

AUTHORS MEET CRITICS:  
REVIEWING  
*CATCH THE FIRE: SOAKING PRAYER AND  
CHARISMATIC RENEWAL*  
BY MICHAEL WILKINSON & PETER ALTHOUSE  
(Northern Illinois University Press, 2014)

**DALE M. COULTER:** In this fascinating work, Wilkinson and Althouse argue that soaking prayer functions as a kind of cultural practice that renews individuals and institutions. More specifically, they claim that it is an interaction ritual that both reflects and inculcates a pattern of social interaction which, in turn, gives rise to a distinct culture. They support this thesis by analyzing soaking prayer in terms of a number of sociological models and unpacking how it fits the internal logic or common narrative frame of the charismatic ethos within which it is situated.

The merits of the thesis depend primarily upon the sociological models that Wilkinson and Althouse employ to analyze soaking prayer as a cultural practice. Rather than utilizing a single theoretical lens, this text employs a multiplicity of theoretical models to situate soaking prayer. The text is heavy on theoretical models, moving through Pitirim Sorokin's thought on altruism, Randall Collins' Interaction Ritual (IR) theory, Victor Turner on pilgrimage and liminality, Max Weber on charismatic authority, and Robert Wuthnow on forgiveness as a cultural construct. In addition, the chapter on prayer and altruism offers more of a literature review of various sociological approaches to those topics and their limitations than an examination of soaking prayer itself. The use of so many theoretical models is both a strength and a weakness of the book.

The strength of so many models is their collective capacity to explain the relationship between interior change and external behavior. Most of the time sociologists measure change in terms of external behavior. It is extremely difficult to describe deepening levels of commitment without some sort of behavioral analysis like how often persons engage in practices such as prayer or church attendance. Henri Gooren's own conversion-career model attempts to do just that.

With IR, Wilkinson and Althouse can translate religious language about the Father's love into the language of emotional energy so

as to connect the internal experience with an external action. The use of emotional energy also allows them to fuse Collins's IR theory nicely with Sorokin's suggestion that ritual practices were the mechanisms by which exemplars of altruism received love and transmitted it to others. The interactions that sustain emotional energy over long periods are part of emotional regimes communicated in symbols and inculcated by rituals like soaking prayer. This is how a culture of love unfolds that socializes members into habits of forgiveness and facilitates ongoing institutional renewal and action in the world. Thus, the discussion of rituals of renewal in chapter three sets the foundation for the renewal of mission in chapter six. Chapter three is the most significant in terms of the application of sociological models to the practice of soaking prayer.

While this use of sociological models exegetes soaking prayer as a kind of cultural practice, it also weakens their analysis in two ways. First, Wilkinson and Althouse do not always integrate the theoretical ideas they set forth, resulting in tensions between parts of their analysis. For example, in chapter two they provide a number of definitions of love (54-62). While most of these definitions are behavioral and deal with various kinds of actions that exemplify traits such as benevolence, some relate more to emotional states than actions (love as a kind of energy). Still other ways they talk about love are in terms of its source (divine or human), object (friendship), or intensity (passionate desire/*eros*). They attempt to resolve these various ways of describing love through a typology of care-love, union-love, and appreciation-love, which focuses on the function (promotion of well-being, promotion of relational connection, and promotion of aesthetic value).

This theoretical analysis of love stands in tension with the more simplified version in subsequent chapters where they utilize the typology to refer to the behavioral dimension and emotional energy to refer to the affective dimension. Moreover, it seems clear that CTF beliefs prioritize love as an internal condition that must permeate all actions, otherwise they become "works" or mere ritualized performance (139, 157). Although it is not clear whether CTF thinks of love as an emotional disposition (a virtue) or simply an emotional reaction to teachings like forgiveness, what emerges is that soaking prayer concerns affective formation to facilitate the loving acts of mission. This signals a preference for interiority and intentionality. An action becomes loving once the emotional investment accompanies it, otherwise it is viewed as perfor-

mance or empty ritual devoid of the delight birthed out of pleasing the beloved. The analysis of love overly complicates the scheme they employ in a manner that obscures the priority of love as emotional energy over love as a caring, unitive, or appreciative behavior.

Second, the focus on sociological models leaves little room for theological reflection and historical contextualization. The relatively brief attempt to situate soaking prayer within the historical framework of early-Pentecostal practices or the Charismatic renewal is not detailed enough to illuminate the practice. In one respect, it is an obvious approach to take, yet it tends to distract from Wilkinson and Althouse's important discoveries. Their analysis suggests three features of the CTF ethos: 1) the fusion of relational and therapeutic metaphors for salvation; 2) a turn toward interiority in which intentions matter more than action in the Christian life; and 3) a preference for symbolic and imaginative modes of discourse. These themes point more toward the 'healing prayer' approach of the Episcopalian Agnes Sandford and the Catholic Francis MacNutt than they do to Pentecostal practices of prayer that Wilkinson and Althouse identify (such as, being slain in the Spirit). Along with the constant refrain that soaking prayer is a form of contemplative prayer or meditation and the movement of inward, upward, and outward, such conclusions suggest on the surface the strong influence of sacramental streams over revivalist ones.

This requires further examination to illustrate the point. The movement of inward, upward, and outward is a standard pattern in Christian tradition going back to the patristic era. Inward and upward point toward the interrelationship between knowledge of the self and knowledge of God. One first enters the self and then ascends to God in the mind. The healing of the soul comes in the context of a dynamic between knowing God and knowing oneself, which is another way of describing how the ordering of desire (orthopathy) occurs in the midst of right worship (orthodoxy). This comes very close to the relationship between love, forgiveness, and physical healing in soaking prayer (81-86). It is a way of prioritizing affective transformation so that healing of the soul precedes and gives rise to healing of the body. Such a view is another way to talk about the relationship between sanctification and physical healing one finds, particularly, in Wesleyan forms of Pentecostalism.

The preference for symbolic and imaginative modes of discourse is evident in the descriptions of prophecy, visions, and other charismatic phenomena. Throughout the text, Wilkinson and Altouse use phrases like mental impression, mental picture, and mental imaging (94-102) to describe how divine communication occurs. This approach traffics in the use of symbols to convey meaning even to the point that animal noises become symbolic of divine activity. It also illumines how CTF thinks of impartation since adherents connect hearing God's voice with the free association of ideas in the mind (87). The flow of emotion in the therapeutic and relational dimensions correspond to the flow of mental thoughts in the cognitive dimension. The use of the imagination to freely associate ideas and images for their symbolic value is central to CTF's understanding of revelation.

Taking into account the use of symbolic and imaginative modes of discourse reveals further continuity with early Pentecostalism. Early Pentecostals regularly engaged in allegorical interpretations of the text of scripture in light of their own spiritual experiences. This interpretive mode is always symbolic, focusing on the way authorial words and images point beyond themselves to spiritual realities. It functions much like the symbolic mode that CTF employs. Moreover, while the meaning attached to glossalalia differs insofar as early Pentecostals saw it as the initial evidence of Spirit baptism, many early Pentecostals report their experiences in terms of the free association of ideas and images. C. H. Mason refers to the ecstatic moment as the wedlock with Christ while A. J. Tomlison mentally moves throughout the entire world, which convinces him of the need to engage in mission. As a non-verbal form of prayer, glossalalia does not entail the absence of mental activity, but the deeper stimulation of such activity. In this sense, it represents a form of intuitive knowledge, which is normally grounded in the immediate connection between events or ideas. It seems, then, that early Pentecostalism and CTF both employ symbolic and imaginative modes of discourse as part of a privileging of intuitive forms of knowledge over analytic.

The strong use of sociological models calls out for more historical and theological analysis in the text. Through such analysis, one might conclude that CTF and Pentecostalism are both forms of Christian mysticism, and it is this stream of Christian tradition that we need to understand better if we are going to unpack the sources that have fed

both sacramental and revivalist traditions within Christianity. This lack of sufficient historical and theological engagement should not distract from the overall importance of this study.

**VELMARIE ALBERTINI:** In *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal*, Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse present findings from an in-depth ethnographic study covering what seems like every salient aspects of a modern charismatic Christian movement, known as “Catch the Fire.” The book offers scholars a broad range of historical information and opportunities to explore both the theological and sociological viewpoints on how spiritual experiences are interpreted and communicated by participants and audiences in diverse Christian settings. The work is somewhat epistemological in that participants of the study are given opportunities to create descriptions to illustrate the primary source of their belief system, events and the experiences shared among them through means of personal and collective spiritual revelations. Anchored by the research question—how experiences of “divine love” could potentially lift people out of their current circumstances, imagining another way, and reaching out in love to others (12)—these researchers relied on the works of numerous proponents from the field of sociology in forming their theoretical frameworks (Emile Durkheim-structuralism, Max Weber, Sorokin, Randall Collins and Simmel). Commensurate with the body of theories available within the classical and contemporary sociological traditions, Wilkinson and Althouse seized every opportunity to combine their qualitative and quantitative methodological skills.

Sociologists who hold tightly to the purist stance and are reluctant to accept qualitative approaches might opt to forego the chance to indulge in descriptive science. Opting for more reliance on the use of large samples that are inherent to quantitative method would surely take away from the richness of this work. Just the same, readers who are more inclined to approach studies of culture and religion with an openness to accept the richness of ethnographic work will find the book riveting.

Wilkinson and Althouse offer readers some great opportunities to immerse themselves into extensive case studies of the religious movement, thereby enlightening readers with details of how these fascinating sub-culture groups have evolved. Readers who are accustomed to cultur-

al anthropology may relish the opportunities to explore what could be described as postmodern expressions of the Christian worldview within what is clearly recognizable as a new Christian movement.

Scholars of culture will appreciate the researchers' commitment to the ethnographic approaches. Using direct observations, and the collection of narratives from a broad range of participants, Wilkinson and Althouse really immersed themselves into the subcultures of the charismatic communities in search of case studies. As I often challenge students in my classes to do, the authors truly honored the research process in skillfully navigating their way through the salient sociological and Christian-based literature they masterfully used to undergird their study. With such copious fieldwork, Wilkinson and Althouse rival the studies of many cultural sociologists. "As researchers," they explain "we wanted to understand the charismatic practice of soaking prayer. Furthermore, we wanted to understand how the culture of charismatic Christians motivated practitioners to act in altruistic ways, which they claimed were related to the practice of soaking prayer" (6).

Unlike many ethnographers who face challenges in relying solely on insiders to guide their pursuits, these researchers managed to navigate their way through the cultural terrains, yet not as though they were complete foreigners. For instance, in anthropology participants could render for researchers anthropomorphic imageries of God that bewilder the outsider-researcher. However, this is not entirely the case here.

Stepping into the strange world of the charismatic renewal is disconcerting for the outsider, and as researchers we often found it difficult to grasp what was occurring in these emotionally intense settings. It is a unique subculture or habitus with unusual notions and narratives (5).

Wilkinson and Althouse are therefore able to draw their readers in by reporting in unusually up-close and personal ways the experiences of the participants. They offer interpretations of both historical analyses and real-time observations. Readers are directed toward the full essence of each individual and group experience associated with the Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal movement. Fellow ethnographers might approach this reading with either the sociological or the cultural anthropological perspective yet each can find solidarity in how skillfully the case studies and theoretical underpinnings are interwoven. It is in-

teresting to see how the movement is linked to other historical intracultural shifts spanning several charismatic phenomena.

Given the heavy reliance on direct observation of the Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal movement, some readers might surmise that there was a deliberate distancing from the theoretical insights of other relevant proponents like Bronislaw Malinowski, for example. This is surprising since he is known as the father of fieldwork and a major proponent of the use of fieldwork to understand how individual actions and individual needs are served by society's institutions, customs, practices and beliefs. With so much relevance placed on his contributions in the functionalist school of anthropology, it is unfortunate that the authors did not invoke either Malinowski nor Radcliffe-Brown in this work. Radcliffe-Brown as "the" structural-functionalist and even Franz Boas' insights into the role of culture as learned behavior could have been useful as well. Were these authors remiss in these exclusions? You be the judge. Perhaps they have appropriately made room for the inclusion of Sorokin's work on crisis in culture on the micro level; and therefore, the resting, receiving God's love via community engagement, and releasing aspects of soaking prayer are given broader contextual meaning than expected. Sorokin's focus on resolving societal tension seems apropos to the context of the cultural practice of renewal that participants described. Of course there are many other benefits to drawing upon Sorokin's contributions, especially in understanding the social and cultural dynamics of the Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal movement. Sorokin's work is also beneficial in analyzing the movement's historical context in relationship to the ideational, idealistic and sensate epoch, which he surmised could have lasted well over 600 years.

Scholars who might be anticipating more discussions on the grounded theory may look forward to Wilkinson and Althouse's future works, especially as new theoretical frameworks are provided to accompany those of other proponents such as Margaret Poloma, Stephen Post, and Matthew Lee. Future works might also include more in-depth analyses of private/public domains and how the levels of power are ascribed based on factors associated with egalitarianism. Also of interest are future trends and influences of ethnicity and gender in the explaining of how the Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal Movement is being sustained. Still, it is exhilarating to find that beyond their methodology, Wilkinson and Althouse have skillfully weaved in their theological ex-

ploration of the many ecumenical factors influencing the Catch the Fire Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal. They have offered powerful insights into the Christian experiences of individuals, groups and organizations that certainly would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

**VAN JOHNSON:** Twenty years after the 1994 renewal began at Toronto Airport Vineyard, Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse offer a sociological and theological analysis of the ongoing ministry of what has become known as Catch the Fire (CTF), especially its popularization of a religious ritual called “soaking prayer.” Their work is part of a larger project that concerns a recent category of sociological investigation called “Godly Love,” which explores the connection between experiencing divine love and altruism (13).

I will focus my review of *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal* on the theological sections, and conclude with some observations about the intersection of theology and culture at CTF that I hope will illuminate how this wavelength differs from the initial one in the Pentecostal/Charismatic spectrum. On the whole, the sociological analysis in the book is more comprehensive than the theological, and the theological description of CTF in its current theological and cultural setting is more developed than is the consideration given to its historical context.

Based upon surveys, interviews, and eyewitness accounts, the researchers concluded that at CTF there is a positive correlation between soaking prayer and altruistic responses. Credit at least some of this to the socializing effect of CTF’s reinforcement through regular rituals (like soaking prayer) and repeated ideology (such as the motif of ‘inward, upward, outward’) that experiencing the Father’s Love is initiation into a life of giving His love away. The researchers tested for altruism by surveying behavioural and attitudinal responses to soaking prayer (ch. 2). Those who scored high on the empathy scale and engaged in acts of forgiveness, even self-forgiveness, were considered altruistic (66). Other positive indicators included donating time and money, and acting to help others (66). There was not, surprisingly, a category for love expressed through evangelism. Surely a case study of a charismatic sector of evangelicalism would have been enhanced by asking about love-motivated attempts at evangelism. Perhaps its omission signifies that this is not an emphasis at CTF.



The synchronic analysis of the theology at CTF, which explains both the theology at CTF and the current influences on it, is a strength of the book. It provides outsiders with context and thus coherence for many of its seemingly unrelated practices. For instance, CTF is well known for the variety and quantity of behaviours exhibited by participants in their meetings: “shouting, laughing, crying, bodily movements such as tics and jerks, rolling, and falling” (101), and even animal-like behaviours such as roaring and barking. These embodied acts of worship, or ‘embodied love,’ are expressions of a theology of the body, which is connected to the belief that the war between God and sin is not being fought in the anthropological arena. The war is cosmic, where the Kingdom of love is advancing against principalities and powers. Since there is no inner conflict between the spirit and the flesh (92-3), the body becomes an appropriate instrument of worship. Also quite helpful was the analysis of the influence on John and Carol Arnott and the leadership at CTF of various charismatic trends, such as the healing movement in the broader Charismatic world, especially Francis MacNutt’s use of soaking prayer as a form of healing (28-9).

An intriguing theological angle was left unexplored. CTF participants tend to describe what they receive from God as substantive. You hear it in their prayer for “more of the Spirit,” and see it in their practice of impartation, where the laying on of hands effects a transfer of Spirit energy. What, then, are the implications of the perception that the Holy Spirit is a substance, which one can receive more of or soak in? Is there an observable effect the more one receives? How does frequency or length of soaking prayer affect altruism? The researchers surveyed the participants about how often they engaged in soaking prayer, but they did not attempt to correlate frequency with other variables.

The section in Chapter One that offered a theological analysis of CTF from a historical perspective was a weakness of the book, and the sketchy nature of it is curious given Althouse’s theological abilities. (Perhaps it is a result of the publisher’s preference?) The immediate historical context for CTF is set out well enough, locating it within the network of Third Wave theological expressions, and in particular, noting the significance of the ministry of John Wimber and the Vineyard. There is also brief consideration given to the influence of the 1940’s Latter Rain Movement. While the context for CTF is said to be the twentieth-century Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement, the diachronic

aspect, for the most part, is narrowed to a consideration of phenomenological similarities between the three waves of the movement. What is missing here is the theological context that would make some sense of how similar behaviours and rituals, like speaking in tongues, function so differently in CTF as opposed to early Pentecostalism. An exception to this is the inclusion of a chronology of the modern healing movement that explains the different historical phases by noting the effect of theology on practice (27-29).

Since New Testament apocalyptic eschatology is an integral component for assembling theological systems in general, and because of its formative role at the outset of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement, it merits particular attention for constructing the historical-theological context of CTF. In particular, it is against the two horizons of the apocalyptic worldview – the spatial and the temporal – that comparative and contrasting elements of CTF and the wider Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement may be seen.

The spatial dimension of the apocalyptic vision encompasses both heaven and earth; what goes on in heaven determines what happens on earth. CTF picks up on this with its “cosmic battle” motif. This worldview is widespread in other sections of the Third Wave, where war in the heavens entails spiritual warfare for those on earth. At CTF, however, the cosmic battle doesn’t appear to require any concomitant struggle for the believer.

The temporal dimension includes this world and the one to follow it; the future actions of God are determinative for life on earth now. In the New Testament and early Pentecostalism, the future was not only close at hand due to the imminent return of Jesus, but it was being experienced in the present because of the Spirit’s presence. Consequently, the prevailing temperament was one of urgency, and the actions called for were self-sacrifice, holiness and witness. In early Pentecostalism, the premillennial rapture was the hope of the church. At CTF the beliefs and praxis suggest a different view of God’s timetable for restoring the world that resembles post-millennialism.

Guy Chevreau, who was the theologian on staff at Toronto Airport Vineyard, defended the renewal by showing its affinities with the Great Awakening and the ministry of Jonathan Edwards in his book, *Catch the Fire: the Toronto Blessing* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1995). The success of the Great Awakening in bringing mass conversion stirred

postmillennial optimism in the 1700s. Likewise, the global expanse of the Pentecostal/Charismatic world has raised similar expectations among some within the movement (Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter*, London: T & T Clark, 2008, 310-2). While Althouse and Wilkinson note the significance of Latter Rain theology for CTF, they left unexplored how Latter Rain's legacy of postmillennial hope, which affected future charismatics, might also explain the understanding of spiritual gifts and other Spirit manifestations at CTF.

If the battle is in the heavens rather than in the body, then embodied worship becomes *a propos*. If the battle is not in the body, then holiness ceases to be an obsession, releasing the believer to procure rest in the Father's love. And if the body is good and the war is in the cosmos, then the world itself is amenable to becoming incorporated into worship.

The theology and practice of soaking prayer at CTF has absorbed Western values, which reflects its origin in Canada and its prominence in the US. As the authors noted, soaking prayer bears similarity to meditative practices once associated more with the East than the West (6). While it was considered radical in the West when the Beatles were consorting with Mahatma Mahesh Yogi, meditation is now mainstream in western culture.

Moreover, the commonly expressed rationale among CTF participants for the practice of soaking was that it served as an antidote to the "rat race." A spiritual remedy is prescribed for the work ethic of western capitalism. The early Pentecostals also expressed their rejection of culture by adopting counter-cultural values. Yet they pursued those ideals through disciplines of holiness that required the expenditure of energy to press into God's presence: a Pentecostal perpetuation of the spirit behind John Wesley's methods and a reflection of the capitalist spirit that Max Weber associated with the Protestant ethic. Seeking and pursuit are quite different from soaking and rest. One prepares the individual to transcend this world by striving, the other, to be at peace in the world as you and it are transformed.

Finally, soaking prayer resonates with the ascendancy within the Western world of the value of inclusivity over exclusivity. Baptism in the Holy Spirit, while advertised in early Pentecostalism as being for all people, presented a challenge for many. The attainment of it was often an ordeal with uncertain results: uncertainty as to the amount of time

and effort required, and no guarantee as to whether the pursuit would be rewarded. Not all who sought were baptized, which made the billing of its universality all the more painful for some. But the ritual of soaking prayer seems to enable all true seekers to attain intimacy. Not everyone has the will and the strength to continue a pursuit with certain costs and uncertain results, but everyone can rest or soak in the presence of God. Pillows are portable, tarrying benches are not.

**JENNIFER A. MISKOV:** As I was reading *Catch the Fire*, I felt like I was reading about my own personal history and inheritance. I grew up under John Wimber's leadership at the Anaheim Vineyard and the culture of worship and signs and wonders was all I ever knew. After I graduated from Vanguard University in 2000, I traveled to work with Heidi Baker in Mozambique, Africa. This was where I first learned about soaking prayer. On several of her Monday leadership meetings, the staff and leaders laid down on kinesu straw mats and simply soaked while worship music was played. I do not think I had ever really done that before then.

From 2007-2011, while doing my PhD at the University of Birmingham, I discovered Pentecostal history as well as the life and legacy of Carrie Judd Montgomery. Through my research of her writings, I discovered many testimonies of historical encounters with God that happened in the stillness or while waiting upon God. After my time in England, I moved to Redding, California and had the opportunity to partner with the leader of Bethel Church, Bill Johnson, on a book about defining moments that greatly impacted leaders' lives and ministries. It was while doing research for his book that I spent time researching Randy Clark's story and the Toronto movement. Inspired by what I discovered, I attended the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Toronto Outpouring in Canada. A convergence of leaders aligned for this celebration with the likes of Heidi Baker, Bill Johnson, John and Carol Arnott, Randy Clark, Blaine Cook and many others.

In 2015 I had the opportunity to do a conference alongside Blaine Cook where early Vineyard leaders came "out of the woodwork" to participate. I also have had the chance to receive ministry at Restoring the Foundations in North Carolina. In addition, I was ordained by Heidi Baker on New Year's Eve 2011 and then I founded Destiny House in February 2012. Destiny House integrates aspects of Vineyard,

Iris Global, as well as the Welsh Revival for our Friday morning worship times. From 8-10 a.m., we create space to worship, minister, and follow the spontaneous leading of the Holy Spirit with no other agenda than to encounter and love Jesus. As we are led of the Spirit, we also minister to people through prayer and dance in the context of worship, soaking, and prophetic acts.

**Evaluation of strengths:** Needless to say, *Catch the Fire: Soaking Prayer and Charismatic Renewal* felt very familiar to me. Being birthed from this stream and as an insider, I wondered if I would catch something that was not represented correctly or clearly. I was pleased to see that most of what was presented resonated with my previous experiences and did not stray from my understanding of this soaking prayer movement.

One of the things that was strong in *Catch the Fire* was the recognition of the importance that receiving God's love is tied to mission and that forgiveness is an outflow of soaking prayer. I appreciated the thoroughness of the authors taking one aspect of this movement and breaking it down. They did not just quantify amounts of time but also looked at what specific things were happening during the soaking time. This is one of their strengths.

The findings showed that ritual prayer was regarded in a more negative sense, whereas spontaneous prayer came out more positively. How one prays is more important than the frequency of their prayers (47). This was a closer look at soaking prayer that helps bring clarity to the type of prayer in which people find greater momentum.

**Weaknesses of argument:** One of the questions that arose for me in this study is, can you call it "soaking prayer"? It seems that prayer is generally an output action, like talking; but soaking is an inflow, a listening, an absorbing, and a simply being with Him. If I were to lay in my father's arms and not speak with him, I am not conversing, I am simply receiving his love. I do not know if I would call that prayer or talking. Something to think about would be to identify and clarify terms. Can "soaking" and "prayer" really be put together or are they two different things?

This was a focused study and the authors did quite well to narrow their inquiry, but if they had a chance to expand, I would suggest several areas for further exploration. First, it would have been great to see more on the role and emergence of silence (91), especially looking at

the life of Rees Howells or others who were advocates of this practice. Sacred space is a second aspect of potential further study and how it relates to soaking prayer. In other words, can people soak more easily in certain historic and sacred spaces? Are there places where heaven seems more open and encountering God through soaking prayer is realized at a deeper level in these spaces? Third, dance and movement in worship would also be interesting to explore the effects that receiving and soaking in God's love might release in terms of greater freedom through physical movement of one's body. Finally, it would be fascinating to trace more of the roots of soaking prayer in history.

The book's argument could have been strengthened even more by inserting facts and figures in relation to the impartation elements of the Toronto Movement. How many nations were changed when one missionary received soaking prayer at Toronto that radically impacted their life? How many leaders of dwindling churches came to Toronto, practiced soaking prayer, and then returned refreshed, rejuvenated, and empowered in a new way? How did the leaders' revitalization impact church growth? For many of the visitors the fruit from their future ministry can be traced back to Toronto.

The impact of soaking prayer released heavily through Toronto may be seen more in the impartation sense of it elsewhere. Impartation is when people receive a blessing or anointing that they take back home with them. Whether or not the city of Toronto is being changed, in part because of the impartation released there through Randy Clark in 1998 to Heidi Baker, the whole nation of Mozambique has gone from three or four churches to thousands not long after her time there. If one environment or atmosphere of soaking prayer can restore one powerful leader, the impact is great. From personal conversations with people who have been to Toronto, I have noticed that many were brought back to life there in the sense of having hope restored. There is something powerful about cultivating an environment that heals and restores leaders, and then launches them back into their mission field or home with a new sense of empowerment.

**Contribution to Pentecostal Studies:** I am thankful for this focused study and I see that it makes a great contribution to Pentecostal studies. It has demonstrated the importance of relationships as the base for an apostolic network over denominational structures in a way simi-

lar to how Carrie Judd Montgomery, A.B. Simpson and other people in the early healing movement functioned (42).

This study brought to light the sad awareness that women's roles are decreasing. As men bring more administration, impartation, and multiplication, there is a danger that the core which birthed this movement might be disappearing. It will be a sad day when administration replaces prayer in a prayer movement (136).

This study helped link how important and effective one can be by simply receiving the Father's love. If effective apostolic leaders who are changing the world regularly practice soaking prayer like Heidi Baker who has planted over 10,000 churches since her time in Toronto, there might be something to be said about this practice.

Baker says that the "first part of your calling is intimacy with Him."<sup>1</sup> She regularly preaches from John 15 and says that all fruitfulness flows from intimacy. Developing intimacy with God takes time. Baker confesses that she needs four to six hours daily of being with God in order to have anything to pour out to others.<sup>2</sup> She partakes of soaking prayer because it develops intimacy; it is time set aside simply to receive and soak in the Father's love. She realizes that "there is no shortcut to being full of the Holy Spirit. The only way we can be close to Him is to spend time with Him. We can't be close to Him any other way. We can't just say, 'I'm going to have a radical experience and it's going to carry me for a year.' Relationships don't work like that."<sup>3</sup> Baker seeks to nurture this friendship by abiding in a continuing encounter with the living God. She encourages everyone to soak in God's love for them.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This section is based on material from Bill Johnson with Jennifer A. Miskov, *Defining Moments* (Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, forthcoming 2016); and Heidi Baker, *Birthing the Miraculous*, (Charisma House 2014) 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> In Pradhan, *Compelled by Love The Film* (Iris Global Films, 2013), Heidi Baker says, "I need my 4,5,6 hours alone, just alone with God and I can't always find that place now. Where people press in or want more meetings. That's the cost. But I'll fight to keep that place in the secret place. I will fight for that because there's no fruitfulness without that. Nothing matters in my life. If not I'm not full of joy and I'm not full of love then I have nothing to offer. So I have to fight for that. I have to stay filled."

<sup>3</sup> Heidi Baker in an interview with Jennifer A. Miskov in Oxford, England in 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Heidi Baker in an interview with Jennifer A. Miskov on January 3, 2012 in Redding, California. Heidi says, "All fruitfulness flows from intimacy. You can't fulfill

Like Baker and many others, Randy Clark places a high value on an “intimate relationship” with Jesus.<sup>5</sup> He believes that this connection and living in the “continuing power of the Spirit,” brings life and strength and anointing and power. As Clark says, “It is not enough to have received a baptism in the Holy Spirit; we must continue being filled with the Spirit. It is not enough to have received an impartation of the Spirit; we need to live in the continuing power of the Spirit.”<sup>6</sup>

The leaders identified in this book have all discovered and practiced soaking prayer because they have realized that receiving from God is crucial. *Catch the Fire* has helped highlight the significance and impact this practice can have on leaders and their movements today.

## SOCIOLOGY, RELIGION, AND THE STUDY OF CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY

MICHAEL WILKINSON

The reviewers of our book *Catch the Fire* all raise a number of important questions about our research. One of the issues noted but never elaborated on is the interdisciplinary nature of the project. Following a statement about Wilkinson being a sociologist and Althouse a theologian, the reviewers discuss what they perceive as the strengths and weaknesses framed within debates among social scientists, historians, and theologians. However, no one ever raised questions about the challenges of doing interdisciplinary research. This was no doubt one of the most difficult issues we faced. Let me offer some context.

The project was funded by a John Templeton grant that required our work to be interdisciplinary incorporating the work of a social scientist and a theologian. This largely reflects the assumptions of Templeton that religion can make important pro-social contributions to

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your destiny or do anything for God unless you're intimate with Him and let Daddy God love you;” and Baker, *Birthing the Miraculous*, 38-40.

<sup>5</sup> Randy Clark, *Lighting Fires* (United States: Global Awakening, 1998, reprint 2011), 126.

<sup>6</sup> Randy Clark, *There is More: Reclaiming the Power of Impartation* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Global Awakening, 2006), 220-222. See also Randy Clark, *Pressing In* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Global Awakening, 2009), 17-18.



society. Religions can engage society and make key contributions as part of civil society. This is not only an assumption of Templeton it is also a controversial one. There are many critics of Templeton and some scholars would refuse its funding. Religion, in the minds of many scholars, is problematic and while religions engage society they do so in ways that are not pro-social.

Bringing together a sociologist and a theologian assumes that by working together we can address the apparent biases of both disciplines: sociologists offer material explanations for social action rooted in political or economic reasons while theologians offer theistic reasons for social life rooted in the human-divine relationship. A sociological method, it is claimed, is based on atheistic methods or at best agnostic ones. A theological method, it is assumed, takes seriously the role of God.

Our research on soaking prayer was one of five funded projects from the “Flame of Love” project managed by Margaret Poloma, Stephen Post and Matthew T. Lee. During the three years we worked on this project, we met regularly with other team members including a two-week summer intensive at Calvin College. During the course of our time we had extensive debates about the methodological and theoretical implications of interdisciplinary work and the pro-social role of religion. There were times I thought this project would never be completed and in some ways the many conference papers we wrote, journal articles and chapters published, and the book are outcomes that exceeded my expectations. During the course of the many site visits we made, Peter and I spent numerous hours trying to figure out what we were doing, how our theological and sociological disciplines might interface, what we observed, and how we would interpret. In the end, I am very pleased with our work and believe it offers an important contribution for understanding how theological praxis and social action are related or, more sociologically, how theological motivations are consequential.

The reviewers raised a number of questions including but not limited to methodological issues. I would welcome that type of conversation in an extended session. However, let me address some of the concerns. First, there were a series of questions about method and the richness of field-work versus the need by some for more detailed analyses on the cause and effect relationship between specific variables. This is a significant methodological issue for which many books have been written. Let me simply say that Albertini is correct in her observations

about the rich detail we attempted to offer precisely because our work is a qualitative case study that explores descriptively the practice of soaking prayer. It is not a quantitative analysis that attempts to test Sorokin's theory or any of the other theories we discuss. The purpose of Grounded Theory is to develop ideas that flow from the interviews and observations that contribute to theories about religion, ritual, and social action.

There were also a number of historical and theological issues raised by Coulter, Johnson, and Miskov. Interestingly, Coulter and Johnson were both intrigued by the relationship between the charismatics we studied and other Pentecostals. Johnson, for example, raised questions about historical discontinuity and the very different theological views on eschatology. Coulter, on the other hand raised questions about similarities between charismatics and Pentecostals and their symbolic expressions rooted in Christian mysticism. In my view they are both correct. This is precisely why we chose a definition that focuses on "family resemblance" that allows us to see similarities and differences across the many and various groups of charismatics and Pentecostals. Finally, Miskov answers the main methodological concern for me, which is, will the charismatics we studied actually see themselves in the book? Did we represent them well? Miskov says yes. For me her response affirms what we set out to do showing how soaking prayer is a ritual that is embodied and is authoritative for those who practice it.

### **A THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE REVIEWERS OF *CATCH THE FIRE: SOAKING PRAYER AND CHARISMATIC RENEWAL***

**PETER ALTHOUSE**

The difficulty with interdisciplinary work is that each of the researchers comes to the field with different, and sometimes conflicting, theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary assumptions. One of the issues that Michael and I struggled with early in this project was how to develop an interdisciplinary methodology that was acceptable to both sociology and theology. We also struggled with the different lenses through which we observed our research subjects. Much of our time was spent trying to understand the other person's theoretical questions and issues. The

methodological discussion was particularly acute since sociologists assume no metaphysical claim beyond the empirical data, while theologians hold a primary assumption of divinity, however defined. From the start methodological atheism would appear to be incongruent with methodological theism. We were able to work through these issues, but the problem became apparent once again when we submitted manuscripts to reviewers who could not move beyond their methodological assumptions to see the value in interdisciplinary work. After a number of reviewer comments we decided to mute many of the theological interpretations in favor of sociological ones in an effort to steer through the review process. The greater prominence of sociological analysis over theological highlights was a strategic decision to include interdisciplinary work within the politics of scholarly publishing.

The theological points raised by Dale Coulter, Jennifer Miskov, and Van Johnson are important ones. Miskov's comments regarding, silence, intimacy, and sacred space, and Coulter's observation, that the emphasis on interiorization in inward, upward, and outward directions of prayer's focus as mystical in orientation with a long history, is dead on. The renewal's teaching deliberately makes the connection between soaking prayer and the mystical tradition with references to the mystic writers such as Jeanne Guyon, Brother Lawrence, John of the Cross, etc., and recommendations that their congregants might benefit from reading these mystics. A whole separate book could be written on this aspect of the renewal, but with any ethnographic research choices need to be made on what to include. Coulter's comments regarding the symbolic interpretations in early Pentecostalism and CTF are insightful. While Arnott applies these symbolic interpretations to the phenomena of bodily behavior, and Coulter to symbolic and allegorical interpretations used by Pentecostals, one also has to wonder whether glossolalia itself is embodied symbolism that is ascribed cultural meaning in different contexts.

Johnson expressed his desire as a biblical theologian for more theological analysis, especially in the historical backdrop of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. Admittedly, there are numerous connections and streams that run through this landscape with many phenomenological expressions between them. Glossolalia, resting in the spirit, holy laughter, bodily jerking, inner healing, and bodily healing represent some of the common connections. Different Pentecostal-Charismatic

groups attribute different meanings to these phenomena. And it is important to trace the genealogy of these practices. Soaking prayer can be traced back to the meditative healing prayers as defined by mainline charismatics Francis MacNutt and Tommy Tyson. As well, we heard a number of ex-Pentecostals compare soaking prayer to old-time tarrying, or waiting on the Spirit. Even the practice of holding soaking prayer meetings in homes, and with women as the leaders, harkens back to the healing homes of the late-nineteenth century. Nevertheless, our decision to include the brief historical background was taken under pressure to eliminate most of that material in favor of starting with the emergence of the Vineyard in the 1980s. In the end we thought it important to provide at least a snapshot of the earlier Pentecostal-Charismatic precedents.

Johnson's comments regarding the eschatology of CTF and whether or not it looks similar to early Pentecostalism needs further comment. Our observations of CTF did not uncover an overt millennial dispensationalism, or the kind of deliverance ministry associated with Peter Wagner. Conversely, John Arnott was noted for employing a form of realized eschatology focused around the "kairos" of time. In many services he would pray before the manifestations of "signs and wonders" using expressions such as "thy kingdom come, thy will be done," "press into the kingdom," or "the time is at hand." Charismatic manifestations are a realization of the "in-breaking" kingdom in love and power. CTF expresses implicitly a realized eschatology that has been inaugurated by the Father through Christ in the power of the Spirit and yet awaiting its final realization in the kingdom to come.<sup>7</sup> The eschatology of CTF is different than the latter rain eschatology of early Pentecostals, or the millennial dispensational eschatology of mid-century Pentecostals, but it is no less significant in its implications for CTF's cultural context and sense of mission.

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<sup>7</sup> See Peter Althouse and Michael Wilkinson, "Playing in the Father's Love: The Eschatological Implications of Charismatic Ritual and the Kingdom of God in Catch the Fire," *ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University*, 39 (2011): 93-116; Peter Althouse, "Eschatology in the Theology of Paul Tillich and the Toronto Blessing: The Ontological and Relational Implications of Love," in *Paul Tillich and Pentecostal Theology: Spiritual Presence & Spiritual Power*, Nimi Wariboko and Amos Yong, eds. 173-184 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

Finally, I would like to thank our interlocutors for their careful readings and meaningful comments on the book. Your insights are greatly valued.