



Pentecostalism and Covenantalism: Towards a Pneumatological Covenant Theology of dealing with Adversity

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ABSTRACT

Covenant theology seeks to explore the connection between deity and humanity which spans from the time of creation to the time when God sent his son to redeem the world from sin. The main tenets of the covenant theology also known as covenantalism are the covenant of works mainly found in the creation story. Second, it is the covenant of grace based on the promises of eternal life through faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and embracement of the Holy Spirit. The third component of covenant theology is the covenant of redemption which recognizes the sending of the Son of God into the world to die for the sins of the people. This article argued that covenantalism in the Pentecostal movement is not a mere doctrine based on these three tenets but rather is pneumatologically defined as a way of dealing with adversity. This is demonstrated through the theoretical framework of the pneumatological imagination in illustrating how Pentecostals in Africa are rooted in the covenant between them and their God through the Holy Spirit. Thus pneumatology in Pentecostalism becomes the foundation for the Pentecostal pneumatological covenant theology of dealing with adversity. This changes how we study covenant theolog., It is not only about religious doctrine but also a means of dealing with adversity. The study is a literature review within qualitative methodology. The study makes an important contribution to covenant theology by suggesting a theology of dealing with adversity beyond doctrinal issues. Therefore, covenant theology should be studied by taking into cognizance the role of the Holy Spirit within the framework of pneumatological imagination in helping believers overcome adversity.

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INTRODUCTION

Covenant theology, also known as covenantalism, is the study of the relationship between God and human beings which is important in understanding Christian theology in historicity.¹ Covenantalism

¹ Michael J Vlach, "New Covenant Theology Compared with Covenantalism," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 18, no. 2 (2007): 201–19; William D Barrick, "New Covenant Theology and the Old Testament Covenants," *Master's Seminary Journal* 18 (2007): 165–80; Jeremy Kimble, "Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants," *Journal of the Evangelical*

has also been studied as an approach to understanding the Biblical text from the days of creation until redemption.² Covenantalism is based on the three main covenants which are the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption.³ While there has been enormous research looking at covenantalism for example in biblical history, early church, medieval church, and reformation little has been explored in the relationship between Pentecostalism and covenantalism. This article explores the intersectionality of Pentecostalism and covenantalism through the pneumatological imagination as a theoretical framework. The central argument in this article is that a covenant theology also known as covenantalism is not only used doctrinally within the Pentecostal movement but rather pneumatologically as a way of dealing with the challenges of life. In other words, when Pentecostals face challenges, they have hope in the covenant that they have established with God through the Holy Spirit.

The argument in this article will be developed by looking at the historical development of covenantalism and the main tenets of this doctrine. These three tenets of covenant theology, the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption are applied to Pentecostalism. The article will go ahead to outline the main aspects of the pneumatological imagination in the development of pneumatological covenant theology. This article mainly aims to develop a Pneumatological covenant theology of dealing with adversity to illustrate that covenantalism in Pentecostalism is more than a doctrine. This is an important contribution to the study of covenant theology because traditionally this theology is known doctrinally, particularly through the lenses of its three main tenets. The next section explores the historical development of covenant theology as the background to this study.

Brief Historical Development of Covenantalism

This section does not provide the entire history of the concept of covenantalism but rather highlights the main historical development in important periods such as the Old Testament, the New Testament, the early church, the Medieval period, and the Reformation. This concept of covenant is a history from the time of the Old Testament which is also known as the Old covenant. The language used in the Old Testament is more a covenantal, signifying the relationship between God and his people.⁴ This language is seen in the relationship between various leaders in the Old Testament such as Moses, Noah, and so forth. In other words, these leaders had established a covenant with God as the chosen leader. Moreover, the children of Israel were known for establishing the covenant between them and their God, who had to maintain the same covenant by following a chosen leader. This covenant is also demonstrated in the Old Testament through the symbol of the ark of the covenant. However, the elect or chosen nation as opposed to being the covenant of entire humanity somehow benefitted from the old covenant expressed in the Old Testament.⁵ This chosen nation received the Ten Commandments as the law of maintaining the covenant with their God.⁶ Those who were not chosen were considered outcasts, unholy, and outside the covenant of God. Similarly, the Gentiles were not considered to be worthy partakers of the covenant of God.⁷

The concept of the covenant also appears in the New Testament. It is also here that there is a clear difference between the Old Covenants in the Old Testament and the New Covenant in the New Testament. In covenant theology, there is a view that the Old has been replaced by the new. Vlach is of the view that with the coming of the new covenant, the old covenant fades away including the law

Theological Society 58, no. 4 (2015): 861; Colin D Smith, *Covenant Theology: A Historical Survey*, Colin D. Smith (Louisville: Colin Smith, 2014), 203.

² Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016).

³ Vlach, "New Covenant Theology," 203.

⁴ Smith, *Covenant Theology*, 3

⁵ Richard Lucas, "The Past and Future of Baptist Covenantal Theology: Comparing 1689 Federalism and Progressive Covenantalism," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 26, no. 1 (2022): 116–63.

⁶ Carlos J. Cruz Pacheco, *The Relationship of Law and Grace in the Hermeneutics of New Covenant Theology* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 2017), 35.

⁷ Joshua Greever, "The Nature of the New Covenant: A Case Study in Ephesians 2: 11-22." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 20 (2016): 73-89.

in the Pentateuch.⁸ However, it is more correct to say that the Old Covenant was fulfilled in the new covenant. The covenant in the Old Testament was based on the law that God gave to his people but in the New Testament, the law is now written in the hearts of the people.⁹ Moreover, it is sealed by the blood of the lamb (the son of God, Jesus Christ) who died for the sins of the world on the cross of Calvary than with the blood of animals. In essence, Christ in the New Testament becomes the agent through which the new covenant becomes activated. Smith explains that Jesus becomes the embodiment of the redemption of humanity. And we can no longer define the blessings of God in terms of the Jewish community but all who are in Christ can receive the same blessings.¹⁰

The early fathers of the church also spoke of the covenant between God and humanity. As much as the language of the Old Testament was covenantal, more so the language of the early church fathers was covenantal. According to Smith, the early fathers of the church such as Augustine perceived the covenant beginning early as the relationship between God and Adam.¹¹ This relationship was broken when Adam fell into sin. Therefore, anyone born of a woman has broken the covenant the same way Adam did in the Garden of Eden. Consequently, an adamic covenant according to Augustine is a covenant of all humanity, hence anyone who falls into sin including the children is a covenant breaker.¹² The early fathers of the church also emphasized covenant theology as maintaining the union rather than the relationship between humanity and their God. This aspect of remaining in Christ as a reflection on John 15 is the covenant theology by church fathers that helps not only in the relationship between God and humanity but also in bearing fruits as believers.¹³

The practice of the covenant also received the attention of the medieval church. One of the leading theologians during the medieval period according to Smith is Thomas Aquinas who made the distinction between the will of God and the essence of God and therefore concluded that God can act based on his will even though it contradicts his essence.¹⁴ This means that according to Aquinas, the will of God is important in the discussion of the covenant between God and humanity. Even the gospels have already articulated the will of God as preceding the essence of God whereby the requirement to enter heaven for example is his will as opposed to his grace or essence (Matthew 7:21). This means that the emphasis in the covenant is not placed on the knowledge of God but rather on doing the will of the same God. In addition, Aquinas taught that human beings depend on the grace of God to be able to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Covenant theology gained momentum during the Reformation period. Vlach points out that even during the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647, there was already a link about the covenant theology as part of that confession.¹⁵ Furthermore, covenant theology became an important matter during the Reformation period, particularly in the works of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. Martin Luther taught that the grace of God comes to anyone who puts in their best effort to receive the same grace.¹⁶ Therefore, even if the grace of God is available, those who put in effort will be able to receive it. Zwingli saw the continuation of the covenant from the Old Testament into the New Testament. According to Smith, the same covenant that God had initiated with the people of Israel, he can keep it today to those who wish to be part of the Christian covenant in the 21st century.¹⁷ Calvin defined the covenant in terms of the accountability of humanity towards God and the accountability of God towards humanity. In other words, the concept of covenant for Calvin, was a reciprocal and had a bilateral agreement between humanity and God.¹⁸ It can therefore, be concluded that the covenant that God had with humanity has existed for a long time and is still an important part of covenant theology

⁸ Vlach, "New Covenant Theology,"209.

⁹ Smith, *Covenant Theology*, 3

¹⁰ Smith, *Covenant Theology*, 5.

¹¹ Smith, *Covenant Theology*, 5.

¹² Smith, *Covenant Theology*, 5.

¹³ Carol Chen, *A Historical, Biblical, and Theological Interpretation of Covenants: Unconditionality and Conditionality in Relation to Justification and Sanctification* (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019), 287.

¹⁴ Smith, *Covenant Theology*, 7.

¹⁵ Vlach, "New Covenant Theology,"203.

¹⁶ Smith, *Covenant Theology*, 10.

¹⁷ Smith, *Covenant Theology*, 14.

¹⁸ Smith, *Covenant Theology*, 20.

even today. The next section discusses the main aspects of covenant theology also known as covenantalism.

The Main Tenets of Covenantalism

The main tenets of the covenant theology also known as covenantalism are the covenant of works mainly found in the creation story. The first covenant of works was made between God and Adam, this makes the covenant of works, an Adamic covenant. This covenant was made with Adam, particularly before his fall, to give him eternal life based on his obedience, the repercussions of disobedience, and the sacrament of the Tree of Life.¹⁹ In essence, the covenant of works is based on the works of obedience, hence, as soon as Adam disobeyed God, he lost the covenant with God.²⁰ Wellum adds that the covenant of works is based on the demand that God placed on humanity to obey him.²¹ Therefore, in following the covenant of works, humanity needs to know what they need to do and cannot be done. Pacheco explains that those who are obedient to the covenant requisites can receive the covenant blessings or even benefits.²² It is also important to note that when Adam lost the covenant with God, he lost it on behalf of all humanity. Chen carries on to say that due to the sin of Adam, all humanity has sinned, however, those who are in Christ, through his new covenant of works can escape because of the grace.²³ Therefore, while humanity lost its relationship with God through the sin of Adam, it gained the same through the works of Christ.

Second, it is the covenant of grace based on the promises of eternal life through faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and embracement of the Holy Spirit. In establishing the covenant of grace, God manifested his grace upon the fallen humanity to save them from eternal damnation.²⁴ The man fell into sin and fell short of the glory of God. Consequently, humanity needed another covenant to replace an Adamic covenant through grace. According to Vlach, the Westminster Confession of Faith states it is the fall of man, not God that makes humanity miss out on the covenant of God. It is for this reason that the covenant of grace is needed so that the fallen humanity can be restored to its place of former glory. Jesus becomes an offering for the freedom of humanity so that they can move from a position of sin to a position of grace. However, those who require this transition from sin to grace must place their faith in Jesus Christ. Those who have faith in Christ can receive the promises of God through the work of the Holy Spirit.²⁵ In addition, while the covenant of works was made with a single man called Adam, the covenant of grace is made with the entire humanity.²⁶ Therefore, in the covenant of grace, God plans to save all humanity as much as the fall of Adam represented all humanity.

The third component of covenant theology is the covenant of redemption which recognizes the sending of the Son of God into the world to die for the sins of the people. Chen explains that the covenant of redemption was used to articulate the trinitarian plan for the salvation of God to humanity, including the fundamental teachings on those who have been predestined for salvation. It is a covenant that is rooted in the eternal peace of God and the lasting relationship that God has with his people.²⁷ According to Vlach, God the Father and God the Son worked together to bring redemption upon the fallen humanity.²⁸ God sent the Son into the world to save humanity from the fall which the Son accepted by coming down to earth and redeeming the world through the shedding of blood. Vlach goes on to define the covenant of redemption as the covenant founded on the trinitarian God and the fact that God the Father sent the son for the redemption of humanity.²⁹ Therefore, being part of the covenant of redemption allows human beings to partake in the redemptive work of God through the Lord Jesus

¹⁹ Vlach, "New Covenant Theology," 203.

²⁰ Chen, "A Historical, Biblical, and Theological Interpretation of Covenants," 203.

²¹ Stephen J Wellum, "Reflections on Covenant Theology from a Progressive Covenantal View," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 26, no. 1 (2022): 164–87.

²² Pacheco, *The Relationship of Law and Grace* 47

²³ Chen, "A Historical, Biblical, and Theological Interpretation of Covenants," 3.

²⁴ Chen, "A Historical, Biblical, and Theological Interpretation of Covenants," 96.

²⁵ Vlach, "New Covenant Theology," 203.

²⁶ David Schrock, *A Biblical-Theological Investigation of Christ's Priesthood and Covenant Mediation with Respect to the Extent of the Atonement* (Berrien Springs: The southern Baptist theological seminary, 2013), 125.

²⁷ Chen, "A Historical, Biblical, and Theological Interpretation of Covenants," 135.

²⁸ Vlach, "New Covenant Theology," 204.

²⁹ Vlach, "New Covenant Theology," 203.

Christ. These aspects of the covenant, that is, works, grace, and redemption are further discussed in the context of Pentecostalism in the next section.

Works, Grace, and Redemption in Pentecostalism

As highlighted in the preceding section, the covenant of works is a covenant based on obedience to God the Father to access his promises. Pentecostals in Africa, although they believe in the new covenant through Jesus Christ, still practice obedience to access the blessing of God. Thus, among Pentecostals, the promises of God are not only obtained through faith but also obedience.³⁰ Gifford points to the use of the obedience rhetoric in the manipulation of believers to pay their tithes and offerings to receive the blessings.³¹ Thus, anyone who does not pay tithes and offerings is perceived disobedient to God. In addition to the material blessings to those who obey God, Pentecostals also believe that they can obtain longevity through obedience.³² Some Pentecostals believe that by obeying God, they stand in a position where Adam was before his fall. To be saved practically means to be restored to the life Adam lived before the fall. This is based on the belief that Adam lost his place because he fell into sin. Pentecostals in Africa believe that whatever Adam lost in the Garden of Eden can be restored in their lives now through obedience. Therefore, the covenant of works, the covenant of obedience is not an Old covenant thing to many Pentecostals as they believe that obedience is important in Christian life.

Pentecostals believe much in the covenant of Grace that God the Father indeed sent his son into the world to save humanity from sin. Pentecostals believe in the three works of grace, that is, salvation, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the rest of God's work.³³ Richie states that although sin stood before humanity and God in tempering with their relationship, the grace of God can save humanity. This is considered the first work of grace.³⁴ In addition, Pentecostals believe that the same grace released by the Father through the Son is accessible in their lives through the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the second work of grace.³⁵ Hence, Pentecostals emphasise baptism in the Holy Spirit as a means to access the grace of God. This position should not be misconstrued as the anti-christological position but rather an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. The God of many Pentecostals including the charismatics is the God of grace, which gives way to the third work of grace. Grace is also emphasized in the faith movement to illustrate that even if humanity falls into sin, in the new covenant the grace of God is able to release forgiveness.³⁶ The same has been criticized by classical Pentecostals as they believe that grace should not be used as an excuse to continue to live a sinful life. Coming to God and being part of the new covenant move one from the life of sin into the life of holiness where believers cannot continue to live in sin in the name of grace (Romans 6:1-2). In this case, even if the grace of God is present, some Pentecostals believe that there is still a need to live in obedience as was demanded by Adam. Therefore, the grace of God in the covenant between him and humanity does not replace the obedience of God or adhering to his word and will.

Pentecostals believe in the covenant of redemption. Pentecostals believe that every unbeliever is in a state of bondage. They believe that every human being was, as it were, in the "slave market" of

³⁰ Paul Gifford, "The Ritual Use of the Bible in African Pentecostalism," *Practicing the Faith: The Ritual Life of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians*, 2011, 179–97.

³¹ Paul Gifford, "The Bible in Africa: A Novel Usage in Africa's New Churches," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 71, no. 2 (2008): 203.

³² Jonathan Kangwa, "The Role of the Theology of Retribution in the Growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in Africa," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37, no. 1 (2016): 1–9.

³³ Gordon D Fee, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit: The Issue of Separability and Subsequence," *Pneuma* 7, no. 2 (1985): 87–99; Amos Yong, "The Spirit, Christian Practices, and the Religions: Theology of Religions in Pentecostal and Pneumatological Perspective," *The Asbury Journal* 62, no. 2 (2007): 37; Gary B. McGee, *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism*. (Eugene Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008); Frank D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 49.

³⁴ Tony Richie, *Saved, Delivered, and Healed: Introducing a Pentecostal Theology of Salvation* (Eugene Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2022), 103.

³⁵ Vinson Synan, *Voices of Pentecost: Testimonies of Lives Touched by the Holy Spirit* (Delight: Gospel Light, 2003).

³⁶ Michael McGiffert, "Grace and Works: The Rise and Division of Covenant Divinity in Elizabethan Puritanism," *Harvard Theological Review* 75, no. 4 (1982): 463–502.

sin.³⁷ Before meeting Christ every human being was a slave of sin. This bondage occurred as a result of Adam opening up to the demonic forces in the spiritual realm. Therefore, Pentecostals in Africa believe in the redemption from demonic forces, including principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness of this age, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:2; 6:12). Pentecostals also believe in the redemption from Sin because all humans have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). This came as a result of the disobedience of humanity in the covenant of works. This resulted in all human beings partaking in the fall of humanity. However, Pentecostals believe that when Jesus comes into the life of the believer, there will be redemption from the sins of this world. In addition, Pentecostals believe that they are redeemed from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:3-14) through the redemptive cross of Calvary. Consequently, Pentecostals believe that they are no longer under the oppression of the law because of redemption through the cross of Calvary.

Pneumatological Imagination: A Theoretical Framework

Amos Yong framed pneumatological imagination as a theory where believers are rooted in the fundamental teachings of God and their faithfulness to him. However, Yong does not end there. He further makes a connection between the pneumatological imagination and the immanence of God in defining the framework as a sign of the presence of God and his activeness in the world.³⁸ In this context, it means that God is not just in a relationship with humanity but is active in the world to change the lives of the people. Pneumatological imagination is a theory that is based on the Pentecost narrative in articulating the presence of God which manifested on the day of the Pentecost. Therefore, Pentecost marks the coming of the Holy Spirit which is essentially the coming of the presence of God in human life. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost marked an era of the coming of the presence of God in the lives of the believers. This means that Pneumatological imagination in the Pentecost narrative is a theory where God is not detached from the activities on earth but rather is ever-present and active in the world. This theory is used here to demonstrate that Pentecostals, pneumatologically move beyond the doctrinal functions of the covenant theology into a covenant of dealing with the challenges in the world.

Pneumatological Covenant Theology

Pentecostals use the covenant theology beyond the three tenets of works, grace and redemption in dealing with the challenges of life. This transition is possible through the pneumatological imagination. In Pentecostalism, the covenant theology signifies the relationship that God has with his people. The Holy Spirit becomes the basis for the relationship between humanity and God to be effective. After all, the Pentecostal theology is the theology of the Spirit.³⁹ Neumann explains that God released his Spirit upon the believers on Pentecost primarily to create a relationship with believers on earth.⁴⁰ The pouring out of the Spirit upon the believers marked the period in which they could enter into a concrete relationship with their creator.⁴¹ This kind of relationship is defined in the context of pneumatological covenant theology. Therefore, more than works, grace, and redemption, Pentecostals believe that they are directly in a relationship with God through the Holy Spirit which is an important thing in the covenant. Hence, most Pentecostals seek baptism with the Holy Spirit more than anything in life as the foundation of their relationship with God.

³⁷ Collium Banda, "Regenerated without Being Recreated? A Soteriological Analysis of the African Neo-Pentecostal Teaching on Generational Curses," *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 76, no. 3 (2020).

³⁸ Amos Yong, *The Missiological Spirit: Christian Mission Theology in the Third Millennium Global Context*. (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2015); Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 92; Amos Yong, *An Amos Yong Reader: The Pentecostal Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020), 24; Chammah Kaunda, *The Nation That Fears God Prospers: A Critique of Zambian Pentecostal Theopolitical Imaginations* (London: Fortress Press, 2019), 51.

³⁹ Allan Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African Context* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1991).

⁴⁰ Peter D. Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience: An Ecumenical Encounter*, vol. 187 (Eugene Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 226.

⁴¹ Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 111; Marius Nel, *African Pentecostalism and Eschatological Expectations: He Is Coming Back Again!* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 82; Steven M. Studebaker, *The Spirit of Atonement: Pentecostal Contributions and Challenges to the Christian Traditions* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 94.

In Pentecostalism, covenant theology is the assurance of God's presence among human beings which is also possible through a pneumatological imagination. Clark and Lederle explain that one of the important functions of the Holy Spirit in the believer is to affirm the presence of God in the believer.⁴² De Benedicto adds that Pentecostals emphasise the immanence of God that comes with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.⁴³ Once, the believer has been baptized with the Holy Spirit, he or she can experience the tangible presence of God by the same Spirit. God is present among Pentecostals through the Holy Spirit, making the covenant of the eternal presence of God a reality. The pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud signified the presence of God in the old covenant. In Pentecostalism, the Holy Spirit signifies the same. Pentecostals believe that God is present in their lives regardless of the circumstances they face in life. In Pentecostalism, it is the same presence of God through the Holy Spirit that can bring transformation in the life of the believer. Therefore, Pentecostals would also emphasise biblical texts such as Romans 8:11 that the same Holy Spirit that worked in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is at work in the life of the believers to grant them life and help them deal with challenges of life. Hence, Pentecostals in Africa have been able to drive the agenda of social transformation and social development.

Pentecostals use the covenant theology as the assurance that God is on their side regardless of what they face in life. Again, the foundation is the Holy Spirit who is in the life of the believer. Because the Holy Spirit lives in the believer, it becomes possible for Pentecostals to believe that God is on their side even when circumstances might prove otherwise. Pentecostals believe much in Romans 8:31 that there is nothing that can overpower them as long as God is with them in everything they do in life. It is for the same reasons that Pentecostals focus on the theology of God being with them which is covenant theology. Therefore, Pentecostals believe that God, through his Spirit, is always on their side and therefore they can overcome any challenge they face in life. In Pentecostalism, the life of the believer is led and directed by the Holy Spirit which proves that God is on their side (Rom 8:14). This is because Pentecostals believe that the coming of the Holy Spirit is eternal; it was not only for the early church. Pentecostals believe that each time someone gets converted, they immediately receive the Holy Spirit which signifies that God is on their side.

Pentecostals perceive God as the God of the covenant, meaning no matter what happens, he will never break his covenant with his people. It is for the same reason that Pentecostals still believe in works of obedience since they do not want the covenant to be broken. Similarly, they do not want to grieve the Holy Spirit because they believe that doing so the relationship between them and God would be compromised. Pentecostals believe and practice Ephesians 4:30 which states they should not grieve the Holy Spirit because it is the Spirit that can bring redemption in Christ. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is that bond through which the covenant with God cannot be broken. In addition, the God of many Pentecostals in Africa is faithful. It is the same theology whereby Pentecostals establish themselves more in the promises of God as they believe that God will not change on his promises including the promise of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals love the text in 2 Corinthians 1:20 that the promises of God cannot be broken. In addition, they believe that the covenant of God as much as it started in the Old covenant is still valid in the new covenant and cannot be broken. In the next section, pneumatological covenant theology is further developed as the theology of dealing with adverse situations.

A Theology of dealing with Adversity

One of the popular songs sung by African Pentecostals is a sotho song "Ha Modimo a le teng, hayo mathata" which literally means when God is present, there will be no troubles. This is based on the pneumatological covenant theology that perceives God as ever-present through the Holy Spirit and therefore able to deal with all adversity. The song is sung at funerals and other occasions or times when Pentecostal believers face challenges in life. Therefore, in times of adversity, covenant theology

⁴² Mathew S. Clark and Henry I. Lederle, *What Is Distinctive about Pentecostal Theology?* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989), 43.

⁴³ Marcos Carvalho. De Benedicto, *The Role of the Holy Spirit in Enabling Believers for Ministry: An Adventist Perspective* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 2004), 36.

becomes a source of strength empowering the believers to face any challenge they face in life. No wonder even in times of natural disasters, crises, and pandemics such as COVID-19, Pentecostals always refer to God as their refuge. Therefore, in Pentecostalism, covenant theology is more than the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption, it is the covenant of dealing with adversity. Pentecostals believe that when God is on their side, they can face any challenge in their lives including financial, spiritual, physical, and psychological problems. This is the same reason, Pentecostalism is popular in Africa, for being able to address the various challenges of life and being able to offer alternative solutions to people particularly when governments fail in the continent. This changes how we study covenant theology, this theology in the context of Pentecostalism should be understood between works, grace, and redemption towards a theology of dealing with adversity. When Pentecostals declare that God is with them they mean he will be able to fight for them when they face sickness, disease, or any other challenges.

In addition, Pentecostal theology of a covenant is different from others in the Christian tradition in the sense that, Pentecostals believe that the covenant of God is for everyone, not the selected few as per the theology of election. Pentecostals believe that the covenant of God is available to anyone who has faith in God and his redemptive works. Furthermore, the Pentecostal theology of a covenant is not only defined in the context of the Old Covenant or even the New Covenant but it is an unending Covenant that lasts forever. In other words, Pentecostals believe that God is with them until the end of time. Thus, the Pentecostal theology of covenant is very eschatological because the presence of God through the Holy Spirit is available not only in the present but also in the future. Therefore, Pentecostals are rooted in the covenant theology of the ever presence of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. This is basically what makes the Pentecostal theology of a covenant very unique, it deals with adversity, it is inclusive and it is an eternal covenant.

CONCLUSION

This article explored the intersectionality of Pentecostalism and covenantalism using pneumatological imagination as a theoretical framework. The article made an important theoretical contribution to the study of covenant theology by arguing that this theology is more than a doctrine in Pentecostalism. The article demonstrated that traditionally, covenant theology is known for its three main tenets of covenant of works, the covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption. In the Pentecostal movement, covenant theology introduces the fourth dimension which is the covenant of dealing with adversity. In simple terms, this article developed a covenant theology as the foundation for dealing with day-to-day challenges in the life of believers in Africa. In Pentecostalism, the covenant theology signifies the relationship that God has with his people through the Holy Spirit. In Pentecostalism, covenant theology is the assurance of God's presence among human beings. God is present among Pentecostals through the Holy Spirit, making the covenant of the eternal presence of God a reality. Pentecostals use the covenant theology as the assurance that God will fight for them regardless of what they face in life. Therefore, covenant theology needs to be revisited in the future as it is not only a theology based on doctrine but also a theology of dealing with adversity.

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