

PENTECOSTALISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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A century ago Pentecostalism was a grassroots movement that focused on experience rather than learning and had few resources for theological research. Today, many prominent theologians come from Pentecostal or charismatic backgrounds, and what is more, reflection on the movement has had deep theological impact— not only on Pentecostal theologians but also ecumenically. The scholar of global Pentecostalism, Allan Anderson claims that 'If there is one central and distinctive theme in Pentecostal and Charismatic theology, then it is the work of the Holy Spirit'.¹ Back in the 1950s the Holy Spirit could be regarded as the 'Cinderella' of Western theology.² But by 1991 the leading German theologian Jürgen Moltmann remarked on the 'flood' of writing on the topic.³ The growth of Pentecostalism, especially in the majority world, had a great deal to do with this development. This short article will trace the impact of Pentecostalism on the development of Western pneumatology in twentieth-century theology, noting the contribution of Pentecostal theologians, and suggest where this might lead in the twenty-first century.

Western neglect of pneumatology

The neglect of pneumatology as a discipline in Western theology can be traced back to the theology of Augustine of Hippo, a key theologian. Augustine (354–430), who lived in what is modern Algeria and wrote in Latin, does not seem to have been aware of the pneumatology of the Cappadocian Fathers that influenced the formulation of the third article of the Nicene Creed at Constantinople (381). In the Creed the Holy Spirit is described as 'the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets'. However,

Augustine began instead with the biblical evidence that the Spirit is both the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son (Jn 16:13; Mt 10:20; Rom 8:9, 11; Gal 4:6) from which he surmised that the Spirit is the 'unity', 'commonness', or 'communion' between the Father and the Son; that is, the 'bond of love'.⁴ This image was carried through into Catholicism in an emphasis that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father *and the Son* and led to the *filioque* clause being added unilaterally to the creed in the West to give a double procession: 'who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*'.⁵

The effect of the *filioque* on Western pneumatology is argued to have constrained the role of the Spirit: 'No longer does he [the Spirit] "blow where he wills"; rather, "it goes where it is sent"'.⁶ Augustine also taught that the love, or *communio*, within the Godhead, which he so closely identified with the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Jn 4:7, 12, 13, 16; Rom 5:5), was imparted in Christ to the church. This love, the most excellent spiritual gift (1 Cor 13), is the church's most important characteristic. Although a valid and valuable insight, the theological effect was an alternative Trinity of God-Christ-Church and the restriction of discourse about the Spirit to discussion of the mystery of the triune God.⁷ The Holy Spirit became a technical theological term in stylized form in the blessing and the baptismal formula, 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'⁸

As the central power of the Pope was increasingly asserted, Roman Catholic ecclesiology was developed along juridical rather than charismatic lines. In reaction to heretical and reformation movements, between the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council, personal religious experience was discouraged by the church but accommodated on the periphery in mysticism or 'spirituality'.⁹ In systematic theology, the biblical role of the Spirit was taken over by matters of ecclesiology, or displaced into other aspects of theology, including the doctrine of grace¹⁰ and the theology of the Virgin Mary.¹¹

The Protestant Reformers repudiated the exclusive association of the Spirit with the Catholic hierarchy. Luther challenged the medieval understanding of the historical outworking of God's grace through the church when he reinterpreted justification as the direct intervention of God on behalf of the sinner, mediated and appropriated only by

the immediate activity of the Spirit of God. Calvin gave a systematic priority to the activity of the Spirit in the individual Christian life and this was to set the tone for future Protestant thinking about the Spirit. In the emerging Protestant theology, the Spirit was seen in two ways: as Enlightener, who inspires Scripture and interprets it, and as Sanctifier, who brings about faith and empowers the new spiritual life.¹² However, neither Luther nor Calvin reflected on the Spirit as sent directly into the world from the Father and the consequent relation of the Holy Spirit to all life. Moreover, even the pneumatology the Reformers did teach was not always preserved in later Protestant theology. Because the mission of the Holy Spirit was seen as dependent on that of the Son, there was little need for a distinct discipline of pneumatology.

Pentecostal-charismatic stimulus to Western pneumatology

Among the reasons why Pentecostal theology was not taken seriously by Western theologians were worries about enthusiasm, the focus on institutionalized forms of religion, and the fact that Pentecostal Christianity grew among the poor, African-Americans and in the majority world.¹³ It was only with the advent in the 1960s of the Charismatic movement in the mainline churches in the West that Pentecostal-type spirituality elicited responses from theologians. As the movement grew, mainstream Western theologians were drawn into discussion of pneumatology by the issues it raised for biblical studies, ecclesiology, ecumenism, social justice, ecology, mission, theology of religions. In the first case, for example, issues around Christian authority influenced New Testament scholar James D.G. Dunn's work on Jesus' experience, charisma and the nature of the Christian community.¹⁴ Lesslie Newbigin was one of the first to include Pentecostalism in ecclesiology, as a recovery of an ancient tradition that complemented others, and this undoubtedly contributed to his strongly Trinitarian theology.¹⁵ David Bosch is one of many theologians of mission to recognise the importance of the early charismatic Roland Allen for the understanding of mission as initiated, guided and empowered by the Spirit.¹⁶ Reflection on the growth of the charismatic movement stimulated Michael Welker's study of God the Spirit as the key to understanding the Christian message and its

relevance to society.¹⁷ And the desire for a dialogue with Renewal movements prompted the recent in-depth study of the Holy Spirit by the leading scholar of biblical hermeneutics Anthony Thiselton.¹⁸

Pneumatology in the West has also benefited from three other theological developments that coincided in the 1960s with the emergence of the charismatic movement: first, more intense dialogue with the Orthodox as they joined the World Council of Churches; second, the renewal brought about in the Catholic Church by the Second Vatican Council; and third, the increased voice of theologians from the majority world in the post-colonial era. Orthodox theologians such as Vladimir Lossky, who argued that the problems of Western dominance could be addressed by the development of pneumatology, and John Zizioulas, who laid greater emphasis on the synthesis of Son and Spirit in the Trinity.¹⁹ The dialogue of Western and Eastern Christianity after so many centuries raised the question of the addition of the *filioque* to the creed. The ecumenical debates on this question in the late 1970s stimulated Jürgen Moltmann to move from a christo-centric to a pneumato-centric approach by 1991.²⁰

In the Catholic Church, the Jesuit Karl Rahner's transcendental theology bridged between theology and spirituality (or between the church hierarchy and the communities of religions) and so opened up the link between the divine and the human spirit for theological reflection. Although there is little explicit pneumatology in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, Yves Congar drew this out subsequently. Congar was especially motivated by the ecumenical desire to include Catholic spiritual traditions as well as charismatic renewal in his ecclesiology.²¹ The liberation theologian José Comblin brought out the intimate connection between Jesus' anointing with the Spirit and his mission of 'good news to the poor' in Luke 4:18 and developed a pneumatology of liberation.²² The new openness to insights from spirituality in theology and the inclusive understanding of the church at Vatican II particularly facilitated women's participation in theological development. For example, Elizabeth Johnson showed the importance of reconsidering the gendered language of the Trinity and drew attention to feminine images of the Spirit, especially in the Hebrew Bible.²³ Similarly drawing on the presence and work of the Spirit before the Incarnation and Pentecost, Celia Deane-Drummond

and Denis Edwards have shown the implications of the Spirit's role in creation for eco-theology.²⁴ Finally, the new openness to the Spirit's mission and recognition of the Spirit's presence and activity beyond the boundaries of the church prompted new developments in theology of religions such as are brought together in the work of Jacques Dupuis.²⁵

Theologians from the historic churches in other cultures and continents have enriched and expanded pneumatology from their cultural understanding of 'spirit'.²⁶ To give a few examples: from India, Stanley Samartha's understanding of the Spirit as non-duality (*advaita*) laid foundations for theology of inter-religious dialogue.²⁷ Whereas Samuel Rayan's appropriation of another Sanskrit word *Shakti* – the life force or the supreme goddess – produced a theology of liberation.²⁸ In Korea, Ryu Dong-shik described the Spirit in terms of the 'wind and flow' that inspired the ancient sages in the mountains and created Korean culture; whereas Suh Nam-dong saw the power of the Spirit in the ancient gods that inspired the popular resistance to authority that culminated in the late twentieth-century *Minjung* movement for civil rights and democratization.²⁹ Other contemporary Korean theologians have understood the Spirit to be the life-breath (*ki*) that harmonises yin and yang forces and brings peace.³⁰ Although these pneumatologies may be contested as one-sided, they show the extent to which pneumatology is dependent on the meaning of the particular word used to translate the Hebrew *ruach* or the Greek *pneuma* (spirit). Looking at the plural spirit-world of African religious traditions, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu is able to explain the popularity of the practices of African Pentecostals – such as healing, deliverance, tongues and anointing.³¹ Anderson calls for further research in the area of the relationship between Pentecostal spiritualities and popular ones.³²

Pentecostal theologians developing pneumatology

Not only have Pentecostal theologians received from other movements but Western theological development has been stimulated by the rise of Pentecostal and charismatic theologians who have broken new ground in various areas. William Kay explains that, as in the New Testament times, Pentecostal theology began in the life of the

church and in order to address issues that arose there.³³ These issues included questions of Pentecostal identity such as Spirit baptism and its relation to water baptism, conversion, 'second blessing' and 'speaking in tongues'; the purpose of tongues – salvation or witness; and whether or not to preach the Trinity or 'Jesus only' (Oneness Pentecostalism).³⁴ However, Pentecostal theology has also developed theologies of wider application both popular – such as theologies of prosperity and spiritual conflict or deliverance – as well as academic.³⁵

Although many versions of prosperity theology are properly condemned as self-serving or magical, sociologists have recognised the benefits of theologies of development and growth in churches which operate as communal self-help organisations.³⁶ Pentecostal prosperity theologies such as that of Paul/David Yonggi Cho in South Korea can also be construed as working toward the common good and even ecological well-being.³⁷ Similarly theologies of spiritual conflict and deliverance give grounds for concern if they focus on evil and generate fear. If, however, they offer empowerment to people formerly gripped by fear of the spirit-world, they may be a New Testament-validated expression of the good news.³⁸

Among the leading academic Pentecostal-charismatic theologians, many are biblical scholars. Gordon Fee, Regent College, Vancouver, has researched the Pauline pneumatology which he characterises as 'God's empowering presence' and shows is absolutely essential to Paul's own Christian experience and to his mission of salvation in Christ.³⁹ Max Turner at the London School of Theology has focused on Lukan pneumatology, which he recognises as 'the Spirit of prophecy' bringing liberation and gifting for ministry and mission.⁴⁰ John Christopher Thomas of the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, Tennessee, is an expert on Johannine pneumatology. He argues that this is as integral to the narrative and the understanding of Jesus' identity in John's gospel.⁴¹ Pentecostal perspectives bring to life aspects of New Testament study that made little sense to earlier generations of Western scholars.

Some scholars have been concerned primarily with the relevance of Pentecostal pneumatology to spirituality. Simon Chan of Trinity Theological College in Singapore is the chief exponent of Pentecostal

spirituality. Chan regards the intense experience of the Spirit in Spirit baptism as the unifying feature of Pentecostalism and he brings this into dialogue with other Christian spiritual traditions and disciplines to shape Pentecostal spiritual traditions, Pentecostal liturgical spirituality and spiritual theology.⁴² Steven J. Land, of the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, similarly regards Pentecostal spirituality as the heart of its theology. However, he focuses not on Spirit baptism but on the experience of the last days and its anticipation of the kingdom. He urges Pentecostals to a 'missionary fellowship' with 'a passion for the kingdom' in the sense of developing a counter-cultural and transformative Christian community.⁴³ While both Chan and Land are primarily challenging their own communities to a deeper and more mature spirituality, the Pentecostal spirituality they describe has a vigour and urgency that also addresses weaknesses in some older spiritual traditions.

Other Pentecostal theologians have paid greater attention to ecclesiology. Pentecostal ecclesiology has been mediated to a wider audience especially by Miroslav Volf, now at Yale University Divinity School, who challenged traditional ecclesiologies on the basis that a 'free church' or charismatic polity best reflects the social Trinity of divine interrelationship (*perichoresis*).⁴⁴ Although Pentecostal systematic theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's work ranges widely over theological disciplines, at its centre is a pneumatological ecclesiology. Kärkkäinen insists that the Holy Spirit is free from any particular church and that the Spirit's work is always contextual. This pneumatological conviction is key to his theological method: he seeks a comprehensive understanding of various views through ecumenical and international dialogue in order to gain a richer understanding.⁴⁵ An ecclesiology that welcomes the gifts of the Spirit and recognises its own limitations is a key contribution in an era when Christianity is so plural and diverse.

Two initiatives that challenge theological method from Pentecostal-charismatic perspectives should also be mentioned: 'third article theology' and 'loosing the spirits'. As a systematic theologian, Frank D. Macchia of Vanguard University of Southern California forged a

close relationship between the Spirit and the Kingdom.⁴⁶ Now Macchia is going on to re-examine many other doctrines and theological works through a pneumatological lens. This approach, which is credited to Lyle Dabney of Marquette University in Milwaukee, has now been taken up by Myk Habets and others as 'third article theology'.⁴⁷ Although many of those pursuing it are Barthian scholars, third article theology may also be regarded as the logical consequence of the way in which Pentecostalism has stimulated pneumatology.

At Fuller Theological Seminary, California, Amos Yong is pushing the boundaries of Pentecostal theology into new areas. His background in process and emergence philosophy has encouraged him to recognise the Spirit's work in creation ... and to develop the 'pneumatological imagination'⁴⁸ that has enabled him to make new contributions to theology of religions, ecclesiology, public life, science, disability studies, and other fields. Recently, he has contributed to exploration of how consideration of the Holy Spirit against the background of a 'spirit-filled world' or a 'world of many spirits' affects pneumatology. This plural pneumatology is not only of interest to those pursuing inter-cultural theology but also for theologians negotiating scientific and philosophical shifts toward plurality.⁴⁹

In conclusion, the Western neglect of pneumatology is certainly now being addressed and Pentecostal theologians are making a significant contribution in the fields of biblical studies and theology, especially in the disciplines of spirituality, ecclesiology and mission theology. It has consequences for the whole of theology which are only now being explored through 'third article theology' and the 'pneumatological imagination'. Since Pentecostalism is a popular, young and a global movement, Pentecostal theology is likely to keep on bringing fresh insights into international academic theology for some time to come.

Endnotes

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