

**A Response to Melissa Archer's “‘Come Out of Her, My People’:
Living Ethically *in* Babylon”**

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Thank you, Dr Melissa, for your rich synthesis of New Testament ethics. You have compellingly demonstrated that from the inauguration of the Kingdom in Matthew to its eschatological climax in Revelation, the call to follow Christ is fundamentally a call to live out a non-conforming Christian life. Your paper serves as a powerful reminder that the Christian faith requires believers to actively embrace kingdom ethics towards spiritual realignment with God.

Contemporary Asian Application

The call to “come out of Babylon” speaks right into the world we live in. What we face in the twenty-first century is like those that confronted the first-century church. The systemic sins of Babylon—idolatrous seduction, self-glorification, materialism, exploitation, and oppression—may be differently packaged but they remain unchanged in their underlying nature. In the Asian context, "Babylon" manifests through several areas, one of which is hyper-capitalism and materialism. Asia's rapid market transition and economic growth have led to increased consumerism and exploitation, particularly in East Asia and some parts of Southeast Asia.¹ The Babylonian machinery is highly adaptive. Take for example, the "5Cs" of the Singaporean dream in the 1970s to 1990s: cash (financial accumulation), car (a heavily taxed luxury and the ultimate symbol of “making it”), credit card (signifying financial prestige and consumer power), condominium (the upward transition from public housing to private property), and country club

¹ “A ‘Wicked Problem’—Seeking Human Rights-based Solutions to Trafficking into Cyber-scam Operations in South-East Asia,” United Nations, February 20, 2026, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/wicked-problem-seeking-human-rights-based-solutions-trafficking-cyber>; Tianhe Chen, “Market Transition and Materialism in China,” January 7, 2026, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://thesocietypages.org/discoveries/2026/01/07/market-transition-and-materialism-in-china/>; “Why do Asian Consumers Love Luxury Shopping?” Michigan News, September 16, 2024, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://news.umich.edu/why-do-asian-consumers-love-luxury-shopping/>; Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr., “Differentiating Sedimented from Modular Transnationalism: The View from East Asia,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 21, no. 2 (2012): 153–155, https://www.academia.edu/35490345/Differentiating_Sedimented_from_Modular_Transnationalism_The_View_from_East_Asia.

(gated exclusivity and elite networking). People highly sought after these tangible status symbols.² Today, Babylon has updated its machinery across Asia with psychological and digital "Cs". These are aimed at exploiting our inner desires and vulnerabilities: convenience (immediate gratification), comparison (mediated through social media),³ competition (academic and career),⁴ cyberbullying and cyberporn (the digitization of malice and sexual exploitation).⁵ In Asia, Babylon also manifests through prosperity theology where “the idea of a benevolent God desiring prosperity aligns with the Asian Mindset”.⁶ This is accompanied by syncretic practices like ancestor worship and spirit pacification,⁷ alongside systemic issues such as corruption,⁸

² Nanyang Business School, "Are the Five Cs Still Relevant Today?" Nanyang Technological University, July 1, 2022, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://www.ntu.edu.sg/business/news-events/news/story-detail/are-the-five-cs-still-relevant-today>. Asian nations have their variants of the 5Cs.

³ The constant exposure to carefully curated highlight reels on platforms like Instagram and TikTok breeds the Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) and damages self-esteem. The drive for online validation creates relentless pressure to measure up to unrealistic social, physical, and lifestyle standards. For example, in South Korea, Instagram and local platforms fuels intense aesthetic and lifestyle comparisons, contributing heavily to the country's booming plastic surgery and luxury goods markets.

⁴ Driven by high stakes in the education system, students face severe performance anxiety. In highly competitive regions like Singapore, China, and Japan, the pressure to secure a stable future is overwhelming, often leading to deep-seated perfectionism and burnout. For example, in China, the phenomenon of 内卷 *neijuan* (involution) describes a hyper-competitive "rat race". This spans from the 高考 *Gaokao* (National College Entrance Examination) to the notorious "996" work culture (9 a.m. to 9 p.m., 6 days a week). In Japan, the pressure to conform and succeed is deeply rooted, historically manifesting as *Shuken-jigoku* (examination hell). Failure to navigate this often leads to *Hikikomori* (extreme social withdrawal).

⁵ Christine Suniti Bhat, Shih-Hua Chang, and Moira A. Ragan, "Cyberbullying in Asia," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2013), 36-39; Shilpi Yadav, "Legal and Policy Context of Revenge Pornography: A Multi-jurisdictional Perspective" (PhD diss., UPES, 2023), 7-14. The phenomenon of 网暴 *wangbao* in China (cyberbullying) is widespread, often leading to doxxing. Digital malice frequently intersects with sexual exploitation in countries like Japan and India.

⁶ Kong Hee, "Prosperity Gospel: A Pastoral Perspective," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 28, no. 2 (August 2025): 250.

⁷ Tsu-Kung Chuang, "Chinese Christian Response to Ancestor Worship," *Academia.edu*, accessed July 13, 2026, 3-6, https://www.academia.edu/40071309/CHINESE_CHRISTIAN_RESPONSE_TO_ANCESTOR_WORSHIP; "Karen Animists: 'We Want The Right To Live on Our Land and Worship Our Gods,'" Karen News, July 16, 2015, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://karennews.org/2015/07/karen-animists-we-want-the-right-to-live-on-our-land-and-worship-our-gods/>; Janine Ungvarsky, "Batak Christian Protestant Church," *EBSCO Research Starters* (EBSCO Information Services, 2024), <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/religion-and-philosophy/batak-christian-protestant-church>; "Torajans: History, Language, Demographics, Groups," Facts and Details, last modified January 2026, accessed July 13, 2026, https://factsanddetails.com/indonesia/Minorities_and_Regions/sub6_3e/entry-4012.html.

⁸ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2025* (Transparency International, 2026), accessed July 13, 2026, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2025>.

nationalism,⁹ authoritarian leadership, and state suppression.¹⁰ A LiCAS news report in January this year notes that Asia tops the global list of Christian persecution.¹¹

Dr. Melissa highlights Babylon primarily as an external reality: empire, consumerism, nationalism, oppression, exploitation, and worldly systems. Yet Revelation also suggests that Babylon appeals to the human heart through pride, greed, lust, self-exaltation, and idolatry. We see that in the Asian examples mentioned. In *The City of God*, Augustine argues that human history is a narrative of two cities formed by two competing loves: the City of God, driven by the love of God and the Earthly City (typified by Babylon and Rome), driven by the love of self. Augustine notes that these two cities are not neatly segregated into two camps; rather, they are deeply intertwined and entangled within the heart of every believer.¹² As Dr. Melissa points out near the end of her paper, "The churches live in Babylon, but Babylon must not live in them."¹³

⁹ Naomi Nishi, review of *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*, by Joseph Chinyong Liow, *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* 9, no. 1 (2020): 89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24761028.2020.1726555>; Stephen Philip Cohen, "The Nation and the State of Pakistan," *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 112. Historical struggles or emergence from colonialism or western influences in Asia has shifted from a struggle for freedom into religious or ethno-nationalism where the state, the dominant ethnic identity or religion is often treated as absolute and infallible. At its extreme, nationalism violates the commandment that ultimate allegiance belongs only to God.

¹⁰ Chandler Peterson, "The Countries Where Christianity is Illegal in 2026," Global Christian Relief, March 16, 2026, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://globalchristianrelief.org/stories/countries-where-christianity-is-illegal/>; Katey Hearsh, "Christians in Southeast Asia Experience Persecution and Poverty," Mission News Network, June 18, 2026, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/christians-in-southeast-asia-experience-persecution-and-poverty/>; Samuel Ben-Ur, "In China, Christianity Is Treated as a Cult," *The Diplomat*, June 19, 2026, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://thediplomat.com/2026/06/in-china-christianity-is-treated-as-a-cult/>;

Montagnards Stand for Justice, "Crackdown on Religious Freedom in Vietnam," Genocide Watch, Mar 25, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/systematic-crackdown-on-independent-religious-practitioners-in-dak-lak-province-dak-lak-vietnam>; John Curtis, Nigel Walker, Tim Robinson, "Religious minority persecution in Myanmar," January 5, 2026, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2026-0001/CDP-2026-0001.pdf>; "Persecution Trends 2023: Christian persecution 2023 Set to Rise in Nigeria, India & China," Release International, December 28, 2022, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://releaseinternational.org/persecution-trends-2023-focus-on-nigeria-india-china/>.

¹¹ "Asia Tops Global List of Christian Persecution," LiCAS.news, January 15, 2026, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://www.lucas.news/2026/01/15/asia-tops-global-list-of-christian-persecution-report-finds/>; "World Watch List 2026," Open Doors, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/>.

¹² Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Roman Roads Media, 2015), 1.35, 14.28. <https://brians.wsu.edu/2016/11/14/st-augustine-the-two-cities-the-city-of-god-xiv-1/>.

¹³ Melissa Archer, "'Come Out of Her, My People': Living Ethically in Babylon," paper presented at Asia Pentecostal Summit, July 22–26, 2026, 11.

Our resistance to Babylon is therefore two-fold: external non-conformity matched by inward sanctification (Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15; Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:8-9). I believe Dr Melissa's paper holds great significance for Pentecostal Christians in Asia today.

A Pentecostal Reading of Revelation towards Spirit-formed Ethics

Dr. Melissa speaks of the churches discerning Revelation "by means of the Spirit," and John's visions as pneumatic experiences.¹⁴ This leaves us with an important theological question: How does the Holy Spirit form believers into people who can live the ethical Christian life and empower believers to resist Babylon? Dr. Melissa also highlights worship and witness as central themes in Revelation. Yet Revelation also portrays the Christian life as one of conquering, faithful endurance, overcoming temptation, purification, and holiness. How does the Holy Spirit progressively conform believers to the image of Christ, moving believers from worship into lifelong sanctification? In her powerful contrast of Lamb or Beast, Bride or Whore, and New Jerusalem or Lake of Fire, what kind of church is Revelation ultimately seeking to produce and how does the Holy Spirit shape this kind of people?

The Spirit Builds the Church into An Alternative Culture of Love

In bridging our theological framework with practical application, I suggest that a Wesleyan-informed Pentecostal theology can make a valuable contribution here. Revelation calls us to a pure, radical, and enduring love for God. The Pentecostal language is precisely that of love (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 14:1).¹⁵ The starting point in Pentecostal theology is the

¹⁴ Archer, "Come Out of Her," 5.

¹⁵ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 176.

Holy Spirit and at its centre, Jesus Christ proclaimed as Saviour, Spirit Baptizer, Healer, and Soon-Coming King. Theologian Frank Macchia observes, “Christ the Spirit Baptizer baptizes us into a deep and mighty river of divine love that expands our souls for God and others and takes us to places spiritually that we never dreamed possible.”¹⁶ Kong Hee also notes, “From the early church in the book of Acts, all the way to the early Pentecostals at Azusa Street, Pentecost was, first and foremost, an outpouring of love.”¹⁷ God's love initiates our Christian journey through prevenient grace (Titus 2:11): justification and regeneration (foundation of love), sanctification or holiness (perfection of love), and power for missions and witness (release of love).¹⁸ As the transcendent presence of God among his people, the Spirit shapes the Pentecostal testimony, affections, and practices which help us navigate Babylon.¹⁹

Theologian Simon Chan insightfully notes, “Creation exists to realize the church.”²⁰ The church's primary calling is not merely to exist as a reactionary counter-culture, but to manifest tangibly as an entirely *alternative* culture rooted in the life of the Trinity amid a call to love and radical endurance (John 15:9-13; Rev. 13:10). From the example in Acts, we see how the Spirit outpouring radically transformed a scattered group of people who were uncertain, doubtful, and fearful into a united, spiritually-motivated and persevering counter-cultural community that was

¹⁶ Macchia, Frank D., *Tongues of Fire: A Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Word and Spirit: Pentecostal Investigations in Theology and History Book 2 (Cascade Books, 2023), 416, Kindle.

¹⁷ Jasmin Ng, “It is the Love of the Holy Spirit That Purifies: Kong Hee,” SOT Alumni Portal, June 1, 2022, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://sotalumni.chc.org.sg/2022/06/it-is-the-love-of-the-holy-spirit-that-purifies-kong-hee/>.

¹⁸ John Wesley, “Sermon 43: The Scripture Way of Salvation,” Wesley Center Online, Northwest Nazarene University, last modified 1999, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-43-the-scripture-way-of-salvation/>; John Wesley, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” Wesley Center Online, Northwest Nazarene University, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/a-plain-account-of-christian-perfection/>; John Wesley, “Sermon 17: The Circumcision of the Heart,” ResourceUMC, United Methodist Communications, 2026, accessed July 13, 2026, <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/sermon-17-the-circumcision-of-the-heart>.

¹⁹ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 53–54.

²⁰ Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (InterVarsity Press, 2006), 23–41. We see support of this in scriptural texts, such as Gen. 1:26, Eph. 1:4 and Col. 1:16.

filled with love, purity, passion, and courage. In his observation of Pentecostal spirituality, prominent Pentecostal theologian Steven J. Land highlights,

“The Pentecostal passion for the kingdom of God is formed and expressed in and through a Pentecostal community... [The church is] more a movement of the Spirit than a structure wedded to the present age... The church was to spread the gospel, relieve suffering, and prepare the faithful for the coming of the Lord ... [T]his counterculture trained men and women to be courageous, articulate and patient. The community was the Spirit’s strategy for transforming the world and them with it.”²¹

The Church, which is birthed and empowered by the Spirit and incorporated as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 1:8), must continue to be Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, and Spirit-empowered to overcome Babylon. She must not quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19-24; Eph. 4:30). The Holy Spirit breaks the seductive hold of Babylon not through mere rules, but by redirecting and orienting human desires and affections toward the Lamb. Instead of living ethically *for* the Spirit, treating the Holy Spirit as an external source of power, believers live ethically *through* the Spirit.

The Spirit Leads Believers Into Sanctification Through Loving Worship

In Wesleyan spirituality, the Christian journey is fueled by “religious affections” rather than just intellectual belief. Love holds primacy and is the context in which other affections like gratitude, joy, and peace flow.²² The more we love, the more we discern God.²³ It shifts the Christian life from obligation to participation, and from performance to allegiance. In the participation of divine life, the Holy Spirit progressively transforms believers into the image of Christ by using worship as an engine for lifelong sanctification. The Holy Spirit takes the

²¹ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 178–180.

²² Gregory S. Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections* (Scarecrow Press, 1989), 28.

²³ Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 293.

liturgical actions of worship and weaves them into the believer's rhythm of everyday life, choices, and spiritual formation, creating in us a yearning for God and the desire to be in an intimate relationship with him. Repenting in corporate worship trains the soul to resist temptation in secret. Bowing before the Lamb breaks the habit of bowing to corporate greed, social pressure, or political idolatry. Spirit-filled worship recalibrates our loyalty, and that loyalty forms the ethical foundation needed to stand firm against Babylon. This is especially in a collectivist Asian culture where there is pressure to conform—be it the fear of missing out (FOMO) or a fear of being singled out. By convicting believers and comforting us with the promise of the coming Kingdom, the Spirit molds our character until our public witness matches our private devotion. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit ensures that Pentecost is not a one-time experience, but an ongoing participation of love.

The Spirit Reveals What Ethical Resistance Looks Like

Dr. Melissa notes that the ethics in Revelation is one of resistance.²⁴ James 4:7 tells us that we are called to submit ourselves to God and actively resist the devil. To resist (*anthistēmi*) is to make a complete stand against.²⁵ It does not mean we take up arms or banners of protest. Far from it. Our resistance is in our worship and submission (*hypotassō*) to God. We submit by willingly yielding to God's authority and making Christ not only our Saviour but our Lord.²⁶ In this, we note two things.

One, in the Wesleyan Pentecostal tradition, this self-yielding submission is Spirit-enabled. If grace is the generous act of love by which we receive the life-giving presence of God

²⁴ Archer, "Come Out of Her," 3.

²⁵ James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Logos Research Systems, 2009), 12.

²⁶ Strong, CDWGTB, 75.

in Christ through the Spirit, it functions first as prevenient grace to awaken us, and then as transforming, sanctifying grace to shape us. This grace enables believers to live ethically but ethics is no longer an imperative (command). It flows from our relational participation in the divine life. The church in Acts is an excellent example (Acts 4:33).

Two, in submitting to Christ as Lord, daily self-reflection and repentance is needed (2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 1:9, Acts 3:19). Through the Spirit, believers practice this. Babylon excels at making greed, exploitation, and pride look normal, legal and even virtuous. The Holy Spirit helps us with these questions: *Has our identity been subtly reshaped, our ultimate loyalty redirected, our moral compass compromised, and has that compromise been normalized?* The Holy Spirit exposes areas of spiritual apathy or compromise (as seen in the letters to the seven churches) and convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8, 13). He imparts wisdom, guides us into all truth, and renews our minds (John 14:26; Isa. 11:2; Eph. 4:22-23; Titus 3:5). Land notes,

“It is those who are spiritually responsive who can walk in the light, walk in love, and walk in the power of the Spirit as witnesses. The journey toward God was a journey with God in God. It was walking toward the Father with Jesus in the Spirit... To know God was to be directed by God’s will, motivated by God’s love and strengthened by God’s power ... The point was not only to be declared righteous, pardoned and forgiven initially in new birth and, thereafter, each day; the point was also and simultaneously to declare *for* righteousness.”²⁷

Conclusion

Dr. Melissa has given us a compelling vision of what Christian ethics in Babylon looks like. She reminds us that believers are called to worship the Lamb, bear faithful witness, and refuse the seductive powers of empire. Yet her paper also raises an important theological question: How does the Holy Spirit form believers into people who can live this way? A

²⁷Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 76–77.

Wesleyan-informed Pentecostal theology would offer a fruitful extension of the paper by highlighting the Spirit's sanctifying ministry. Through prevenient grace, ongoing sanctification, participation in Christ, and life in the Spirit, believers are progressively transformed into the image of Christ. In this way, the Holy Spirit not only calls the Church out of Babylon but also removes Babylon from within the Church, forming the Bride of Christ into a holy, discerning, and Spirit-filled community of love that faithfully bears witness to the Lamb until He comes.

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