

# Syncretism: The Strongholds of Tradition, Teaching, and Legend

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## Abstract

*The world of Christianity in Indonesia has a complicated history and culture. The Indian sub-continent, Arab and Chinese traders, European colonialism, and American interests have influenced the indigenous culture over centuries and developed complicated relationships within the country. This complex mixture makes Indonesia unique to the rest of Southeast Asia—possibly the rest of the world—and raises challenges to spreading the gospel. Indonesian Christian denominations face those challenges when encountering the gospel with different cultures around Indonesia. There is a constant tension of assimilation between local culture and the gospel. This tension pressures pastors to take compromising actions at a level that is sometimes dangerous because they have crossed the boundaries of contextualization and are trapped in syncretism.*

**Keywords:** Syncretism, Pentecostalism, Tradition, Teaching, Legend.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In trying to make the gospel as acceptable to Indonesia as possible, there is a danger that we can go too far and end up changing or distorting the message. Syncretism can have various meanings, but here it refers to adding anything from the surrounding culture that will weaken or replace the core essentials of the gospel. The critical point is that the basis for avoiding syncretism is a correct understanding of the Bible, not what a person or a tradition thinks is right or wrong.

Paul wrote to Corinthians, "For though we live in the body, we do not wage war in an unspiritual way, since the weapons of our warfare are not worldly, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments and every high-minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to obey Christ." (2 Cor. 10:3-5, HCSB). According to Paul, the stronghold is an argument and a high-minded thing raised against God's knowledge and obeying Christ. There are three significant factors here, the man who has an argument, his teaching, and the expression of his teaching.

This article analyzes the dynamic relationship between the Gospel message and the cultural force through three significant layers: the tradition, the teaching, and the pastor who initiated the teaching. Observing the expressions exposes the core teaching, and analyzing the core teaching will conclude the reality of the man himself. On the behavioral level, the discussion will focus on tradition. The deeper level will be

the teaching itself. The deepest is the legend himself. This research indicates how they position Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the Great Commission. Each category will explain syncretism, its extension, its implication, and how the World of Christianity deals with it. Ultimately, the conclusion and further suggestions will end this paper.

## II. METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative research, the primary methodology is conceptual argumentation—different ways of engaging conceptual literature in a philosophical debate. This article used a dialogical tool to dialogue with different authors' viewpoints. The comparative tool is the best for finding the similarities and differences among different views. Another tool is harmonizing different theories or views by molding them into a single, logically coherent whole. This research uses an epistemological tool to criticize a specific philosophical foundation on which a theory or an argument is based. The polemical tool is used to argue for or against a particular viewpoint.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 The Traditions

The church organization has its written or unwritten by-laws. Several churches promote fellowship, evangelistic, revival, Bible study, and prayerful worship. As an example in this article, the community uses Acts 2:42 as their biblical foundation: "They were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (NET) Those churches will hold this belief by emphasizing three weekly primary services: Sunday Worship, Bible Study with the holy communion, and Prayer-Worship.

Seemingly, the senior pastor – the shepherd of the church – copy-paste the interpretation of that verse from their teacher. Widjaja Hendra states that three instruments in the Holy Place of Tabernacle perfectly match the weekly three services of Tabernacle Pentecostal Church (TPC)—i.e., the Great Worship, the Bible Study and the Holy Communion, and the Prayer-Worship (*Transkrip IBADAH PENDALAMAN ALKITAB MALANG, 13 AGUSTUS 2015 (KAMIS SORE)*). PAPMA Kasih—Tangka established this community—differentiating the Christian and the congregation based on their practice toward these three primary services. When someone believes and accepts Jesus as his Savior, PAPMA Kasih categorizes him as a Christian, while the church is a Christian who always diligently worships in the atmosphere of the Holy Place—the three services weekly (*Pintu Yang Sempit*).

Seemingly, those pastors apply and teach the tradition to the experience level weekly to strengthen their adherent's core belief that the teaching is truth—at least their adherent will plan seriously to join these services. There are various testimonies regarding the consequences of following or rejecting this instruction. In general, one of these primary services' neglect impacts feelings of sin and experiencing physical, psychological, and even spiritual problems. (*Kesaksian MUJIZAT TERBESAR (Ibu Setyo)*) Conversely, perseverance in three basic worships improves physical, psychological, and spiritual qualities—some experienced miracles (*Kesaksian 3 MACAM IBADAH (Indah Maria)*).

These spiritual and life-changing experiences of those who heard the Bible's message that followed the Tabernacle pattern convinced many people that this teaching was God's revelation to van Gessel, the founder of the teaching. These experiences strengthen the stronghold of members' core belief—every practice that

works well is the truth—and convince the church to preserve this tradition as the only authentic application of Christian life.

### 3.2 Syncretism analysis

Peter wrote, "First of all, you should know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (1 Pet. 1:20-21, HCSB) Peter emphasized that people can not interpret the Scripture using their interpretation.

However, the interpretation method that is very popular among these pastors—even stated as the standard form of absolute truth—is "the verse explains the verse." Luke, in Acts 2:42, exposes four early church activities, but this community only performs three services—they combine the apostles' teaching and the breaking of bread. The idea of the three services does not come from Acts 2:42 but from three instruments in the holy place of the Tabernacle.

Jusak Widjaja Hendra often uses this statement in his sermons, as happened during the Bible Study Service on October 8, 2012. He explained the meaning of the robe of holiness based on the interpretation of Revelation 19:13,16. The understanding of it directly compared or paralleled to 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. In this sermon, Hendra stated that the method is God's revelation (*Transkrip IBADAH PENDALAMAN ALKITAB SURABAYA, 08 OKTOBER 2012 (SENIN SORE)*).

Paul Hiebert defines syncretism: "Syncretism is the mixing of different beliefs and practices in ways that distort the truth and power of the gospel." (Hiebert et al. 13). Most pastors in using this parallelism technic to prepare their sermons. This hermeneutic promotes parallelism interpretation out of the original context of the Biblical text. They put their interpretation above the illumination by the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writers of the Bible.

This community adheres to and applies Pentecostal theology or ideology. The Pentecostal movement that started modestly in 1921 in Indonesia, brought by the Groesbeek and Klaveren families sent by Bethel Temple in Seattle, has become a dominant force in the Christian world in Indonesia. (van der Maas and Burgess 126). The facts of healing that the name of Jesus Christ worked through them have attracted many people and followed the Pentecostal Movement.

Pentecostal churches were established everywhere in 1930, even in places where very few Christian attendances, because they experienced evidence of the gospel message being followed by "signs and miracles." The fact also proves that many people are converted and believe in Jesus Christ through the activities of the Pentecostal Movement in Indonesia, including that carried out by one of the phenomenal evangelicals from mainland China, John Sung, who came to Indonesia in 1939 at the invitation of the Pentecostal churches in Surabaya. (van der Maas and Burgess 129)

Pentecostal theology was The Significance of Nonacademic Theology. (van der Maas and Burgess 1120). Stanley and Eduard reveal that Pentecostals have always preferred real experiences in testimony, chorus, and prayer, over intellectual reflection and criticism to interpret the Bible. Water Hollenwerger states that Pentecost emphasizes oral tradition, visions, dreams, and dance as the primary means of the theological interpretation of the Bible.

M. D. Wakkary said that Bible study is a way of life and is a priority for his ministry. (pentakostapedia) He quotes Offiler in "God and His Bible of the Harmonies of Divine Revelation," the primary reference for Pentecostal doctrine in Indonesia,

“The study of the Bible, as the word of God, is fascinating in the highest degree, and I have tried to put first, because they have filled the first place in my own mind, and heart. It has been a joyous and inspiring experience throughout the years.”

Wakary said Pentecostal theology is no different from Christian theology in general. Among the Pentecostal churches, the study of true biblical theology is first a belief, then a discipline and system. Pentecostals understand theology as integrative, comprehensive, practical, and dynamic. Therefore, the theology learned must be proven in the application, so Pentecostals rely heavily on the Holy Spirit, the Great Inspiration, who directs them to theology correctly and becomes a blessing to many people. Pentecostal theology is applied biblical theology, a theology of great power, strength, ability, and power.

Although Wakkary emphasizes that all spiritual activities must return to the Bible, his presupposition about the strength and power of the experience of living with the Holy Spirit is essential so that unconsciously, most Pentecostal pastors adore their seniors who have evidence of phenomenal spiritual experiences.

In the nineteenth century, secularism and liberalism were colorings, dominating the church. At the same time, and sadly, conservative theology has frozen and lost its dynamism. This reaction to situations like this has prompted believers who still uphold God's Word and obey its teachings to find new ways of understanding their faith. Because they were discouraged from seeing the current situation in the church, namely the suppression of intellectual understanding, which only resulted in various disappointments, they turned away and chose to focus their attention on the experience of faith.

The importance of the experience of faith in the Christian life needs to be recognized. Nevertheless, it would be dangerous if the experience turned into the supreme judge. What is clear is that putting experience as a guide for life is very much against one of the essential principles of Christianity, namely sola Scriptura. The Bible must be the sole guide in Christian doctrine and living.

Experience is very subjective. Whereas humans are sinners, so their experience is not free from error. Therefore, the experience should not be used as a measure of truth. The greater the danger if the formulated truth is valued and exalted above the truth directly stated by the Bible, especially by using the Holy Spirit as the person who legalizes this spiritual experience as an absolute truth that all Christians must follow and experience.

Every believer must heed the call of the Bible, which is to place God's revelation as the absolute truth guide in belief or the formulation of the principle of belief (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). However, it seems that pastors in this pentecostal community promote the out-of-context parallelism hermeneutic, not only for interpreting the Biblical text but also to make them parallel in life daily.

This discussion has one thing in common: the tradition in this community comes from their teaching or doctrine.

#### The Teaching

All humans need is to believe in Christ Jesus to be saved. Humans do not need to do anything. This statement is fair and correct by most Christians to those who do not believe. Somehow this statement turned out to be misleading. Grace is very cheap. However, is it cheap? Humans do not need to do anything to be saved, but the price of salvation is not free. Christ pays off the debt of sin through His death, Jesus' death, our Lord. After believing in Him as God and Savior, following the command is a must.

As a servant of God who is trusted to lead the Church of God, obeying God's Word is a must. Thus, demonstrating and teaching congregations to go out and preach and teach the gospel to the lost is a must too. Do leaders of Christians know and understand the essence and urgency of the statement? Does it accept that God's grace has the only active goal in the church building and waiting for the coming of God both times? Does God want His people to live comfortably with His blessings in the church building? All servants of God will say that the Bible is the Word of God, but how far do the servants of the Lord use the Bible regularly in their daily life altogether?

Back to the example of a case study, this community also emphasizes horizontal (i.e., physical) marriage life that aims for vertical (i.e., spiritual). Accordingly, it is essential to be complete sanctity and unity physically because the Church of God is the prospective bride of the Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly groom. One of their statement is that this teaching does not focus on earthly cases alone, but the Church of God must be brought to the final goal as the Bride of Christ.

They believe that the Tabernacle pattern is the only systematic pattern that can guide the Church of God into eternity because this pattern has simple steps. The intended eternity was to live forever with the bridegroom of heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the new city of Jerusalem. According to their understanding, the Tabernacle is the holy tillage where God's residence was ordered to be established by Moses and the Israelites, exactly as He showed Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 25:8-9, 40 cf. Heb. 8:5).

Seemingly, this community's teaching centers on the Lord Jesus Christ as the heavenly groom, but only the Tabernacle's pattern can fully explain His personality and how to live with Him perfectly. The Church was educated to undergo a continuous purification process using the Tabernacle pattern to get ready and welcome the heavenly groom's arrival, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A part of John 1:14 is the basis of the theology of this community, *καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν*. They accept the founder's interpretation, focusing on *ἐσκήνωσεν*, which according to Gingrich, has the root of the word *Σκηνόω* (Skenoo) (Danker and Gingrich). The founder, F. G. van Gessel, experienced illumination in 1935, but he stated that experience was God's revelation. From then on, he studied Moses' Tabernacle in Exodus. Interestingly, van Gessel went deep into the noun, *skene*, and found his "revelation" from Exodus 25-40 up to the entire Bible. After more than 20 years of studying, van Gessel concluded that the whole Bible was organized according to the Tabernacle pattern—it depicts God's ultimate plan, the pattern of the heavenly kingdom, Christ and His bride, and their relationship.

Syncretism analysis

In Ephesians 2:8-9 (HCSB), Paul wrote, "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— not from works, so that no one can boast."

Tennent stated that the early-twentieth-century fulfillment theologians, in particular, were trying to demonstrate how Christ fulfilled aspirations within other religions by pointing to typical nuggets of truth. As quoted by Tennent, Hogg believed that the missionary's task should never be to draw out various parallels between systems of thought. Such an attempt, according to Hogg, would only encourage syncretism and allow people to retain their old beliefs longer because the inherent difficulties in their beliefs are not sufficiently exposed (Tennent 233).

David Hesselgrave wrote a syncretism definition, "a change of behavior and even institutions without a change of values and worldview is not truly conversion; it is

syncretism.” In this case study, the excessive appreciation of the importance of experience endangers this community to be a syncretistic institution (Hesselgrave).

The founder considered the illumination he experienced regarding the word *skeno* in John 1:14 as God's revelation. He studied the Tabernacle of Moses thoroughly and built up his interpretation progressively. Then he announced the Tabernacle's pattern as the unique pattern to edify the church perfectly. Seemingly, he built up a new canon in the evangelical canon. The pastors in this community use the pattern as a great tool to understand the Bible. Moreover, several pastors believe that the Tabernacle pattern is God's origin and authentic Word.

Jusak Widjaja Hendra said on the seventieth anniversary of the Tabernacle Teaching that there were many books on the theme of Tabernacles that emerged before van Gessel received revelations about the Tabernacle Teaching from God (e.g., *The Spiritual Meaning of the Tabernacle* by Yohanes de Heer in 1907, and also Kohlbrugge's book in 1857). However, Hendra continued, the original book of van Gessel was written apart and was not influenced by any book before. Hendra believes that van Gessel received the revelation of the Tabernacle Teaching from the Lord, as seen by Moses on Mount Sinai. Then Hendra convinced his readers with this sentence, “So there is no need to doubt about the Tabernacle Teaching because the Tabernacle is the person of Jesus himself (Hendra).

The belief that the Tabernacle Teaching was a revelation from God has directed the main focus of all Biblical research to the Tabernacle of Moses in Exodus 25-40—study on, comparing and referring to it. On a broader development, after van Gessel died, the Tabernacle became a dogma, where the liturgy and the type of worship must base on the spiritual understanding of the Tabernacle of Moses. One implementation that all churches in this community continuously carry out is holding three primary worship services weekly (read *The Tradition* section above). Those services refer to the three types of furniture in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle of Moses—Sunday Service: the application of the Golden Candlestick; Bible Study and the Holy Communion: the application of the Table of Shewbread; and Worship Prayer: the application of the golden altar of incense. It has been a tradition for a long time and always echoes in their pastors' sermons in general. It is a broader development in the application of this teaching.

The above understanding makes pastors and their congregations believe that the Tabernacle is the only true teaching and that its adherents have a higher spiritual position than other churches that do not apply it.

Although supported by Bible verses, the various interpretations had created problems of their own, primarily when the principles applied to contradict each other. The main problem in interpreting is if the interpreter does not want to adhere to the central and most important principle, namely “to return to what the Bible says,” and the nature of the Bible as a whole, a comprehensive meaning. In general, misinterpretation occurs when the interpreter places experience above the Bible. It is a syncretistic mindset, according to Hesselgrave.

The second syncretism problem relates to determining the method of interpreting. This community accepted the Tabernacle teaching without questioning van Gessel's hermeneutic because of the religious experience of how the Tabernacle teaching was given to him. They believe that the Tabernacle teaching is God's revelation; thus, it is good to interpret John 1:14 by interpreting Moses' Tabernacle in parallel because it is the heavenly kingdom pattern. Moreover, TPC believes that Tabernacle's pattern is the unique pattern to edify the church perfectly. Ultimately, the teaching became a new canon inside the orthodox-evangelical canon.

Even the legality of this interpretation pattern has become the congregation's fundamental belief, as presented by an internist, Calvin Damanik, on December 31, 2010, as follows:

My family and I really give thanks for all God has done in my personal life and family. We have passed the year of deliverance or the year of watching. God let many tests or temptations happen in our lives, but we (especially I) have been strengthened by three primary services we commit patiently. We are shepherded to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, whose manifestation is the true teaching Word, whose pattern is a verse explaining other verses, so there is no reason to reject the Word written in the Holy Bible. I do not know what will happen if I live without the Word, Holy Spirit, and the love of God. I have passed this year with many renewals in my life. I have delivered from many things binding me in the world, such as disobedience, emotion, no discipline, no responsibility, et cetera. (*Testimony THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH SHEPHERDING WORD (Dr. Calvin Damanik, SpPD (Medan))*)

These facts expose the root of the problem in their core belief in this community. The life-changing experiences of the members are real and undeniable. Nevertheless, the measurement of the absolute truth is that experience and not what the Bible says. That is why almost all members depend on their pastor. They fear studying the Bible independently. Although they still believe that the Bible is God's Word, notes or sermon summaries also have the same value and are often positioned above the Bible. As a result, the congregation's attitude is that whatever the pastor says is the same as absolute truth by the anointing of the Holy Spirit—that statements cannot be criticized or debated.

This kind of interpretive technique relies more on concordance and does little to make complete observations in the immediate context of the related text. Even though they believe that they still rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit, who is believed to be in His power to give enlightenment, the events are interpreted as 'miraculous,' aka they are not allowed to use reason or logic to think generally in examining the Bible. The impact is idolizing a spiritual leader (pastor). It will trigger strife and division among the members of the body of Christ.

There are two interrelated issues here. Superficially, it is related to applying the interpretation method, but the deeper problem begins with selecting one passage of the Bible as the basis for developing the doctrine. The adherents of the Tabernacle doctrine must realize that they build their understanding on John 1:14 and directly relate it to the Tabernacle of Moses in Exodus, especially regarding God's commandment about the Tabernacle (Ex. 25-40). The question must be asked, would it be the thought of John, the apostle, when he wrote that sentence? Seemingly, van Gessel jumped back too far without reading and studying why the apostle John wrote that verse. However, the worst step was establishing Exodus as the place to discover the patterns and standards for faith experience. In other words, the events and experiences narrated by the book serve as normative patterns. There was a belief that the truth or spiritual meaning found in Exodus chapters 25-40 must be reproduced in the experience of faith of believers throughout the ages.

As an effort to simplify, it seems that what is described above is sufficient to represent the reasons that give rise to and, at the same time, strengthen the formation of an extreme understanding of the Tabernacle pattern. This community believes the tabernacle teaching is God's revelation and is greater than the Bible. Their pastors use the pattern to interpret the Bible. It is a fatal error that has been derived from syncretism.

### 3.3 The Legends

The section focuses on van Gessel as the initiator of the Tabernacle teaching. He received the Tabernacle teaching and believed it was the divine revelation. Van Gessel taught Pentecost Theology when starting a Bible Training Program for Christian Youth in Surabaya, and stated by Stanley and Eduard in his book that many of the young evangelists were described by Van Gessel carrying the message out of the island in early 1930 (van der Maas and Burgess 129).

Year after year passed, and several divisions and new denominations were formed by van Gessel and other pastors who had the same thought, including the students.(van der Maas and Burgess 129–31) One of the reasons raised to legalize separation is because it feels that with corporate bonds so shackling, the Church of God cannot achieve the peak destination, namely the Bride of Christ. Van Gessel's longing did establish a new church that was not in the form of an organization but only Jesus and the gifts of the Holy Spirit who led the Church.(Julianti 14) He explained that the purpose of not eliminating the organization, but the organization must be organized and centered on the Lord Jesus himself.(Julianti 19) That is why one of his followers' sermons emphasizes the importance of the organism as follows:

It must be one subject of the true teaching Word! ... There is an organization = organizational management. Management tasks are not taking care of / regulating services, finance, etc., but only taking care of or helping correspondence. There is a principal organism = true teaching Word. The true teaching Word governs everything. The staples that work to find and spread food. If we are attached to one right, sooner or later, bear fruit!(*Transkrip IBADAH PERSEKUTUAN TUBUH KRISTUS DI PALANGKARAYA, 23 SEPTEMBER 2011 (JUMAT SORE)*).

The irony, the facts prove that there has been a summit of particular leaders that result in separation, namely those who have the same interpretation paradigm will form a new group of organizations. Stanley recorded that Sister Alt left the new Pentecostal denomination because a leader who had a significant influence, like van Gessel, was uncomfortable with a woman who became pastor. Since the early movement, the seed of division had been planted (van der Maas and Burgess 130).

This article does not intend to bring up the women's pulpit service polemic but explains that Pentecostal theology is famous with the summit of spectacular leaders as the 'Servant of God who is anointing by the Holy Spirit.' Stanley states, "Pentecostal groups inherit the kind of 'Biblicism,' in the sense they believe that they can enter and live in a world of the Bible through the services of the Holy Spirit without the need to consciously involve hermeneutical difficulties in the case of reading ancient text From the point of view of the modern situation at this time."(van der Maas and Burgess 1122)

When the resolution of a difference of opinion on the biblical text is not reached through dialogue but only based on the views of an influential leader, it results in separation. The commitment to return to what the Bible says entirely based on the context of the author (human) and the Author (Holy Spirit) has long been abandoned. The practice of interpretation, which only picks up one part of the verse, even just one word, and considers it higher than other parts of the Bible, seems to have unknowingly formed a cult mindset in those who apply this method. Although the primary doctrine of this community prohibits the cult of humans, there is a human being who is the primary benchmark of a truth related to Bible interpretation. Thus, it is unsurprising because the initial hermeneutical concept has been built by promoting several Bible verses or even one word.



The history of the Pentecostal movement in Indonesia noted that although the organism church van Gessel missed in the future became an organization, namely the Bethel Church, the word Tabernacle remained their focus on teaching and preaching. The inappropriate interpretation can result in inappropriate application. This article argues that even though the teaching uses Bible verses as the foundation, there is still a summit of a person or some influential leaders, resulting in divisions. From the explanation above, there can be a contradiction between interpretation and implementation. In reality, van Gessel's longing to establish 'organisms' and not 'organization' separated his community from their parent organization, and the newer organizations will be established in the future.

#### The Implication in Mission and Evangelism

The idolization of the legendary leaders resulted in paralysis of thinking. There is no need to do more profound biblical research. The implication of this attitude is the right-to-copy mindset, passing on the idols' writings or sermons and expecting new information (i.e. new enlightenment) from their idols. The further implication is the fear of creativity (creativity is prevented) and even the reluctance (or maybe more precisely, the fear) to carry out the mission of evangelism to the majority in Indonesia.

The implications of teaching: The Tabernacle Teaching focuses on self-salvation and inspires others to do the same. Look carefully at the tabernacle pattern that shows the pattern of salvation through the gate to the court, continued to enter the Holy Place, and finally arriving in the Most Holy Place. If the eagerness of the believer is to be in the Holy Place all the time, wherein Moses's era shows only the priests who serve in it, then it is clear that the focus of the Tabernacle teaching is to enter and live comfortably in the Holy Place, looking forward to the time to enter the Most Holy Place, that is to meet Jesus Christ. So, the adherent of this teaching will reject the application of the Great Commission in their life. Even though they say that Tabernacle Teaching is Christ-centred, the reality is self-centered.

The tradition of three weekly church services is convinced will increase the sanctification of self spiritually. The implication uses the current time to diligently participate in the three primary worship at least three times a week. This reality means there is no time to evangelize others.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Apostle Paul says to Corinthians, "For though we live as human beings, we do not wage war according to human standards, for the weapons of our warfare are not human weapons, but are made powerful by God for tearing down strongholds. We tear down arguments and every arrogant obstacle that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obey Christ." (2 Cor. 10:3-5, NET).

This community believes its teaching is evangelical, but this article argues that they are a cult. There are invisible layers in their core beliefs, but the most critical layer is legendary figures, becoming the same as God for all his followers. They are the pastors in this group who are famous for being full of the anointing of the Holy Spirit and manifesting their charisma. The legendary figure is the first layer. The second layer was built on this layer, namely teaching, which was believed to be the Direct Revelation of God to legends. The third layer, built on the second layer, becomes the dogma—the daily practice that characterizes the community.

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