

**A Response to Roger Heuser's "Silence and Solitude in Pentecostal Spirituality:
Exploring the Inner Life in Contemporary Context"**

Ee Zhen Ying

City Harvest Church, Singapore

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Roger Heuser's paper offers a timely invitation for Pentecostals to take the inner life seriously and to ask whether the Spirit who comes upon believers in power is also welcomed to search and sanctify the hidden places of the heart. Pentecostals are not short on spiritual experience such as revival meetings, expressive worship, altar ministry, healing, and deliverance. Yet Heuser rightly asks whether such encounters automatically mature believers into discipleship. It is possible to be outwardly empowered while inwardly unchanged.

The paper may nonetheless raise a concern for some Pentecostal readers, for Heuser draws freely from Catholic contemplative sources: Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, Teresa of Ávila, and John of the Cross. While Pentecostals stand within the Protestant family, confessing Scripture as final authority, salvation by grace through faith, and Christ as sole mediator,¹ can we still receive insight from these Catholic writers and remain faithful to our convictions?

Learning from such writers is not new for Protestants: John Calvin and Martin Luther² drew from Augustine, John Wesley abridged Thomas à Kempis,³ and none became Roman Catholic by doing so. To learn from a writer is not to submit to his church. When Teresa describes the soul's longing for God, when Merton names the pretence of the false self, when the desert tradition teaches watchfulness over the heart, they are not defining doctrines of salvation or ecclesial authority. They are describing the inner life before God: what happens when a believer grows still, comes with honesty and humility, and is met by God. The realities the contemplatives describe, the divided heart, the longing for God, the desire for

¹ City Harvest Church, "Our Beliefs," accessed July 12, 2026, <https://www.chc.org.sg/about-us/beliefs>.

² Both Reformers appropriated Augustine's anti-Pelagian theology critically rather than wholesale. Calvin draws on Augustine throughout the *Institutes* in arguing that the fallen will is liberated only by grace and that election rests on God's unmerited choice; Luther appeals to him to similar effect in *The Bondage of the Will*. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.3.5–14; 3.21.1–7; Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 33, ed. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972).

³ Wesley abridged and edited à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* for Methodist readers, commending its interior spirituality of holiness. Thomas à Kempis, *The Christian's Pattern*, ed. John Wesley (London, 1735).

transformation, are not unique to one tradition. They are found in Scripture, named by a Catholic writer, recognised by a Pentecostal believer.

For sure, genuine differences remain. We do not receive the Magisterium alongside Scripture,⁴ appeal to the saints' intercession,⁵ or hold the sacraments to confer saving grace.⁶ Yet Catholic teaching should be represented fairly: it regards the sacraments not as magic but as efficacious signs of grace and distinguishes the veneration of saints from the worship due God alone. The question to ask of a page on prayer is not, "Was the author Catholic?" It is: Does it accord with Scripture? Does it lead to union with Christ? Does it depend upon the Holy Spirit? If the learning leads believers deeper into communion with God through Christ, we may receive it with discernment. If it contradicts Scripture, undermines the gospel, or breeds confusion, it must be refused. Paul's instruction stands: "test them all; hold on to what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

The stronger response is not that Pentecostals may borrow with discernment, but that we already possess more of this inheritance than the concern assumes. Silence and solitude are biblical before they are Catholic: Jesus withdrew to lonely places to pray (Luke 5:16); Elijah met God in a still small voice (1 Kings 19:11-13); the psalmist calls us to be still and know that He is God (Ps. 46:10). Heuser's paper is therefore not an import from outside, but an invitation to return to our biblical tradition.

I propose then that Pentecostals are mystics without the vocabulary—not because we consciously identify with the Christian mystical tradition, but because our spirituality has always been marked by a deep longing for communion with God. Steven Land describes the early Pentecostal journey as "a kind of mystical, ascetic journey" in knowing God and going

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., §§80–86.

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., §§956, 2677, 2679.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., §§1129, 1131.

“further, deeper, higher.”⁷ A people made to seek God this way could never be finally satisfied with power alone. Yet an encounter is not yet a practice. Pentecostalism has often known powerful experiences without developing what sustains them and forms lasting character. Not every ecstatic experience was contemplative union, and without sustained formation, shallow emotionalism and genuine depth can be difficult to discern. This is the lack Heuser’s paper addresses. In silence and solitude, in the examen and lectio, in the language of the true and false self and shadow work, he offers practices that help believers cultivate deeper communion with God under the Spirit’s transforming work.

In many Pentecostal contexts, the language of power comes more readily than the language of purity. However, Pentecostal theologians like Frank Macchia resist separating sanctification and Spirit baptism. To divide them reduces sanctification to “inward cleansing” and Spirit baptism to “outward empowerment.”⁸ Pentecostal power was never intended to be separated from the sanctified life. As William Seymour said, Spirit baptism is power “upon the sanctified, cleansed heart.”⁹ Heuser’s turn to the inner life is thus no departure from Pentecostal spirituality, but a recovery of its sanctifying core. This is why his proposals matter for a mission-driven people, for the same Spirit who empowers the witness also purifies the heart.

Heuser’s discussion of shadow work presses beyond “What was done?” into “What is being revealed?” Such questions matter because unresolved inner realities are often projected into families and ministries. A leader’s unhealed insecurity becomes control, and a wounded heart hides behind faithful service. But Carl Jung and Christian spirituality diverge on what to do with what surfaces. Jung integrates the shadow into conscious life, granting its tendencies

⁷ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 76.

⁸ Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), loc. 1583, Kindle.

⁹ William J. Seymour, “The Way into the Holiest,” *The Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 1 (October 1906): 4.

“some measure of realization.”¹⁰ Christian spirituality does not integrate every hidden impulse; we put the old self to death and put on Christ, love being the bond of perfection (Col. 3:5, 12-14). Scripture brings hidden things to light not for awareness alone, but for confession, healing, and sanctification (1 John 1:8-9). Jung posits that confronting the shadow requires “considerable moral effort,”¹¹ but Christian transformation cannot be accomplished by moral effort alone; it depends upon the grace of God. True biblical transformation is by grace, not works (Eph. 2:8-9). The theological danger arises when the divine is absorbed into the structures of the psyche, collapsing the distinction between God and the self. For Pentecostals, Scripture remains the governing framework, “God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16), so that psychology may illuminate human experience but never becomes the final authority by which God is interpreted.

Such awareness must therefore be framed pneumatologically, as Heuser suggests. It is the work of the Holy Spirit who searches the heart, convicts, heals, and sanctifies. This is why the psalmist does not rely upon autonomous introspection but prays, “Search me, O God, and know my heart” (Ps. 139:23-24), making God, not the ego, the revealer of the hidden self. When Paul cries, “Who will rescue me?” (Rom. 7:24) he asks not for a method but for a Saviour. So the “true self” is not an essence waiting to be discovered but a self made new in Christ. Heuser’s appeal to Wesley’s purity of affections is fitting: sanctification is not behavioural modification but the Spirit’s reordering of disordered loves.¹² What brings it

¹⁰ C. G. Jung, “A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity,” in *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed., vol. 11 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, ed. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 197–98, para. 292.

¹¹ C. G. Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, 2nd ed., trans. R. F. C. Hull, vol. 9, pt. 2 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, ed. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 8, para. 14.

¹² John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Boston: Christian Witness Co., 1880), 4.

forth is not self-mastery but grace, and grace works cruciform: the self is put to death with Christ (Rom. 6:6) so that He may live in us.

The mystical impulses Pentecostals possess are expressed through revivalist rather than monastic vocabulary. Where Catholic contemplative traditions speak of quiet, wordless prayer, and union with God, Pentecostals have practised comparable forms of attentive waiting through tarrying and praying in the Spirit. Asian Pentecostalism has been shaped by such waiting: in Korean daybreak prayer (*saebyeok gido*),¹³ in the intercessory meetings of Indonesian Pentecostals,¹⁴ and in the Chinese house churches that wait on God under pressure.¹⁵ The vocabulary and theological frameworks differ, but both traditions bear witness to a similar desire for communion with God. Heuser's proposals are therefore best received not as a retreat from Pentecostal spirituality but as an invitation to enter more deeply into it.

The Catholic mystical tradition holds two poles together, the ecstatic and the ascetic, and Pentecostalism has *both*. At the ecstatic pole, Maria Woodworth-Etter, an early Pentecostal evangelist, wrote of visions in which “the Saviour appeared on the cross by me, and talked with me,”¹⁶ a rapture Teresa of Ávila would have recognised as “a glorious foolishness, a heavenly madness.”¹⁷ At the ascetic pole stands Smith Wigglesworth, whose disciplined life of prayer, Scripture, and separation from worldly pleasure was ordered

¹³ Yoido Full Gospel Church, “Worship Service,” accessed July 14, 2026, <https://english.fgtv.com/a04/01.asp>; Lucille Talusan, “Thousands Seek Breakthrough, Healing, Spiritual Renewal during South Korea’s Early Morning Prayer Festival,” CBN News, March 4, 2026, accessed July 14, 2026, <https://cbn.com/news/world/thousands-seek-breakthrough-healing-spiritual-renewal-during-south-koreas-early-morning>.

¹⁴ Chang-Yau Hoon, “Pentecostal Megachurches in Jakarta: Class, Local, and Global Dynamics,” in *Pentecostal Megachurches in Southeast Asia: Negotiating Class, Consumption and the Nation*, ed. Terence Chong (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2018), 28.

¹⁵ E. A. Johnston, “How the House Churches in China Meet,” transcript, SermonIndex, last modified March 30, 2026, accessed July 14, 2026, <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ea-johnston/how-the-house-churches-in-china-meet/>.

¹⁶ Maria Woodworth-Etter, *Signs and Wonders* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997), 10.

¹⁷ Teresa of Ávila, *The Interior Castle*, quoted in Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 60.

towards faith and mission. Where Catholic spirituality speaks of detachment, Pentecostals speak of consecration and surrender. Yet in every case the ascetic road ends where the ecstatic one does, not in self-denial for its own sake, but in the divine love that self-emptying makes room for. To die to self is not to lose the self, but to receive it anew in Christ. Silence serves this cruciform surrender, through which the self is transformed by divine love rather than by mere introspection. As the early Pentecostals insisted, the true evidence of the Spirit's work is "divine love," for "charity is the Spirit of Jesus."¹⁸

Much of Asian church life runs on activism and achievement, so that service becomes a source of identity rather than communion with Christ. Confucian tendencies towards saving face, restraint, and duty make weakness hard to admit, and the face a shame-honour culture requires can become the false self that is socially reinforced.¹⁹ In a Singapore workforce where one in three report work-related stress or burnout,²⁰ the church is no exception. The Singaporean pastor Andre Tan, in describing his own burnout, recalls being expected to be "a counsellor, therapist, community organiser, theologian, executive director, CEO—all at the same time,"²¹ and fearing that if his congregation knew he was struggling they would lose respect for him. What restored him was not more effort but the practices of attentive rest this paper commends, keeping the Sabbath, seeking counsel, and submitting to spiritual direction. That same pressure runs through volunteers and lay leaders, everyone whose serving can quietly become performing. Silence before God becomes the place where the mask is removed. This is not a retreat from mission but its renewal.

¹⁸ *The Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 11 (October 1907–January 1908): 2.

¹⁹ Cultural Atlas Editors, "Singaporean Culture: Core Concepts," Cultural Atlas, accessed July 14, 2026, <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/singaporean-culture/singaporean-culture-core-concepts>.

²⁰ Tay Hong Yi, "1 in 3 S'pore Workers Reported Facing Work-Related Stress or Burnout: Data from MOM Online Tool," *The Straits Times*, September 25, 2025, accessed July 14, 2026, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/politics/1-in-3-spore-workers-reported-facing-work-related-stress-or-burnout-data-from-mom-online-tool>.

²¹ Ethel Lim, "'Pastors Are Not Superheroes. We Burn Out Too': Ps Andre Tan on Mental Health Care of Church Leaders," *Salt&Light*, August 31, 2021, accessed July 14, 2026, <https://saltandlight.sg/faith/pastors-are-not-superheroes-we-burn-out-too-ps-andre-tan-on-mental-health-care-of-church-leaders/>.

Silence is not ultimately a private discipline, but one formed in and for the body of Christ. If silence opens the hidden rooms of the heart, the church must be ready to walk with people through what is found there, through spiritual direction, pastoral care, counselling, and where necessary therapy and deliverance. And because silence strips away the performed self, it returns us to one another freed from the need to be seen, able to love rather than to impress. Jesus himself withdrew to pray, but returned to preach, heal, and deliver.²² As Robert Mulholland writes, spiritual formation is “a process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others.”²³ Those “others” include the world, but they begin with the body of Christ, where we first learn to love, serve, and bear one another’s burdens.

At City Harvest Church, silence and solitude have become part of our shared life. I am grateful to Pastors Kong Hee and Sun Ho, who first led us into this practice, and to Professor Roger and Pastor Gayle Heuser, who have walked with us as retreat directors over four years.

We offer a useful case study. Since 2023, 634 unique participants—including full-time staff, lay leaders, and members—have attended silent retreats. These have not been years of withdrawal from mission, but of its deepening. As John Cassian wrote, when we let go of our immediate concerns and desires we become fully available to God, so that renunciation expands our true freedom to hear, receive, and reciprocate with God and our neighbour.²⁴ In these same years the staff, leaders, and members did not do less but more, drawn into a rhythm of retreat and return.

Mission deepened alongside contemplation rather than despite it. Our missions sending has grown from 140 trips involving 721 participants sent to 14 countries in 2023, to

²² Cf. Luke 5:16; Mark 1:35–39.

²³ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 12.

²⁴ John Cassian, paraphrased in Robin Maas and Gabriel O’Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 86.

268 trips involving 1,522 participants sent to 20 countries in 2025,²⁵ and we have seen some of our highest fruit in years: 5,783 decisions for Christ at Easter 2026, the highest since 2008, and 4,494 at Christmas 2025, the highest in over a decade.²⁶ These figures do not prove causation, but in our experience, contemplation and mission have enriched one another, forming not merely greater activity but a deeper, truer love, for God, for one another, and for the world.

This is not only the community's story; it is mine. At my first retreat, we were invited to imagine God looking at us with eyes of love. I could not do it. I had been a Christian for twenty-two years and was serving in full-time ministry. I loved God and preached about God, yet I could not picture Him looking at me with love. Four years later, by His grace, I have begun to.

Henri Nouwen describes this reversal beautifully:

“For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me. I am beginning now to see how radically the character of my spiritual journey will change when I no longer think of God as hiding out and making it as difficult as possible for me to find Him, but instead, as the One who is looking for me while I am doing the hiding.”²⁷

In this sense, Heuser has not invited Pentecostals away from their tradition, but more deeply into the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that has always stood at its heart. His paper offers practices through which the Holy Spirit can carry a reviving encounter into deeper communion with God. The Spirit who fills the *upper room* also searches the *inner rooms* of the heart. The goal is not a quieter Pentecostal spirituality, but a holier, more discerning, and more loving one, until Christ is formed in us.²⁸

²⁵ City Harvest Church internal records, 2026. Missions-sending figures are complete through 2025; figures for 2026 are preliminary and have not yet been finalised.

²⁶ City Harvest Church internal records, 2026.

²⁷ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* (New York: Image Books, 1992), 103–4.

²⁸ Galatians 4:19, NIV.

(2,285 words)

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