church—which was supposed to amaze everyone, including the rulers and authorities in heavenly places.¹¹ We have the privilege of having Byron Klaus with us at this conference. He will give the key note address at our banquet tomorrow night.

Steve Kemp, global dean of our Antioch School, and I recently spent a week together in Uganda. We were working with The National Fellowship of Born Again Pentecostal Churches (a network of 45,000 churches) and global Pentecostal networks from the five other East African Community countries. Steve reminded me of a very important paper, published independently, not included in Roland Allen’s selected writings, *The Ministry of the Spirit*. It is titled “Pentecost and the World: The Revelation of the Holy Spirit in the ‘Acts of the Apostles.’” Steve then gave me the blog he wrote on this article. It came at just the right time. Then I found out Allen spent time late in his ministry seeding these ideas in Uganda, and he is actually buried in Nairobi, Kenya. Is that circumstantial? Or is the strategic Spirit involved? To top that off, I had several cancellations on this trip, which gave me time to write the first draft of

¹¹ Since that forum I have collected everything I could find on Global Pentecostalism—most all of which was written after that forum.

this encyclical in real life Global Pentecostal situations. It finished with one of my worst Western missions conflicts in a long time. This is often how the Spirit works: a nodal event, capped off by a very important insight at just the right time.

The conflict was in Nairobi where I attended an African leadership development consultation. The theme of the conference was chosen to address the problem that 90% of African pastors have no theological training. The theological consultant of the conference (a 3rd generation Western missionary “expert”) essentially blocked me from speaking. My question for him was essentially this: If your Western mission organization—which you helped lead—has been here for over 100 years, why are 90% of the African pastors theologically untrained, and why can’t they think biblically? The answer is simple, he taught them the wrong system—the Western missionary enterprise and formal theological education system rather than “the way of Christ and His Apostles.”¹² These good men have expended unbelievable energy. God used them mightily and will reward them, but they have propagated the wrong system! Again, the Spirit often shapes our thinking and understanding through conflict situations.

I was introduced to these massive Global Pentecostal movements in 2004 by Tom McCallie, then executive director of The Maclellan Foundation. While

¹² See Roland Allen’s article mentioned in the Appendix, “Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Satan’s!” I do not go that far.

visiting DAWN in Colorado Springs with him, Tom challenged me to focus on India and China. The idea was, if we shifted the paradigm there, the whole Global South would follow. We only had the capacity to do one of them. I already knew India, so we decided to focus there.

God has opened the door to the Global South, just as Tom predicted. We have 75% of the Global Pentecostal movements in India using our system; we are on course for 25% of the churches in China embracing the paradigm of “the way of Christ and His Apostles”; and we have partnerships with AEA, Asia Evangelical Alliance (19 countries) and we hope soon with AEA, Association of Evangelicals in Africa (54 countries).

To solve the huge problem that now exists in North India—as well as in Africa, SE Asia, China, and the whole Global South, for that matter—we must understand the Global Pentecostal movement, Christ’s grand strategy, and the strategic Spirit. We work with over 500 small networks in North India, most of them are anywhere between 5 to 80 house churches. Most of them are weak and experiencing significant attrition, because they are based on Western church-growth strategies. Why is that a problem? Western church-growth strategies focus on the spontaneous expansion of the gospel and fail to understand Christ’s grand strategy and how the Spirit stabilizes and matures church networks in this new Network Christianity.

1. Global Pentecostalism

In the introduction, we introduced you to the concept of a *global Pentecostal movement*—progressing the gospel at a magnitude we have not seen since the 300 years of the Early Church. Therefore, it is necessary to accurately understand the incredible movement of the strategic Spirit who brought Christ's grand strategy into a global reality, as recorded in the book of Acts. I will attempt to identify the core characteristics of this movement of the Spirit, then turn to how the Spirit works in movements, and finally address why we cannot ignore any element of His complete strategy in Acts.

- A. It is a movement of the Spirit, not from classical pentecostal denominations or from Western mission enterprises and strategies (DAWN, Finish the Task and 1040 Window initiatives, para-church organizations, or USA foundations), although entrepreneurial leaders from classical Pentecostalism laid the foundation, and groups like DAWN fanned to flame the spontaneous expansion of churches.

In fact, Western church-growth strategies and initiatives like Saturation Church Planting (SCP), Church-Planting Movements (CPM), and Disciple-Making Movements (DMM) actually failed to stabilize and mature the churches and networks. While these Western strategies are committed to the spontaneous expansion of the Church, they almost completely fail to grasp the Spirit's strategy as unfolded in Acts (Acts of the Spirit), which is based on Christ's grand strategy.

As one looks across the horizon of the spontaneous expansion of the Church in the Global South, there is no unified explanation other than the Spirit decided to move. But why, if this is the case, has this tremendous movement had so little impact on the cultures of the Global South? And why is the attrition rate so high, especially in India? This takes us back to the questions raised at the 2001 OMSC forum on Global Pentecostalism, which we will progressively answer throughout this encyclical.

- B. It did not grow out of classical pentecostal denominations, but from entrepreneurial leaders with a kingdom orientation.

It may seem a little redundant at this point, but seeing these elements systematically laid out will serve an important function as the encyclical unfolds. What do I mean by this? Once classical Pentecostals become institutionalized—denominational structures, professional missions, formal theological education—they stop spontaneously expanding. In fact, they start a 4-generational process of dying: the second generation lacks leaders and the fourth generation becomes nominal just like what has happened with denominations started by Western mission agencies.

- C. Everyone agrees that we must get back to the spontaneous expansion of the Church as seen in the book of Acts.

What do I mean by *everyone*? I mean everyone involved in the progress of the gospel in the Global South: mission leaders and Western mission agencies; SCP, CPM, and DMM leaders; as well as those of us committed to a return to the spontaneous expansion of the Church based upon the strategy laid out in Acts—what Roland Allen called “the way of Christ and His Apostles.”¹³ Denominations plant sister churches one at a time, whereas a key characteristic of Global Pentecostalism is the spontaneous expansion and *multiplication* of churches as seen in Acts.

- D. It is called *Global* Pentecostalism because it is global, it started like at Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, and looks like Acts as it multiplies around the world.

I have asked myself several times—Why is it called “Global Pentecostalism”? Why did that name so readily stick and find itself so quickly into today’s scholarly mission literature? In a way, the term is confusing, because it is easy to associate it with Pentecostal denominations. But I think the answer is simple: It started by the work of the Spirit like at Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, and looks like Acts as it multiplies around the world. It is *global* because it spread all across the Global South over the last fifty years. There was a huge response in Latin America, Africa

¹³ Roland Allen fully developed the concept of the spontaneous expansion of the church over 100 years ago in his work *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*.

grew to 53% Christian, and now India and China are on pace for 230 million Christians each by 2030 (China is 110 million now, India is about 85 million). But unless we answer the questions of attrition and establishing strong churches that impact culture, much of the fruit will be lost. This demands an understanding of the power of the Spirit's strategy as unfolded in Acts.

- E. Most Global Pentecostal networks are house church movements like those seen in Acts.

This is necessary for spontaneous expansion, as seen in Acts. The spontaneous expansion—an empire-wide multiplication of house churches—was key to turning the Roman Empire upside down. While it is not essential that the entire movement be house churches—hubs and clusters may, by strategic intent, be resource centers churches—the spontaneous expansion part of a complex apostolic network, by necessity, demands house churches.¹⁴

- F. Western church growth and discipleship organizations, institutions, donors, and mission agencies do not understand Christ's grand strategy as unfolded in Acts, which was intended to be catechetical for every future generation of networks and movements of churches.

This is where we begin to address the questions of why these massive

¹⁴ See my encyclical *The Churches of the First Century: From Simple Churches to Complex Networks*.

movements of the late 20th century and early 21st century have such a lack of transformational impact on culture and such high attrition rate. In the next section on the *strategic Spirit*, we will look at substantial answers to these important questions. We will move from the Spirit's strategic work in shaping networks around Christ's grand strategy and how He works in building powerful, one minded churches on down to how He transforms individual Christians.

2. The Strategic Spirit

Let's now revisit the book of Acts from the viewpoint of the Spirit's strategic work in our networks and movements of churches; in our churches themselves, empowering them to impact cultures and cities; and in our own lives.

THE STRATEGIC SPIRIT IN ACTS

- A. The whole book is entitled *Acts of the Apostles*—but what does that mean?

“The best-attested title for this book is πράξεις ἀποστόλων (“Acts of the Apostles”)...Titles, however, provide useful information about the reception of the book. They indicate how readers of the middle and late second century, when titles are first attested, would have understood the contents and purpose of Acts”¹⁵

The title was added later, but it is insightful in light of Acts 1:1 and the context of Jesus' instructions to wait for the Spirit to come before they went about carrying out His commission to them to take the gospel to the whole world.

¹⁵ Pervo, R. I. (2009). *Acts: a Commentary on the Book of Acts*; H. W. Attridge, Ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press—Hermeneia Series) p. 29

¹ In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”
Acts 1:1–5 ESV

So do you see a connection here? He told the Apostles to wait for the Spirit before carrying out His basic plan of being witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. First note, that Acts is what Jesus *continued to do and teach*. Now, Jesus will do it through the Spirit instructing and shaping the “acts of the Apostles.”

When I ask Global Pentecostal movement leaders—from anywhere in the Global South—what the Apostles were waiting for, they say “power!” which is correct. When I ask what else, they often look puzzled and say something like, “more power?” In the upper room discourse in John 13–17, Jesus promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to remind

them of what He had taught them and to reveal things He was not able to teach them yet. In light of Peter's teaching in his five sermons in Acts, the initial teaching that made up the Apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42) was like Jesus opening up the Scriptures to them on the road to Emmaus—it was getting the gospel story right, seeing that the Scriptures point to Christ—what we call the *kerygma*.

Later, through Paul, we understand that Paul's role was 2-fold (Ephesians 3:8–10): (1) to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and (2) to bring to light Christ's plan—His grand strategy—the Church, which had previously been hidden. In his two large prayers (Ephesians 1:15–23 and 3:14–21), Paul prays that the Spirit would enlighten the Ephesus churches so they might fully understand Christ's grand strategy and experience His full power in their midst. We will visit these prayers in the next section.

- B. How the strategy unfolds is in the power of the Spirit—there is power in His strategy, which is available to us.

The Spirit brings the instructions, and then when men He has chosen obey those instructions, His power goes with them. You can see this clearly in Acts 13:1–4. After Paul and Barnabas taught the new church in Antioch for an entire year, there was now a team of strong leaders. Look carefully at what Paul and Barnabas told the leaders.

¹ Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul.

² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit.... Acts 13:1–4 NRSV

So the Spirit gave specific instructions as to how to carry out Christ's strategy for taking the gospel to the ends of the earth—instructions essentially for fulfilling the Great Commission. As Paul's missionary strategy unfolds, he builds on the core of the Spirit's instructions. He is fully aware that the Spirit is both empowering and reshaping the specifics of that plan as he and his team unfold it, building a complex apostolic network.

This is how the Spirit works in Acts. This is why I call Him the *strategic Spirit*, one of His main roles in Acts. You can see this again and again in the book of Acts.

²⁸ For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials. Acts 15:28 NRSV

This is the conclusion from the Jerusalem council. It is a balance

between evidence of the Spirit working combined with a consensus of the Apostles. It is a very interesting phrase—“it seemed good to the Spirit.”

You can see this “operating formula”—principle—in every aspect of Paul’s ministry. In Acts 16:

⁶ They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; ⁸ so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

Acts 16:6–10 NRSV

Let’s make several observations. Paul had a specific plan, based on the strategy the Spirit gave him, but the Spirit rearranged certain specifics of the plan. The Spirit is called “the Spirit of Jesus,” because this is “what Jesus continued to do and teach.” Paul saw this new area of proclaiming the gospel as God calling him to do it—thus the Spirit is unfolding Jesus’ grand strategy that is unfolding God’s overall plan.

Paul had an overall plan that included going to Rome and then eventually taking the gospel to Spain. From Paul's explanation of his future plans to the Roman churches, we get great insight into how the Spirit works. Romans 15:

¹⁷ In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God. ¹⁸ For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ. ²⁰ Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation.... ²² This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you ²⁴ when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while. Romans 15:17–20, 22–24 NRSV

Several observations can be made from this text. Paul saw his work as his “work for God.” He broke new ground in the progress of the gospel by proclaiming Christ in regions not yet proclaimed—by “signs and wonders and the power of the Spirit of God.” But he also saw the Spirit hindering him from going to Rome before. But now, since his network

was set up from “Jerusalem to Illyricum,” he was able to make specific plans. What did he mean “no more room for me here?” There were lots more places to proclaim the gospel. As you will see in the next point—Paul had a specific core strategy (the specific work the Spirit had given him to do—Acts 13:1–4). That was done, so now he could go on to Rome and beyond.

How do I know this power is available to us? Luke wrote Acts for us, carefully recording and giving us the strategy. We can see the strategy from the structure of his book—Jerusalem, Judea—Samaria, and the uttermost parts—and also with his six summary statements (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:31; and 28:30–31). We can see that all the episodes Luke records show us the keys Christ gave through the Spirit for carrying out His grand strategy for building His Church—keys essential to any contemporary strategy. Acts finishes open-ended with the gospel continuing to progress unhindered, implying that others would continue to build on that strategy. We know Jesus has a grand strategy. And Luke makes it clear that his two volumes (see Luke 1:1–4 and Acts 1:1) are accurate and catechetical (Luke 1:4 is the Greek word for *catechetical*—serious, ordered learning). It is catechetical for carrying out Christ’s strategy for every generation—which the Spirit empowers. We should expect the same power when proclaiming the gospel in unreached areas, followed by the Spirit working in the same way to establish churches, train leaders, and to experience ongoing, spontaneously expanding networks.

- C. The core of the strategy is seen in Paul’s missionary methods, which is shaped by the Spirit, based on Christ’s grand strategy.

Remember in Acts 13:1–4, it states that the Spirit had given Paul and Barnabas a specific work to go and do. Luke gives us a snapshot of that work in Acts 13:5–14:23, which we refer to as “the Pauline cycle,” because the pattern repeats itself in each of Paul’s missionary journeys.

First, he evangelized strategic cities.

Second, he established the churches that emerged from that evangelism.

Third, he appointed elders in every church.

The formula is simple: The Spirit gives the core strategy; Paul repeats the formula on each of his missionary journeys, building a complex apostolic network¹⁶; and the Spirit redirects Paul’s specific strategy as He will. When Paul said there was “no more room for me in these regions,” he meant he had established hub churches, clusters, and strategic individual churches and trained key leaders, and the churches would now spontaneously expand on their own, so he could move on.

- D. The Spirit compels men, we respond, and He works out the result—in movements, networks, churches, and individuals.

¹⁶ I describe a complex apostolic network in detail in my encyclical *The Churches of the First Century: From Simple Churches to Complex Networks*

We are given significant insight by Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5 into how the Spirit specifically works in compelling leaders like Paul (Ephesians 4:11, the 5-fold gifts) to completely dedicate themselves to massive commitments across their lifetime (and really any serious believer as well). He describes many elements that show his commitment and how the Spirit compels him: sleepless nights, endless pressure, major depression, endless conflicts, significant fears.

Paul built an amazingly effective network of churches that unfolded into a movement which lasted for almost 300 years and turned the world upside down; this network was formed by the strategic Spirit, carrying out Christ's grand strategy. What motivated Paul? Paul makes it clear that it was not him—he could hardly get through the whole ordeal. It was the Spirit who compelled him. It was the Spirit who shaped the whole movement. The Spirit opened and closed doors. In fact in 2 Corinthians, Paul makes it clear that though his outer man is decaying, through the Spirit his inner man is being renewed day by day; he is seeing clearer and clearer the reality of Christ and His grand strategy for building His Church.

- E. The Spirit moving in our lives as leaders (shaping and compelling us) does not exempt us from human pressures and suffering—conflicts without and fears within.

Paul describes his whole ministry as conflicts without and fears within. (2 Corinthians 2:12–7:5) This is a direct extension of the last point. Paul considers himself simply a common clay pot but with the power of the Spirit inside him. As “conflicts without and fears within” pound on the clay pot and it cracks, the light of the Spirit shines out the cracks.

Many who do not understand the strategic Spirit or the grand strategy of Christ, preach a health and wealth gospel or life in the Spirit in which everyone is smiling and loving Jesus every moment. They do not understand how the Spirit works. We need to see how He matures us, how we learn to see more clearly day by day as Paul did, and how our churches and movements really mature. But we will reserve our critique of this for the final section on charting the course for the future of Global Pentecostalism.

- F. The Spirit is key to one-mindedness—around the kerygma and didache—in our networks and in our churches.

We will come back to this in the next section. But Paul is clear in Ephesians that the Church—Christ’s grand strategy—has one foundation laid by the Apostles and prophets, Christ being the cornerstone. In 4:1–3, there is one God, one Lord, one Spirit and one faith—the Teaching, the deposit, the sound doctrine, the apostolic traditions—which we refer to as the *kerygma* and the *didache*. Without

that one faith there can be no real one-mindedness, the power of the Spirit dissipates, and we cannot think biblically and creatively in our cultures. All these elements are key to building one-mindedness in our churches and to our capacity to strive together for the progress of the gospel (see Philippians again).

3. The Spirit and Our Kerygmatic Communities

Our next area to examine is how the Spirit works in our churches. Paul was constantly working to build a one-mindedness in the churches he planted. They would fail to experience the power available to them if they failed at this point, and the Spirit is key to that one-mindedness: enlightening, illuminating, and transforming.

THE SPIRIT AT WORK IN OUR CHURCHES

- A. The Spirit produced a movement-wide one-mindedness (“they were one heart and one soul”) around the Apostles’ teaching of the gospel (the proclamation, the kerygma, Acts 2:42), that Jesus was the Messiah and He inaugurated the kingdom of God, as seen from the Acts narrative.

The disciples waited for the Spirit as they had been told. When the Spirit came two things happened: (1) the gospel was proclaimed with demonstrations of power and (2) a new community was formed. The Spirit began this global movement at Pentecost.

But examine carefully what happened before Pentecost. Remember, Acts is “what Jesus continued to do and teach.” Notice again Acts 1:

¹ In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ² until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. Acts 1:1–3

Jesus gave them instructions for over forty days before He left. This formed what is called *the Apostles' teaching*, Acts 2:42.

⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:41–42

So what exactly was Jesus teaching them? It was an intense forty-day “Emmaus Road” course—the Spirit opened their minds (“through the Holy Spirit”) and Jesus rearranged their entire understanding of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Luke records five major sermons of Peter in the first few chapters of Acts; they all follow the same outline. In 1 Corinthians 15:1–5, Paul called this *the proclamation* (the kerygma), which was authoritatively passed on to him.

When you study Peter’s sermons, he now demonstrates a huge command of the Story. With the Spirit’s power, he can weave everything together skillfully, convincingly, on his feet, in front of thousands of people, backed up by signs and wonders. But again, notice what Luke records at the end of Peter’s first sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2.

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”
³⁸ Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” ⁴⁰ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

When Peter’s sermon was done, they asked what they should do. He said, “Repent and be baptized.” So they received the message and were baptized. But notice a very, very important phrase in 2:40: “and he testified with many other arguments.” Peter testified, from that forty-day “Emmaus Road” crash course. In his other sermons, he demonstrated a similar command of the gospel story woven through the entire Old Testament. What exactly was the essence of *the gospel story*—the proclamation, the kerygma? The essence of Peter’s five sermons is this:

Jesus was prophesied in the Old Testament as the Messiah.

He came down to earth and lived as a man going about doing good and healing.

He was rejected by Israel and killed.

He died, was buried, and resurrected.

He ascended to heaven and is sitting at the right hand of God.

He will return again as king and judge.

And everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins.

Notice how Luke unfolds the narrative of Acts.

⁷ The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7

³¹ Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. Acts 9:31

²⁴ But the word of God continued to advance and gain adherents. Acts 12:24

⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily. Acts 16:5

²⁰ So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Acts 19:20

It was the word of God that continued to progress. *The word of God* here means “the gospel message—the proclamation, the kerygma.” That is what is being referred to in Acts 2:42 as devotion to the Apostles’ teaching. It is all they had at that time. It could not include all the future revelation of Christ’s grand strategy, which was not fully revealed yet. The point of Peter’s sermons and Luke’s summary statements is to show that the Spirit laid the gospel at the foundation of the entire movement. But also remember, even in Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council, the Jewish Apostles and elders had a limited understanding of Christ’s unfolding plan and what the strategic Spirit was shaping.

This is where the problem begins with today’s Global Pentecostal movement. As new movements start all across the Global South, most of the time, those who proclaim the gospel emphasize “signs and wonders,” but preach a shallow gospel. They do not win people “with many other arguments” as Peter did. In Acts, the Spirit was progressing the gospel—the word of God—not “signs and wonders” and healing services.

I do believe that often, when the gospel—the word of God—is breaking into new territory where it has not been proclaimed, those proclaiming it will sometimes experience “signs and wonders,” probably not as big as seen by the Apostles. But key to how the Spirit builds a network or movement of churches is through leaders who have a command of the

complete gospel and can proclaim it convincingly; the Spirit empowers them.

Rarely have I found a network or movement of churches in Global Pentecostalism that fully proclaims the gospel as seen in Acts.¹⁷

- B. The power of the Spirit matured in churches as Christ’s grand strategy was fully revealed. This is seen in Paul’s prayers in the letter to the Ephesians—the power is in Christ’s strategy, it takes the Spirit for us to fully grasp it, and it assumes it is reached in community together.

“The power matured” is a strange phrase, but useful. Paul was trying to mature the Corinthians, weaning them off of dependence on “ecstatic experiences.” In 1 Corinthians 14:20 he tells them they are “children in their thinking.” A big part of his intention in 1 Corinthians 12–14 is to mature the churches in their understanding of how the Spirit works in them as their thinking matures. God works a similar type of supernatural personal experiences today, often to get our attention and believe the gospel message. But, as with the Ephesian churches, He expects us to mature, and the Spirit is critical to that maturity.

In addition, “maturing in the Spirit” means we grow with His plan as it unfolds. In this case, we must return to Ephesians 3 and increase our

¹⁷ This whole argument is unfolded in my ten-session journey through the Scriptures entitled *The Story: Grasping the Metanarrative in a Postmodern World*.

comprehension. In Ephesians 3:8–10, Paul states he has been given a 2-fold job description: (1) to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles (as Peter did to the Jews) and (2) to bring to light Christ's grand strategy—the Church. His letter is designed to help the Ephesian churches fully grasp that strategy. He bookends the first half of his letter with two rather large prayers.

¹⁵ I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰ God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Ephesians 1:15–23.

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶ I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸ I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:14–21

The prayers bookend this section where he gives the fullest, clear revelation of the mystery of Christ—His grand strategy, the Church, which will demonstrate God’s wisdom to the world and even to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places. Look carefully about what Paul is asking for:

“may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation” 1:17

“the eyes of your heart be enlightened” 1:18

“may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with

power through His Spirit” 3:16

“may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints” 3:18

Why?

“what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power” 1:19

“by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine” 3:20

Let’s put the picture together. Paul lays out the full picture of Christ’s grand strategy—the Church. In that plan is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (1:20). It is available to the Ephesian churches. But it takes a process to tap into it. We must dwell on it, grasp it, meditate on it, embrace it, build our lives around it! And as we do, the Spirit gives us wisdom, enlightens us, transforms our inner being, and gives us the power to comprehend it. That, Paul is saying, is how the Spirit works!

There is even more insight in 1 Corinthians 2. The whole chapter talks about the fact that it takes the Spirit of God to help us fully understand the things of God and to develop the mind of Christ (2:16). That is what the Spirit is doing as we avoid the foolish strategies of the world and become absorbed with Christ and His Church. The whole chapter is about the power we receive when the Spirit gives us illumination by

opening the door to the mind of Christ. And specifically, we are then able—he says it two times (2:12 and 14)—to discern the gifts He has given us.

Let's turn back again to Global Pentecostalism. As I have worked with large-scale movements all across the Global South, I see churches, networks of churches, and movements of churches unestablished in the faith, unaware of Christ's grand strategy and almost completely powerless to impact their cultures with the gospel. They cannot think biblically in culture, they are filled with confusion on the gospel, and they mix cultural religious practices into their faith. After the initial surge of power as they embrace the gospel, they quickly become powerless.

- C. The one mindedness or power is maintained as churches as we practice the word richly dwelling in our gathered churches—speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs—in a style of dialogue in community.

One issue is tapping into that power in our churches. It is another issue to maintain the Spirit's power. For insight on the issue of maintaining power, we need to turn to Paul's middle letters: Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

In Philippians, Paul's main concern is for the churches of Philippi to

remain one-minded in their striving together with Paul for the progress of the gospel. Dealing with co-worker disunity is his focus, and he gives an overall view of how to keep strategic churches like Philippi focused.

I particularly want to focus on parallel passages in Ephesians and Colossians that give us tremendous insight into how the Spirit works in churches to keep them functioning as powerful, high impact churches.

¹⁵ Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, ²⁰ giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:15–20

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:16–17

There are several observations in these passages that help us understand how the Spirit works. First, as churches (and individuals)

we are to be good stewards of our time and resources. In both passages it refers to speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. But they begin with different phrases:

“be filled with the Spirit....” Ephesians 5:19

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom....” Colossians 3:16

The gathered church meetings, which were all house churches at the time, are in view here. The meetings were informal, beginning with a meal and retiring to a time of teaching, sharing, and singing.¹⁸ “Being filled with the Spirit” and “letting the Word richly dwell” are synonymous ideas. When the Word richly dwells through teaching, admonishing one another, and putting the Word to music, we are one-minded and focused. Then the Spirit empowers us.

Again, this is important for the Global Pentecostal movements. Most of the movements have been made up of spontaneously expanding house churches, just as in the Early Church. But increasingly, the leaders of the networks are becoming pastors of one key church and developing a Western style of preaching and church services. The meeting style in our churches matters. Small group dialogue around the Word is critical

¹⁸ See *Going to Church in the First Century* by Robert Banks and my encyclical *Kerygmatic Communities: Evangelism and the Early Churches*. The general pattern of meeting is set by the extensive treatment of the church gatherings in 1 Corinthians 11:17–14:25.

to churches being one-minded, maintaining the Spirit's power, and spontaneously expanding.

- D. The Spirit also works in individuals and churches both in the process of renewing our minds and as we are equipped for the work of the ministry. Each church, essentially, becomes a hermeneutically trained community in which everyone can think biblically in one faith—the same first principles.

This is an expansion of the previous point and is dealt with extensively in my paradigm paper “Church-Based Hermeneutics: Creating a New Paradigm.”¹⁹

Paul's letter to the Romans is very important at this point. Paul wrote the letter to the Roman churches as sort of a manifesto on the gospel. At the end of the letter (16:15–17), he states that after writing the letter, he has now established them in his gospel, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. What he meant was, that while the gospel (the proclamation, the kerygma) that he received (1 Corinthians 15:1–6) was correct, it was not fully developed (remember his conflicts with Peter). After a thorough treatment of fully unpacking the gospel in chapters Romans 1–11, he makes an amazing statement.

12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies

¹⁹ Paper 4 in *The Paradigm Papers*.

of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

On the basis of all that I have said in chapters 1–11, after fully understanding this gospel, dedicate yourself completely to God. Then begin a lifelong process. Begin a transformation process. What does that look like? To be transformed, renew your mind in the Word—what we have been talking about in grasping all that Christ is doing and has for us. Notice, we do the hard work of renewing our minds in the Word—(*renewing* is active in the Greek; that is our part), and we will *be transformed* (passive in the Greek—someone else’s part). Who transforms us? The Spirit that we have been given. The Greek word for *transform* is *metamorphizo*—metamorphosis—the Spirit gradually transforms us from a caterpillar to a butterfly as we renew our minds.

In a different way, the Hebrews author addresses this in Hebrews 5:11–14, when he states that many of the Hebrew Christians are still babes; they have not matured in the faith. He wants to explain the more developed parts of Christ’s grand strategy, but he cannot because they cannot think biblically with the mind of Christ. So he has to teach them the first principles of the faith all over again. When they learn *the first principles of the faith* (which Paul calls in his letters “the faith,”

“the Teaching” (didache), “the deposit,” “the sound doctrine,” or “the authoritative apostolic traditions” and practice them, they develop discernment—the ability to think biblically. Who gives that ability, that discernment, that enlightenment, that comprehension?—the Spirit.

In my fourth paradigm paper²⁰ we define the ability to think biblically as a hermeneutically trained judgment. I make a case for the fact that leaders need a hermeneutically trained judgment collectively, churches need to mature with a collectively trained judgment, and each believer needs to develop a hermeneutically trained judgment. The Spirit will only unleash power if we seriously embrace the teaching in our lives and families and churches.

Again, we turn our attention to the Global Pentecostal movement. I am not aware of a single movement or network that has been founded with a serious commitment to laying the foundation carefully on the first principles of the faith, as the Hebrews author laid out. (Paul gave a similar challenge in Colossians 2:6–8.) In our next section, we will discuss why beginning here is one of the foundational rebuilding strategies for Global Pentecostalism all across the Global South.

- E. The Spirit empowers churches and individuals when each one is committed to do his or her part—varieties of gifts, ministries, and effects, but one Spirit.

²⁰ Ibid

One of the greatest errors in Western Christianity is the development of the *professional pastor* who is hired to “do the work of the ministry.” This false idea is quickly being embraced by the Global Pentecostal movement. On my recent trip from Africa to China and back to Africa (and in my trip a month before, visiting movements all over India, for over a month), I asked a question: How many people in your churches are really active in ministry? A few said 15% but almost all said 10% or less. Why is that? 1 Corinthians is clear that for the church to function in the power of the Spirit every single person is needed.

We have confused the role of the 5-fold gifts of Ephesians 4:11, especially the role of pastors and missionaries. We have professionalized their roles and sucked the power out of our churches.

Ephesians 4:11–16 is very important at this point. The function of the five-fold gifts is not to do the work of the ministry, but to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry.²¹ Today, apostolic leaders all across the movements are becoming professional pastors and seeking the wrong kind of degrees.

This leads us to 1 Corinthians 12, a very important passage on the work of the Spirit in our churches. If every believer is important to the

²¹ This is where I began in 1972, influenced by Ray Stedman’s book *Body Life*—the whole book was on Ephesians 4. My job description was to equip the saints for the work of the ministry not to become a professional minister.

churches operating at full power of the Spirit, then the churches in Global Pentecostalism, and everywhere for that matter, are operating at 15% at best of their potential power—but more likely it is 10% or less.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 1 Corinthians 12:4–6

The point of 1 Corinthians 12 is this: For the church to operate at the full power of the Spirit, everyone needs to be able to operate at full capacity with the gifts given them by the Spirit. Remember our 1 Corinthians 2 passage—we cannot even recognize our gifts if we are not enlightened by the Spirit forming Christ's mind in us, which implies understanding His grand strategy.

This is the core problem with donors: Most do not understand Christ's grand strategy, so they fund the wrong thing time and time again. And Global South leaders accept the money and do what they are told to by the donors because they do not understand the grand strategy either, but they want the money.

- F. Critical to that power is striving together with one mind and one spirit for the progress of the gospel, which involves staying within the plan of Christ, keeping the vision and mission in front of us, all gifts fully

participating, and as churches, engaging in good occupations and meeting pressing needs.

The key question here is this: How is spontaneous expansion maintained? Paul just went to strategic cities. He built a complex apostolic network and was ready to move on to Spain. How was it supposed to continue to expand?

Well, if you have a strong apostolic team (sodal leaders) moving amongst the churches, key hub or resource center leaders (modal), strategic individual churches and clusters of churches, then the gospel will spontaneously expand to smaller and outlying areas. And if the churches are well ordered and plug into the power, they will meet pressing needs and engage in good occupations, impacting their culture generation after generation (see Titus).

4. The Spirit, Global Networks/Movements, and the 21st Century

So where do we go from here? We have to rebuild from the ground up—on a completely different foundation. It takes about five years to rebuild that foundation and another five years to scale it.

PATHWAY FOR REBUILDING OUR NETWORKS AND MOVEMENTS

My encyclical “The Churches of the First Century: From Simple Churches to Complex Networks” gives a comprehensive framework for building church networks and movements of churches based on Acts and what we call *the way of Christ and His Apostles*. In this section, we will narrow our comments to Global Pentecostal networks, with a few comments on the institutionalized Global South and the West from a renewal perspective.

Phase 1: Building Complex Apostolic Networks (5 years)

A. Forming apostolic teams

Our starting point is building apostolic teams. This is the missing starting point in the Western missionary enterprise of the 20th century and in all the church-growth strategies that fueled the Global Pentecostal movements of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Think

back on Acts and the beginning of Paul's missionary journeys, which Luke established as the catechetical framework for future church networks and movements. It started with the first Gentile church—Antioch. When Barnabas saw what was happening, what did he do? He went and found Paul. And together they taught the whole church (Acts 11:29) for an entire year. Only then, in Acts 13:1–4, did the strategic Spirit make His first move—He sent Paul out on his first missionary journey.

Finding the Pauls

The first job of our team and our strategic partners is to *find the Pauls*. Building on Acts after the first century, wherever the gospel is breaking through, every century must build complex apostolic networks. Then, as these networks form, we must network them together, forming a network of networks—thus making a movement.

Let me begin with an illustration. One of the most influential Urban Network leaders in China is Abraham Cui. He is the founder of All Nations Mission Church in Shanghai and has developed a church multiplication strategy called Seed Church. He describes his experience of encountering the paradigm as a four-year rebuilding process. First, he said, he thought he would take a few of the best of the BILD resources and add them to his system. He soon could see that would not work. Then he entered a phase of trying to add the BILD system

into his system—that wouldn't work either. Then he realized he needed to rebuild everything from the ground up. That whole process took him four years. We find we have to completely shut down the Western system and build fresh from scratch in culture.

This is a picture of our first step. We have identified Pauls and reshaped their thinking all over the world. This defines the essence of BILD.

In our D.Min. cohorts, I always ask the question: “Who am I?”

I get answers like “the provost of the Antioch School.” After a whole range of “professional minister” answers, I say, “I am like a Paul with an apostolic team with two powerful tools—the Antioch School and the BILD Institute.” Then I ask, “If I am a Paul, who are you?”

They usually begin with, “If you are a Paul, then we are Timothy’s.”

“No,” I say, “you are Pauls with your own networks. Otherwise we would not be investing in you! You are inviting me and my team into your sphere. We are equal. If you do not like what we are doing, then throw us out of your sphere—it is the sphere God has given you, not us.”

It takes about five years to train a Paul fully in *the way of Christ and*

His Apostles—the length of our D.Min.²² BILD is essentially a high powered apostolic team. When focusing on Global Pentecostalism, we have found key Pauls all across the Global South, in eight of the nine civilizations, for that matter. This is the heart of our strategy as a key resource center church and an apostolic team.

Again, we believe this is how the Spirit works. He brought Paul to his knees on the road to Damascus and rearranged his brain (his paradigm) for three years in Arabia. Then He started him on a twenty-year journey of building a complex apostolic network that would turn the world upside down, which is our catechetical framework. This is the beginning of our process. It is our job to recognize them and invest in them.

B. Launching comprehensive grassroots “first principles” training

In one sense this is the second step. We have to get the Pauls to buy into a whole new paradigm before we can begin. But it does not mean they have to wait four years. They can begin using *The First Principles* immediately—because it is part of their developmental process.

Let’s return to the illustration of the Chinese urban leader I mentioned

²² The primary purpose of our D. Min. competency is to train a Paul and often a couple of his key leaders to form a complex apostolic network, build an apostolic team, and build a grassroots strategy elder team. The degree is just a by-product.

earlier who took four years to shift his paradigm. While he is intensely building his apostolic team, he has also begun a process that will train 300 urban leaders in strategic cities through an intense 3½-day process that includes a certification at the end. Then they go set up small First Principles cohorts that will multiply fast. He believes 25% of the Chinese believers will be using our system in five years. By experiencing this, they will be able to more quickly experience and grow into the paradigm.

C. Investing in strategic eldership

This is what Paul did in Ephesus. He spent night and day for a period of three years teaching the whole counsel of God to the elders in that strategic city. Elders are leaders with a local focus—Ephesus and the surrounding areas. They are responsible to guard and shepherd the churches in that strategic city and to take the lead to see that all believers are established in the first principles of the faith. That, then, provides a context for spontaneous expansion to begin.

One of the reasons our team within BILD has been able to be effective in helping networks of churches around the world is that we have a strong, strategic eldership and a key resource center church (a church of churches) to come and go from. Paul had that in Antioch. Only then did the Spirit move.

D. Shaping into Complex Apostolic Networks

As we saw above, Paul had a specific strategy within the Spirit's catechetical framework. What is critical to do? Mapping the sphere God has given a key leader, thinking strategically, identifying key cities, building an apostolic team, and investing in the churches and leaders in those cities are all critical. Many of the Global Pentecostals claim to be led by the Spirit, but they "follow the Spirit" without understanding how the Spirit leads. They "just claim it" and baptize their own thoughts by claiming it, not planning, and following the Spirit in immature ways.

Think back to the Saturation Church Planting (SCP)/Church-Planting Movement (CPM) critique in our conversation. One network was started by hiring 2,000 church planters. And while 35,000 house churches were planted, it eventually resulted in 70% attrition. Why? They had no base church, and these church-planters were not trained well and had not built apostolic teams. The Spirit moved, but by not understanding the plan God gave, the movement was not sustainable.

Our North India strategy developed naturally as we were invited into these large-scale networks. We are working with a majority of these movements in a similar fashion—we regard SPC and CPMs as on-ramps that got these movements started. BILD helps them shape their movements around the Spirit's strategy in Acts. Each network invites us in, and a team of leaders are seconded for us to work with—putting

them in our M.Min./D.Min. degree programs. Over the five years, they learn Acts and the Spirit's catechetical framework for carrying out Christ's grand strategy, and they build their own strategy for their sphere or cultural context.

Phase 2: Forming Movements Around Strategic City Initiatives (5 years)

As networks begin forming in the same strategic city, country, civilization or culture, they naturally begin networking together because they are all working with the same plan. The Spirit then begins to empower them in a way that together they can have a significant impact on their cities and culture for the gospel to progress. We have four elements to help facilitate our partners networking together toward this end.

A. Prototyping Strategic City Initiatives

This is what we refer to as our North American Antioch Initiatives and our Global City/Shadow City Initiatives. We are working with key partners in North American cities as prototypes (Little Rock, Chattanooga, and Paterson). We are building what we believe will be powerful networks as we work together following the Spirit's Acts paradigm, enacting Christ's grand strategy. And we are just beginning two Shadow City/Global City prototypes in Mumbai and Chennai, India. A common pathway is taking shape towards this becoming a powerful movement in strategic cities worldwide.

B. Educating the Existing Establishment

It is critical for every key leader in our existing networks to renew his or her mind around Christ's grand strategy. This includes denominational leaders, network and movements leaders, theological educators, and marketplace leaders and benefactors. So we are prototyping three substantial executive education programs for this purpose: one for denominational and church network leaders, one for theological educators, and one for major donors and marketplace leaders.

Many leaders of large movements, networks, and denominations are older and do not have the time to do a D.Min. with us. That is a consistent problem. But they want to implement the whole paradigm. Paradigm change at the level we are talking about brings complicated problems and often conflict. So the top leader needs to be informed on the issues in a substantial way, even if he is not doing thorough work like many on his team. Theological educators need to rethink their paradigm as well. And often marketplace leaders do not understand Christ's grand strategy enough to fully participate with more than just money.

One of the challenges in Global Pentecostalism is to get over the idea that these kinds of programs are too academic. Renewing our minds around the "way of Christ and His Apostles" does require hard work, but it is key to unlocking the Spirit's true transformational power.

C. Creating “Theology in Culture” Forums System

We have not done any of these forums yet; they are a few years off. But the groundwork of the process has begun in what we call D.Min. major projects or artifacts. These replace the idea of doctoral dissertations. They are intended to be serious work done by key leaders doing theology in their own cultures. While Christ has a grand strategy and the Spirit works within that strategy, it is also true that to impact our cities and cultures with the gospel, we need to think biblically and creatively and deal with real issues in a substantive way.

Once a significant number of these artifacts are published, we believe they will lay foundations for “theology in culture” forums to be held around strategic artifacts. Again, part of the Spirit’s role is to transform our thinking as we renew our minds and to empower us to accomplish more than we ever thought. This means impacting cities and entire cultures. Again, we are not talking about Western academics, but serious ordered learning and thinking in our cultures.

D. Forming a Global C-BTE Network²³

Again, this is a strategy built squarely on Christ’s grand strategy; it is clearly within the Spirit’s strategic framework in Acts. The Global C-BTE Network will be completely framed in by the end of 2022. It

²³ I am looking forward to Michael Vos’s D.Min. artifact on building a Global C-BTE Complex Apostolic Network. It will chart our path for the next fifty years.

is designed to help support our partners globally and to identify the strongest networks to partner with us to help others. This will form a global network of networks—a movement to help recover Christ’s grand strategy throughout Global Pentecostalism and the world.

This strategy is designed in the spirit of Paul’s two prayers in Ephesians. As we align ourselves with “the way of Christ and His Apostles” around Christ’s grand strategy, the Spirit will empower us, network by network, in kingdom partnership, together in a powerful movement affecting all nine existing civilizations.

Conclusion: Rediscovering the Strategic Spirit in Global Pentecostalism—A Vital 21st Century Initiative

This encyclical has been in development in my mind for a long time. I began dealing with these issues with Saturation Church-Planting debates in the late 1980s. And as I mentioned earlier, I started focusing on Global Pentecostalism in 2001. But I never did serious reflection on how Global Pentecostalism views the Spirit or how to comprehensively challenge the movement until this last couple of years, as frustration grew in me. This was especially true toward those who were not seriously renewing their minds—who were not doing serious work in their educational cohorts.

Out of these roots of Global Pentecostalism was born the International Coalition of Apostles, what essentially is being referred to in *The Rise of Network Christianity*. Joe Mattera, a pastor in NYC, a good friend, and a leader in our doctoral program, was asked to become director of the US Coalition for Apostles. He asked me to serve on his US CAL National Council. I said I would if he changed their name to US Coalition for Apostolic Leaders. And he did and for a while posted my encyclical “The Churches of the First Century: From Simple Churches to Complex Networks” on their website. As quoted earlier from *The Rise of Network Christianity*, these huge movements “are led by a network of dynamic independent religious entrepreneurs, often referred to

as ‘apostles.’” But the problem is these apostolic leaders do not understand apostolic teams and how to build complex apostolic networks. In the meantime, evangelicals were uncomfortable using the term *apostolic teams*. But I have continued to persist in teaching this, and most of our partners are now comfortable with it.

The Spirit is birthing something new as the Western Church and missions have long left “the way of Christ and His Apostles” and are dying. If evangelicals do not work with a recognition of the strategic Spirit and the way of Christ and His Apostles, they will continue to die off.

How do we think about all of this? What about the fact that the strategic Spirit launched this whole movement—all across the Global South—but it is now in serious trouble? Global Pentecostalism is the Spirit’s 120-year project of creating new movements all across the Global South. He is continuing to develop and shape it. But we must take seriously that the movement is in trouble and work very hard at rediscovering the strategic Spirit who birthed it. How hard was it for Jesus and Paul to break the Jewish leaders out of their paradigm? The Spirit works with real people who make real choices. I believe He uses and transforms leaders who see part of the need, even though they are still trapped in the Western theological education, missions, and parachurch discipleship paradigms. Why He does it this way, I do not know!

In the last 60 years, Africa has become over 50% Christian. But why are 90% of the pastors in Africa untrained? Why is there still 70% attrition in

India after 30 years of church growth strategies: Saturation Church Planting, Church-Planting Movements, and Disciple-Making Movements. Why are there massive nominalism and syncretism in Africa? Why is the massive Ugandan network in Africa called “born-again Pentecostal churches”? African Global Pentecostalism–Western missions “civilized them.” Indian Global Pentecostalism–Western Church Growth missionary or discipleship organizations used them to “finish the task.” Why is China different? The Church was on a wrong path in China too, but Mao threw out the missionaries. (Allen proves it would have been different if they had stayed.) But now the West is trying to shape China in the wrong direction also.

A few key leaders broke through a part of the Western paradigm, calling for spontaneous expansion. Yet this is the state of the Church, and everyone needs to be challenged to be part of the return to the way of Christ and His Apostles.

I have not dealt much with Latin America (which is where TEE began). But again, because of the Western mission system and the almost irrelevant Western theological education system, the Church could not deal with poverty (did not have a biblical theology–theology in culture framework). Liberation theology destroyed massive amounts of the fruit. We have been somewhat successful with South India leaders, but it is still a mixed paradigm with most of them. But we are winning the paradigm battle with key North India leaders. In China, we are making key strides with the church networks, especially the emerging urban churches. And In Africa, we have several large-scale

movements fully embracing *the way of Christ and His Apostles*.

So where do we go from here?

Why are you sitting in this room? There are three distinct audiences here:

- Most of you are Global Pentecostals

You have tremendous pressure on you. You have to stabilize and mature your networks of churches. This demands fully understanding Christ's grand strategy and the Spirit's strategic framework in Acts, and designing a specific strategy for your network. You must build a complex apostolic network, develop an apostolic team, and train large numbers of grassroots leaders. In addition, you need to develop sustainability through the development of marketplace leaders and a benefactor team from them.

- Or you are part of the Mainline–Evangelical–Classical Pentecostal church—caught between a dying Western Christendom and the rise of Network Christianity.

Learn from the Pentecostals. That is what the reader in Appendix A is designed to help you do. Get used to the term *apostolic team*. It will help you shift your thinking a bit toward the new Network Christianity. I have done this with my relationship with Joe Mattera, and learned a lot, which is why I participate with his ministry. You must build a complex apostolic network, develop an apostolic team, and train large numbers of grassroots leaders. You

need a strategy for renewing your denomination into a network and developing a church multiplication strategy.

- Or you are Western marketplace leaders and donors, which includes publishing houses.

You need to gradually learn a whole new way of having impact through your giving. Those of you who are marketplace leaders and donors in the Global Pentecostal networks need to become fully engaged in your network. We have created an executive education program to help you discover Christ's grand strategy so you can give intelligently and your skills can be used for high impact in the network and in your city. Several of our Global South partners will be offering these in 2020; we have already begun in Uganda and the East African Community. We are launching two in the USA: in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Paterson, New Jersey, in January, 2020.

For All Audiences: BILD is just one integrated training system, even though it looks like many programs. Take the system seriously.

- Learn the paradigm—do your own work in the M.Min.–D.Min. programs.
- Learn the training system completely.
- Shape your strategy in 5 years, then scale it the next 5 years.

If you want to stabilize your networks and eventually operate at 100% of the power available through the Spirit, you must fully grasp Christ's grand strategy, and learn to lead within the strategic Spirit's framework given to us in Acts.

Appendix A: The Core Global Pentecostal Reader

This introduces you to the 100-year conversation that shaped Global Pentecostalism. There are significant works that lay the foundation for this encyclical. While the encyclical can be grasped in its essence in one reading, the works listed here are helpful to grasping it in full.

A. Roland Allen

Allen has an incredible range of influence—from top missiologists of the 20th Century to the entire missions strategy of the Assembly of God and the foundations for the birth of Global Pentecostalism.

In this encyclical, the most important work is *Pentecost and the World: The Revelation of the Holy Spirit in the “Acts of the Apostles.”* I think he actually saw Global Pentecostalism coming 75 years early. This core trilogy is the core of his writings:

- *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours*
- *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church: and the Causes Which Hinder It*
- *The Ministry of the Spirit*

See also “Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Satan’s? An Infernal Dialogue,” Appendix 5 in *Roland Allen: Pioneer, Priest, and Prophet*

by Hubert J. B. Allen, Roland's grandson, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995) pp. 197–214. It was never published in his lifetime and was written in the style of C. S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*.

- B. *The Rise of Network Christianity: How Independent Leaders Are Changing the Religious Landscape* by Brad Christerson and Richard Flory (Oxford, 2017).

This book is critical because it traces the history of the rise of Global Pentecostalism, what they call Network Christianity, since the Azusa Street Revival in 1906 in Los Angeles.

- C. Byron Klaus

The Globalization of Pentecostalism, which he co-edited, is foundational. He also introduced me to the three feature articles published by *The Evangel*.

The Globalization of Pentecostalism: Religion Made to Travel, edited by Murray Dempster, Byron Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Regnum, 1999).

D. C. Peter Wagner's works

Wagner's works are amazing. He foresaw the emergence of a new apostolic era and apostolic type churches. His is the only modern author I know that saw Acts as catechetical, as I do. But he completely missed the concept of apostolic teams (only apostles that led to the distortion of the movement of "The International Coalition of Apostles,") and he missed the concept of *complex apostolic networks*.

But I am not being critical. Changing a 250-year paradigm is not easy, and prophetic leaders can only see a few pieces at a time, which has been part of my 47-year quest.

Read

- *The Book of Acts: A Commentary*
- The New Apostolic Churches

E. Key Encyclicals and Paradigm Papers

1. "Churches of the First Century: From Simple Churches to Complex Networks"
2. "Kerygmatic Communities: Evangelism and the Early Churches"

The first two on “Church-Based Theological Education” and “Church-Based Missions” are important, but the two key papers for this encyclical are “Church-Based Theology” and “Church-Based Hermeneutics,” which are the basis for this paper saying we must start all over and build a new foundation for our networks.

F. Ed Silvano

Ed Silvano is a Brazilian Global Pentecostal apostolic leader with a vast network. He was introduced to me by Abraham Cui. Silvano’s work is very good. He is an outstanding example of a key leader from this Global Pentecostal Network. In my mind, his three core books are these:

- *Ekklesia: Rediscovering God's Instrument for Global Transformation*
- *Anointed for Business: How to Use Your Influence in the Marketplace to Change the World*
- *Women: God's Secret Weapon*

Discussion Questions

The following questions are designed to be discussed after reading the entire encyclical. They can be used for a retreat, a small group gathering, or by church leaders at leadership meetings. A small group Bible study, a fellowship group, a cell church, or house church could easily spend four weeks, an issue each week, discussing an encyclical. It is recommended that the entire encyclical be read again before discussing each issue.

ISSUE 1: GLOBAL PENTECOSTALISM AS A MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRIT

Questions:

1. What are the key movements within the Spirit's shaping of Global Pentecostalism?
2. Why do you think there has been so much opposition to this movement by the Western mission and theological education establishment?
3. Why has there been such a lack of leadership and high attrition rate within the movement?
4. Why has the movement had so little impact on the cultures of the movement across the Global South?

**ISSUE 2: THE STRATEGIC SPIRIT—HOW THE SPIRIT
CARRIES OUT CHRIST'S GRAND STRATEGY****Questions:**

1. Why were the disciples to wait for the Spirit? What was He bringing more than just power?
2. How is Acts structured? How does Luke lay out the Spirit's strategy so we have a catechetical pattern for all future missions after Acts 28?
3. What freedom do we have to develop 21st century strategies based on the catechetical framework for following Christ's grand strategy for the Church?
4. Why do you think Western missions and theological education completely miss Luke's intent for writing Acts?

ISSUE 3: THE SPIRIT EMPOWERING OUR CHURCHES AND TRANSFORMING OUR LIVES

Questions:

1. What is the process the Spirit uses to build a powerful one-mindedness in churches?
2. What does one-mindedness mean and not mean? What does it look like?
3. What is the core of our one-mindedness, and where lies cultural freedom and adaptation?
4. Why is releasing the power of the Spirit related to the one-mindedness of churches, church networks, and church movements?

ISSUE 4: FOLLOWING THE STRATEGIC SPIRIT INTO THE 21ST CENTURY FOR THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL**Questions:**

1. From the late 20th century and the early 21st century, how can you say that the Spirit has been moving across the Global South? How do you know it is from the Spirit?
2. What are the major problems facing these new churches as regards to leadership development and sustainability?
3. Why do these churches need to build a new foundation—rejecting the Western institution systems of the last 250 years?
4. What will it really take for massive church movements to present the gospel in ways that have a transformational effect on their cultures?