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Pentecostal Theology

Wolfgang Vondey

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Pentecostal Theology

Wolfgang Vondey

A Pentecostal theology distinct from other Christian traditions was evident from the start of the modern-day Pentecostal revivals that occurred worldwide at the turn to the twentieth century. Yet, initially, Pentecostals viewed themselves as an ecumenical movement and did not develop an independent theological programme. Although there exists (still) a widespread skepticism over whether Pentecostal theology represents a genuine theological tradition, the rise of biblical, historical, and theological scholarship among Pentecostals marked the maturing of Pentecostal theology by the end of the century, and the beginning of constructive proposals to integrate various distinctive features of Pentecostalism into a comprehensive theological agenda (Yong 2007a: 244–248; Vondey 2013a: 141–148). The transformation of classical Pentecostalism and the emergence of the Charismatic Movement and neo-Pentecostalism further contributed to developments that both sharpened Pentecostal interests and moved towards a global theological agenda (Yong 2005a; Macchia 2006; Vondey 2010a). Many Pentecostal scholars blend ministerial vocation with academic careers (Fettke and Waddell 2012), and the resulting forms of theological expression emphasize an everyday experiential, embodied, and analogical character. With the waning of traditional Pentecostal anti-intellectualism, access to higher education, and entrance into official ecumenical conversations since the 1970s, Pentecostal theology has widened its influence and brought to prominence several distinctive teachings, typically focusing on an experiential encounter with God, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the relevance of spiritual gifts, empowerment for mission and Christian living, divine healing, and the imminent return of Christ. Although Pentecostalism is dominant in the Global South, much Pentecostal theological literature originated in the English-speaking world from Western scholarship, and African or Latin American contributions have emerged only gradually (Nel 2016). Pentecostals exhibit a certain ‘ad hoc theology’ which elevates immediate praxis over critical reflection, orality over literacy, and ministry over education, yet generalizations about the global state of Pentecostal theology are difficult, even if its general contours are universal. This article articulates the prolegomena to Pentecostal doctrine, identifies the different methodologies that have emerged since the start of Pentecostalism, outlines classical Pentecostal teachings, and discusses the shape of contemporary Pentecostal theology.

Keywords: Experience, Doctrine, Praxis, Ecumenism, Spirituality, Holy Spirit, Pentecost, Theological reflection, Charismatic Movement

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1 Prolegomena to Pentecostal doctrine

The prolegomena to Pentecostal theology form the presuppositions for the doctrines and practices of the movement in often unarticulated ways that reach back to the origins of the worldwide revivals at the start of the twentieth century, but find only implicit expression in theological discussion. Experiences and confrontations with the renewal of Indigenous Christianity (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005) and individual spiritual encounters (Albrecht and Howard 2015) interweave in a deeply embodied narrative that traverses the wide range of personal transformation, miracles, spiritual warfare, social and economic welfare, and political vision (Miller and Yamamori 2007; Milton 2015; Onyinah 2012; Sahoo 2018; Wariboko 2014a). At least initially, Pentecostal theology does not seek the articulation of doctrines as an end in itself, but encourages their original motivation by maintaining the possibility of the actual encounter with God that stands at their root and that makes any articulation of the experience as doctrine principally redundant. Pentecostal theology is therefore a way of engaging the world not exclusively through doctrine but also materially, physically, experientially, affectively, socially, and spiritually.

1.1 Pentecostal spirituality

Pentecostal theology in the West emerged fundamentally as a response to the widespread divorce of theology from spirituality (Castelo 2020: 30). In the Global South, Indigenous spirituality has retained a strong influence (Gifford 2004: 83–112; Medina 2020; Wariboko 2014a: 40–53). A global Pentecostal spirituality communicates the core commitments of the movement's ethos to a life in the Spirit and the resulting enthusiasm, spontaneity, and improvisation which suggest an alternative theological methodology often misunderstood in the West as immature or incomplete. Instead, the spirituality at the root of Pentecostal theology is not simply any form of exuberant experience or revival but the expression of a personal participation of the individual and the community in the biblical story of God actualized in Jesus Christ, and made possible by the Holy Spirit (Land 1993: 71–82). The beliefs, practices, sensibilities, and values of Pentecostal spirituality are defined at the core by the experience of God narrated in the biblical texts through the revelation of Christ. The focus of Pentecostal spirituality is not the biblical narrative itself but its accessibility in the world, that is, its restoration, renewal, and revitalization in the believer and the community (Albrecht and Howard 2015). Ascetical and mystical theology are prominent in Pentecostal descriptions of the relationship between spirituality and theology (Castelo 2017; Chan 1998; 2000).

Chief to Pentecostal spirituality is an encounter with Jesus Christ as the centre of the gospel filtered through an emphasis on the cross and the resurrection. This christological focus accentuates the work of the Holy Spirit as the most essential component of recognizing the life of Christ and, in turn, of living a Christ-like life. Pentecostals seek

recourse in scripture to interpret their own story in an interwoven dynamic in which the biblical revelation interprets the experience of the Spirit, and that experience serves as a hermeneutical filter for the reading of scripture (Archer 2009: 89–171). This kind of spiritual hermeneutic always emerges from, identifies, preserves, and returns to the foundational experiences of the Holy Spirit. The move to theological reflection is born from this emphasis on the Spirit of Christ, and the development of doctrine always passes through a personal encounter with Christ through the Holy Spirit. In this christo-pneumatological sense, Pentecostal theology begins as spirituality (Vondey 2017a: 18). The process and result of theology reflect the distinctively Pentecostal spirituality by moving from experience, to testimony, to affections, to practices, and returning to experiences in an ongoing dynamic (Land 1993: 192, 218–219). Theology seeks a relationship between spirituality and doctrine so that doing theology becomes a constant and reciprocal back and forth movement between beliefs, affections, and actions, on the one hand, and the articulation of doctrine, on the other.

1.2 The experience of the Holy Spirit

As a gateway for Pentecostal spirituality, experience serves as an important foundational resource for theology (Neumann 2020). Resonating the central emphasis spirituality places on the Spirit, Pentecostal theology is experiential because it is both pneumatic (as the experience resulting from the encounter with the Spirit) and pneumatological (as reflection on that experience). Theology is rooted in the actuality, not merely the possibility, of the experience as an immediate revelation of God, that seeks a mediating ‘action-reflection’ (Land 1993: 119) in the life of the human person and the community. Theological reflection therefore begins with the experience of the Spirit and from there submits to the current of spirituality and theology (Wariboko 2018: 45–64). Oral narrative and testimony, proclamation, prayer, song and dance, prophecy, and speaking in tongues are some of the native expressions of that experience. Scripture contains these expressions (or reports them) in a normative (but second-order) fashion that allows Pentecostals to reflect on and discern their own experiences (Vondey 2017a: 18–20). Doctrine is in this process a third-order moment of an implicit theological method that emerges from and aims at the experience of worship.

What exactly Pentecostals mean by ‘experience’ is (often intentionally) ambiguous, at least to the outside observer (Neumann 2012: 100–161). The appeal to experience ‘demands more than *belief* in an experience – it demands the *experience of the experience* itself’ (Clark and Lederle 1989: 40 [original emphasis]). In other words, for the Pentecostal it is a particular kind of experience – not the idea of experience as such – that forms the possibility for theological articulation. Historically, it is the particular set of experiences surrounding the day of Pentecost, which gives the movement its name, that form the foundation for carrying out a Pentecost-al theology. Conversion is perhaps the entrance

for most Pentecostals to the particularity of Pentecostal experiences (Milton 2015). Yet, Pentecostals shy away from conceptualizing their experiences in fear of losing the dynamism of the actual experience and of turning the uninhibited encounter with God into an object of theological reflection distanced from a personal and communal transformation (Chan 1998: 24). At the same time, since theology is always already a mediated experience, the articulation of Pentecostal theology requires also an indication of the framework of mediation (Neumann 2012: 162–330). This framework arises out of the situatedness of everyday experiences in the practices of Pentecostal communities where the experiences of Pentecost find their natural continuation. The framework of this theology is bound to the biographies and ethnographies (Cartledge 2010) or microtheologies (Wariboko 2018: 1–2) that testify to the concrete contexts of lived experiences on the ground. Theological generalizations and formulations of doctrine are shaped and reshaped by personal experiences, practices, and rituals of the community.

1.3 Pentecostal affections

The theological narrative of having encountered God is communicated and interpreted through the affections. For Pentecostals, pathos, feeling, affection, emotion, and desire make and shape the world in an aesthetic rather than a logical form, driven by experience rather than intellect (Smith 2010: 78–81). The affections mediate God's involvement in the world through manifested expressions of the passion of God's eternal being revealed in Jesus Christ and communicated by the Holy Spirit (Solivan 1998: 59–60). Passion is the bridge between Pentecostal experience and doctrine, since the encounter with God occurs in the human being in a manner reflecting God's eternal being, thus characterizing the human person in their disposition toward God and others (Land 1993: 131–164). Pentecostal theology is affective in that it proceeds on the premise of abiding individual and communal dispositions, not mere spontaneous emotional states, but transformative manifestations of the encounter with God (Vondey 2017a: 26). Individual affections are always embedded in communal affections and vice versa, so that the communal experience of God verifies and interprets the individual experience. In turn, the ecclesial and personal encounter with God is always embedded in the biblical story of Pentecost, which interprets and discerns the contemporary experience as a faithful manifestation of the Spirit of Christ.

The affections bring the Pentecostal aesthetic to the limits of speech, concepts, theories, and systematization (Smith 2010: 123–150). The result is a theology carried out, at least initially, in the realm of spirit (pneuma) rather than word (logos), because the experience of God among Pentecostals is always pneumatic (an experience of the Spirit), and the affections, as manifestations of and reflections on that experience, are foundationally pneumatological (Yong 2020: 167–188). Reflection on the affections proceeds by way of an imagination nurtured by the encounter with the Spirit that seeks to interpret all reality in

terms of the worldview generated by that experience (Yong 2005a: 27–30). Image, symbol, song, poetry, prophecy, vision, dreams, and testimony are the ‘pure’ media (Wariboko 2018: 133–153) of the imagination carried by the affections toward theological articulation.

The range of Christian affections is objective, relational, and dispositional; the source and object of the affections is God as an enduring expression of the believer’s relationship with Christ, the church, and the world. The affections dispose ‘the person toward God and the neighbour in ways appropriate to their source and goal in God’ (Land 1993: 136). Singular affections and dogmatic expressions of their underlying experiences have been treated as the exclusive distinctive of Pentecostal theology, among them particularly the doctrine of Spirit baptism. Even so, the central transformational experiences among Pentecostals are not limited to a select few. The story of the Spirit in the world, the church, and the human person provides an archetype for narrating Pentecostal theology that extends to the transformation and salvation of the whole of life (Vondey 2017a). Therefore, Pentecostal theology functions as an affective embodiment of the universal promise of Pentecost that the outpouring of the Spirit transcends all theological structures, possibilities, and prejudices.

1.4 Theology as praxis

The centrality of spirituality, experience, testimony, and affections characterizes Pentecostal theology inherently as praxis. This designation should not be misunderstood as a rejection of rational, theoretical, and speculative theology, or as focused exclusively on pastoral concerns (Cartledge 2020). However, Pentecostal theology as praxis is challenged by the potentially unlimited modes of expression of the experience of the Spirit made possible by an affective imagination (see 1.3). Hence, Pentecostal spirituality cannot proceed immediately in the forms and customs of traditional theology, whether conceived as doctrine, propositions, or wisdom, since the affective dimension contrasts with the often performative, functionalistic, rationalistic, utilitarian, and competitive character of these perspectives (Vondey 2013a: 13–15; Wariboko 2018: 133–153). The practical dimension of theology, which expresses the experience of the Holy Spirit as the root of spirituality, demands the continuous association of doctrine with the original experience in a way that moves from making sense to spiritual consciousness (Wariboko 2020: 115–154). Yet Pentecostals, simply put, rely on wonder; they want to remain within the realm of experience and practices, or at least return to them. In this sense, Pentecostal theology exists more in the realm of possibilities than in the realm of already actualized and objectified projections of reality (Alexander 2009). Theology lives expectantly in a proleptic eschatological tension between the not yet and the already (Althouse 2003: 9–106). Amidst this tension, theology is worship, the joy of God’s grace, the exuberance of life, the freedom of creation finding itself in God. Pentecostal theology does not eschew

extreme practices (e.g. exorcism, speaking in tongues) – it requires them in order to remain in the realm of possibilities.

The most comprehensive account of Pentecostal theology emerges from practices and experiences embodying the corporate worship of Pentecostal communities (Wilkinson 2020; Wariboko 2018: 133–153; Vondey 2017b). As a form of mystical theology, Pentecostalism embodies a radically doxological movement, and the worship service forms the foundation of spiritual practices from which doctrinal reflection can emerge. Rituals, rites and liturgies, once disregarded by Pentecostals, have become increasingly the focus of theological attention (Albrecht 1999). Among these practices, the altar call and response stand out as a comprehensive metaphor for the climax of Pentecostal worship (Vondey 2016; Tomberlin 2010). Contemporary ritual, historical and phenomenological studies of world Pentecostalism affirm certain foundational rites oriented around the altar as the consistent practices and traditions of the Pentecostal movement (Cartledge and Swoboda 2017; Lindhardt 2011; Albrecht 1999). The summit and source of Pentecostal worship, rituals and practices from which Pentecostal theology can be grasped constructively is the altar service. Other practices (and their doctrinal reflections) are readily integrated in what might be called an ‘altar hermeneutics’ (Moore 2016). Pentecostal rituals are often playful, improvised, and unstructured and invite and require additional interpretations (Vondey 2010a: 109–140). Since the most widely accepted Pentecostal doctrines have emerged from an experiential and affective doxology, Pentecostal theology is most prepared to engage other doctrines from the practices and concerns of the altar perceived as the encounter with God. In turn, conceptualized doctrines and philosophical considerations have to be brought into the embodied world of the liturgies, rituals, sacraments, and practices surrounding the altar.

Pentecostals have struggled with the question if their embodied theology can (or should) be systematic (Archer 2007; Cross 2000; Yong 1998; Bundy 1993). Part of the difficulty is concentrated in the need for an orderly, rational, and coherent method that allows for the formulation of doctrine without threatening the integrity of the experiential and doxological narrative. Another concern is that systematic theology is dominated by Western ideas and constructs that are not always readily shared by the Pentecostal experiences in the East and the Global South (Medina 2020). If we identify Pentecostal theology with an embodied spirituality based on particular experiences, affections and practices, then a systematic account of Pentecostal theology may threaten to institutionalize, theorize, disimpassion and disembodify the demand for the immediacy of the encounter with God. A systematic Pentecostal theology includes and embodies the Pentecostal spirituality, experiences, affections, and practices that form and inform Pentecostal doctrines.

2 Methods of Pentecostal theology

There is no single method that defines Pentecostal theology worldwide but emerging from the core theological commitments of the historical movement there are several dominant approaches to the theological task. The trajectories reflect debates about biblical hermeneutics, the core themes of Pentecostal doctrines, the prominent narrative of the so-called full gospel, a genuinely Pentecostal imagination or theological principle, a pneumatologically-driven praxis, and the engagement with ecumenical and interfaith conversations. These themes form the heart of diverse theological methodologies in development since the beginning of the twentieth century.

2.1 Biblical doctrine

The earliest and still one of the most prominent approaches to the theological task is the articulation of 'Bible doctrines' (Stephenson 2013: 11–27). This methodology arose with the origins of Pentecostal scholarship and its privileging of the importance of scripture (Archer 2009: 65). It was central to the establishment of missionary training and Bible schools and colleges in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century, which developed into a prominent model for theological training with the global spread of the Pentecostal movement (Vondey 2013a: 142). Represented by the prominent works of Myer Pearlman, E. S. Williams, and French L. Arrington, this methodology concentrates on a principal arrangement of biblical themes and texts along an order of doctrines adopted from traditional organization of systematic theology (Stephenson 2020: 8). Carried by a commitment to divine revelation as the source of theological articulation, this approach is dominated by biblical interpretation based on often literal readings of scripture and relies on word studies of biblical terms to interpret the biblical texts in the so-called 'plain' common sense (Arrington 1993: 121; Pearlman 1937: 85–86; Williams 1953: 131–135 [vol. 1]). Yet, the resulting theological arguments rely not on a purely literalist, subjective hermeneutic but on 'inductive and deductive interpretive reasoning skills' (Archer 2009: 74) to analyse and synthesize the biblical data into a reflection of biblical teachings.

Hence, doctrine here refers to the subjects, themes, and ideas contained in scripture, in contrast to creeds and dogmas that interpret and extrapolate the biblical revelation into what is not seldom perceived as an erroneous theological tradition (Pearlman 1937: 20–21, 144–146). The foundation of this theological epistemology is a firm belief in the divine revelation of the biblical scriptures that justifies the possibility of knowledge about God and thus the theological task itself. The theological praxis of articulating biblical doctrine proceeds along the following core steps (Stephenson 2020: 9): (1) affirming the possibility of knowledge of Christian truth; (2) categorizing divine revelation as the source of Christian knowledge; (3) acknowledging the usefulness of general revelation for obtaining select knowledge of God; (4) recognizing the inadequacy of general revelation and affirming the need for special revelation; (5) identifying scripture as the superior form of special

revelation; (6) justifying the fidelity of scripture with divine inspiration by the Holy Spirit; and (7) arguing for the correct interpretation of scripture through illumination by the same Spirit.

2.2 Systematic doctrine

A second approach favours the selection of a central Pentecostal teaching through which to present and interpret a wider theological framework. This perspective was favoured from the beginning of the movement by both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals to identify the doctrinal distinctives particular to Pentecostal theology (Vondey 2001). With the rise of Pentecostal theological scholarship, this methodology has also emerged as a prominent way to articulate, analyse, and organize a systematic Pentecostal theology. A chief representative of this approach is Frank D. Macchia, whose work draws attention to the well-known Pentecostal emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit as an organizing principle (Stephenson 2013: 59–81). Beginning with a constructive theology of glossolalia as theophanic eschatological signs of Jesus' death and resurrection, Macchia (1992: 68–72) argues for a quasi-sacramental quality of speaking in tongues as believers groan in the Spirit with creation, identify with its wait for redemption, and speak prophetically against injustice and oppression (Macchia 1998: 159–164). Glossolalia signifies the church's advocacy for justice and liberation, made possible by Jesus' redemptive work, and prefigures the arrival of the new creation.

The organizing doctrine for developing such vision is Spirit baptism – once the 'crown jewel' (Macchia 2006: 20) of Pentecostal theological distinctives. Yet, theological conversations among Pentecostals have shifted the focus at times predominantly to an apologetic for Pentecostalism, often evidenced exclusively in terms of biblical doctrines (see 2.1) and contributed to a weakened emphasis on the praxis of Spirit baptism and its theological integration (Macchia 2006: 26–28). Instead, for Macchia, Spirit baptism represents a soteriological metaphor that includes justification, sanctification, and charismatic empowerment as central dynamics of Pentecostal theology. Spirit baptism not only represents the single central distinctive of classical Pentecostal thought but serves as an organizing principle for other doctrines of the movement and for an ecumenical engagement with other theological traditions by encompassing the entire Christian life in the Spirit (Macchia 2006). An application of Spirit baptism to the concerns of God's kingdom directs the attention of Pentecostal theology more intentionally towards a pneumatological perspective of Spirit-baptized justification (Macchia 2010), Jesus as Spirit baptizer (Macchia 2018), and the Spirit-baptized church (Macchia 2020). This application of Spirit baptism as a heuristic principle ultimately opens Pentecostal theology towards a theology of God's kingdom that transcends the concerns of individual doctrines.

2.3 Full gospel

Another dominant approach to articulating a theological narrative among classical Pentecostals has been the motif of the 'full gospel'. Historically, this has emerged as a four- or fivefold kerygmatic pattern proclaiming that Jesus Christ brings (1) salvation, (2) sanctification, (3) baptism in the Spirit, (4) divine healing and (5) the impending arrival of the kingdom of God. A contemporary representative of this methodology is Wolfgang Vondey, who presents the full gospel as a comprehensive and systematic liturgical narrative aiming at participation in Pentecost on the basis of a hermeneutical and experiential move to and from the altar (Vondey 2016; 2017a; 2020a: 173–182). The full gospel depends as method on a theological narrative unique to Pentecostals built around participation in foundational biblical experiences originating with the day of Pentecost, which functions as the symbol of Pentecostal theology (Vondey 2020b: 173; 2017a: 283). Since the possibility of participating in Pentecost is grounded in spirituality and worship manifested in practices, rites, and rituals oriented around the altar, Pentecostal theology is not manifested exclusively in terms of central doctrines but rather as a way of living that is concerned fundamentally with embodying the fullness of God's redemptive work in the world (Vondey 2017b: 102–119).

Vondey (2016: 223–238) insists that Pentecostal theology is fundamentally soteriological. As 'gospel' the narrative of salvation for Pentecostals is centred on Jesus Christ and interpreted through the experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The 'gospel' of the Spirit of Christ 'poured out on all flesh' (Acts 2:17) allows Pentecostal theology to reach deep into Pentecost as a theological symbol, engaging the concrete beliefs and practices emerging with Pentecost reflected in an experiential spirituality believed by Pentecostals still to be available as a continuation, repetition, or expansion of that original experience. As a symbol, the biblical Pentecost is determinative for the entire hermeneutical focus of Pentecostal thought and praxis (Vondey 2017a: 283–288), and the logic of Pentecost forms the foundation for the broader theological narrative of the full gospel. The goal of this theology is, in the first place, to preserve the availability of Pentecost, the validity of those experiences, and their perpetuation. The concrete theological and experiential realm for this availability is the altar call and response rite (Vondey 2016). Hence, the full gospel functions as narrative expression of a Pentecostal altar liturgy in a manner represented by the popular testimony of being 'saved, sanctified, baptized in the Spirit, healed, and on the way to heaven' (Vondey 2017a: 107). On this premise, the full gospel not only articulates the core beliefs of Pentecostals but can be constructively applied to contemporary theological concerns and conversations and thereby transcends purely Pentecostal concerns.

2.4 Pneumatological imagination

The pneumatological imagination represents a methodological attempt to integrate the biblical, historical, and theological commitments of Pentecostals into a single hermeneutic

that is based on a uniquely pneumatological logic and inclusive of the diverse experiences, performances, and interpretations of Pentecost. The chief representative of this approach is Amos Yong, who proposes a wide-ranging foundational pneumatology in conversation with various themes of Pentecostal and wider theological concern (Stephenson 2013: 82–109). For Yong (2020) the logic of Pentecostal theology derives from the way the day of Pentecost depicts the work of the Holy Spirit as the most appropriate expression of God's agency in the world. A foundational pneumatology is therefore an account of the relationship between God and the world in pneumatological perspective by correlating the affirmations that God is active in the world and the world is able to receive God's activity (Yong 2000a: 99). The pneumatological imagination is a dual theological and anthropological hermeneutic (Yong 2020: 155) which relates ontology to epistemology (Yong 2002: 123). Although this affirmation – that the Holy Spirit illuminates the rationality of the world and makes it intelligible – has roots in the contemporary Pentecostal social imaginary, it is of fundamentally ancient origins on the day of Pentecost (Yong 2020: 160), so that a pneumatological imagination provides the logic that can sustain a theological programme of 'many senses', 'many tongues', and 'many voices' (Yong 2005a).

To sustain a wide-ranging Pentecostal hermeneutic, Yong (2005a) envisions Pentecostal theology as the possibility of global theology, including a theology of religions, the dialogue between science and religion, theological hermeneutics, missiology, a theology of disability, and the revisioning of diverse traditional theological loci. Originally, Yong (2000a) applied the dialogical element of the pneumatological imagination to a theology of religions to discern the presence and absence of the Holy Spirit, and of other spirits, in the different religious traditions. The possibility that God's Spirit is confirmed in places where Christ is not explicitly confessed can temporarily bridge christological questions that might otherwise lead to an impasse by focusing first on pneumatological concerns (Yong 2000b: 70). However, the pneumatological imagination functions not as a merely speculative concept for the discernment of deity in relationship to the world but also presses the concerns for participation and performative praxis. As a foundational theological hermeneutic, the pneumatological imagination can engage also with other Pentecostal methodologies, as Yong (2010: 86–98) illustrates in his use of the full gospel (see 2.3) to explicate the contours of a Pentecostal political theology. In turn, this methodology affirms that beyond exclusively Pentecostal concerns, all Christian theology is creational, incarnational, and Pentecostal, as it affirms Christ pneumatologically in and through the Holy Spirit and proceeds theologically in the Spirit to envision God's work in the world.

2.5 The Pentecostal principle

Building on the pneumatological dimension of existence, concerted efforts have begun to focus on identifying the deepest presuppositions, symbols, and mechanisms that inform a Pentecostal theology of spirit. The leading representative of what may be classified as the

pursuit of 'the Pentecostal principle' is Nimi Wariboko, who has developed a methodology rooted in social ethics and its concerns for the concrete situation, possibilities, and alternatives of human flourishing conditioned by the African experience of Pentecostalism. Wariboko (2012) considers Pentecostal theology as a public theology and understands it as a theology of possibilities organized around the Holy Spirit as the signature of existence and human experience. Theology is the reflection on everyday Pentecostal practices, which facilitate the divine in ways that are both loyal and challenging to orthodox Christianity (Wariboko 2018). The particular interest of this African Pentecostal theology is not in an 'academic' principle but in the affirmation of the social existence and ethical substance of the Christian life consistent with foundational theological expectations (Wariboko 2014a; 2018; 2019). Yet, the articulation of this Pentecostal principle demands the depths of rigorous logic and re-conceptualizations that do not shy away from 'tearing apart' the traditional idea of God and reassembling the different parts into a new synthesis (Wariboko 2018: xv). The Pentecostal principle functions not coherently as a deliberate mechanism of Pentecostal theology but as pure means radically open to divine surprises.

Building on Pentecostal articulations of theology as play (Vondey 2010a; Suurmond 1994), Wariboko (2012: 161–195) locates the inner dynamics of the Pentecostal principle in a ludic mode of theology given to freely emerging possibilities. The result is that the 'principle' functions as a form of theological 'hypothesis' that enables Pentecostals to grasp playfully alternative ways of knowing and living in the world which conform to 'spirit' even when they do not make 'sense' (Wariboko 2020: 2). Alterity and excess characterize microtheological transactions that belong to a Spirit-filled life and its demands of negotiating everyday conflicts and challenges (2018: 155–180). Pentecostal epistemology is itself 'split' between purpose and purposelessness, expectation and unexpectedness, order and disruption, instrumental value and the irruption of destiny. Pentecostal theology at large thus unfolds amidst the confrontation of spirit and sense as a social ethics and praxis that foster moral solidarity and hope.

2.6 Practical theology

The foundational emphasis Pentecostal theology places on praxis is reflected in the more recent development of practical theology as a rigorous academic discipline. A chief representative in the wider Pentecostal and charismatic community is Mark J. Cartledge, who developed a particular approach to a pneumatologically-driven praxis that interrogates the contemporary context via multiple theoretical lenses. Cartledge (2020) is interested in employing different methods which bring theology into interdisciplinary discourse through the integration of empirical research methods. In his construction of practical theology, Cartledge (2003; 2015) observes that Pentecostals approach practical theology primarily with attention to pneumatology and Spirit-driven praxis. Because the life of the church in all its facets is intertwined with the work of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostal theology seeks to

understand and develop a pneumatologically-driven praxis of leaders and congregations that discerns the mediation of the Spirit in Christian formation, worship, and ministry (Cartledge 2015: 4–13). Using a pneumatological lens through which to address religious experience, Cartledge (2010) models how a deeper engagement with scripture can lead to dialogue with systematic theology and the doctrinal traditions of the church by ‘rescripting’ ordinary Pentecostal theology (Cartledge 2010; Cartledge and Swoboda 2017). This task pays particular attention to ecclesiology, ethnography, and congregational studies by taking seriously the contemporary and concrete expressions of the church, and bringing these current actualities into discussion with biblical, historical, and systematic accounts of ecclesiology (Cartledge 2020: 168). Practical theology thereby offers an account of Pentecostal theology from the inside out that can dialogue with the wider concerns of intercultural theology (Cartledge 2011), public theology (2018), and the common good (Cartledge 2016).

Practical theology speaks to the intersection of church, society, and academy, and Cartledge (2018) views this mutual relationship as a critical ‘walking alongside’ seeking to address issues in the wider domain of public life. Practical theology thus aims to inform the way Pentecostal and charismatic Christians, in their concerns for the empowerment with the Holy Spirit, are sensitized for service to the world and frame their pneumatology of engagement for the sake of the common God (Cartledge 2016). In this way, Pentecostal theology remains conscientious of the praxis of the church’s mission for evangelism and social justice as it manifests itself in the congregational life. Areas where this methodology has been applied include the analysis of theological discourse and symbolism in cyberspace representation (Cartledge and Davies 2014) and other areas where traditional theological methods have not advanced.

2.7 Pluralistic theology

The principles of divine hospitality and spiritual discernment, prominent in other Pentecostal approaches to the theological task, form the core of a more recent methodology aimed at engaging with the demands of a pluralistic world. This approach has its roots among Pentecostals in the intercultural theology of Walter Hollenweger and his concerns for the emerging theologians, oral spiritualities, narrative structures, and religious experiences of the Majority World (Hollenweger 1979; 1982; 1988). Another dominant theological voice for this contemporary method is Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, who offers an integrative perspective that does not aim at a specifically Pentecostal theology but at integrating a plurality of methods (Stephenson 2020: 14). Originating from ecumenical and interfaith observations of Pentecostalism, Kärkkäinen (2002) offers a pneumatological theology that speaks to the variety of theological loci without becoming preoccupied with navigating from the outset all of the methodological choices (Kärkkäinen 2013a: 1–4). Hence, a pluralistic theology is neither exclusively ‘Pentecostal’ in confession

nor pneumatological in orientation but seeks to be hospitable, dialogical, and integrative (Kärkkäinen 2013a: 13). A shift is required in the perception of pneumatology from a singular to a pluralistic model that pursues and discerns the Holy Spirit within a cosmology of many spirits and powers (Kärkkäinen 2009).

A significant premise of this approach is the choice to start from a postfoundationalist perspective and to break out of the limitations of confessional particularity by becoming sensitive to interfaith and interdisciplinary debates (Kärkkäinen 2017: xviii). What Kärkkäinen envisions is a constructive theology of many foundations grounded in the distinctive witness of different traditions and resisting a foundationalism which denies Christianity an integrative, dialogical, inclusive, and hospitable vision. And yet, Kärkkäinen's work is undoubtedly also foundational in its insistence on starting with Christology (2013a), a trinitarian unfolding of the divine economy (2014), a divine creation (2015a), and a soteriological affirmation (2016), leading to a final consummation (2017). That the pluralistic pneumatological attention is particularly pronounced in the discussion of the Holy Spirit among non-Christian religions is therefore no accident but evidence that integrative theology aims to avoid focus on internal contradictions and adaptation of external beliefs through critical and comparative commitments sensitive to assessments of other traditions' beliefs, symbols, practices, and rituals in their relationship to Christianity (Kärkkäinen 2016). Pentecostal sensibilities to spiritual discernment are particularly open to a comparative theology which takes the beliefs of their faith tradition as the point of departure to explore the beliefs of another faith tradition in the hope to articulate a theology informed by both (2013a: 23–29). Kärkkäinen believes that only a robust trinitarian understanding of the role of the Spirit in the world will suffice for this kind of theology (Kärkkäinen 2004) and advocates that a Pentecostal theology for a pluralistic world is characterized by this hospitable but discerning methodology.

3 Classical Pentecostal doctrines

The diversity of Pentecostals worldwide makes a clear theological articulation of doctrines for all groups improbable. However, the theological roots of the so-called classical Pentecostal movement are predominantly Western and found in the four- or fivefold gospel (see [2.3](#)) inherited from the Wesleyan Holiness tradition (Dayton 1987: 15–33). The fivefold pattern offers a coherent articulation of the core beliefs of classical Pentecostals formed since the early decades of the twentieth century with an emphasis on salvation ([3.1](#)), sanctification ([3.2](#)), Spirit baptism ([3.3](#)), divine healing ([3.4](#)), and the coming of God's kingdom ([3.5](#)). Some Pentecostals adjust the historical pattern and combine or include other themes or emphasize select beliefs over others (Vondey 2013a). These themes also find reflection among Pentecostals worldwide and in neo-Pentecostal and charismatic movements in the mainline churches albeit interpreted through the theological lens of the dominant tradition and shaped by the dominant culture. The situation is further

complicated by denominational preferences and nuances in the articulation of Pentecostal experiences, above all between trinitarian Pentecostals and the 'Oneness' theology of the Jesus Name group or the Apostolic Pentecostal movement (Bernard 2020). Although the orientation is fundamentally soteriological, the order of doctrines is not strictly linear.

3.1 Salvation

The general contours of Pentecostal soteriology follow an evangelical Protestant narrative, centred on the atoning death of Jesus Christ on behalf of humankind alienated from God through sin. Pentecostals believe in the universal sinfulness of all humanity understood fundamentally as the breaking of God's law and offence to God's holiness (Warrington 2008: 35) which has affected the relationship of all creatures with one another and with God (Thompson 2010); in Jesus Christ, the Son of God took on human nature and restored the cosmos through the atoning sacrifice of his death (Rybarczyk 2018: 80–82). Pentecostals extend the story of salvation beyond the crucifixion to the resurrection and ascension of Christ, which made possible the outpouring and reception of the Holy Spirit (Vondey 2017a: 52). Hence, the christological and pneumatological components of soteriology are viewed through the lens of Pentecost and not always in light of traditional atonement theologies (Studebaker 2021). Trinitarian Pentecostals view their participation in the story of salvation in the light of Pentecost as the work of both Christ and the Spirit, that is, both justification and sanctification (Macchia 2010; Studebaker 2003). Oneness Pentecostals point to justification by faith as a means to transformation by the Holy Spirit albeit not as the work of two divine persons but in another form of God as the Spirit that was in Jesus (Bernard 2020: 201). For both, the order of salvation follows more closely the soteriological narrative of Pentecost (Acts 2:38) to include repentance, water baptism, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Milton 2020: 229).

Pentecostal soteriology is therefore more closely related to the experiences and practices that embody the moments of salvation and perpetuate the work of Christ through the Holy Spirit across all dimensions of life (Yong 2005a: 91–98). Through the lens of Pentecost, the gift of salvation is the regeneration of the human person, and the Spirit is both the gift and the promise of this regeneration (Vondey 2017a: 49). The concrete experience of a personal encounter with God opens up the charismatic dimension of the Christian life to continued experiences of redemption directed toward a perceived climax of salvation in terms of fulfilling one's personal destiny, eternal life after death, and the eschatological renewal of all creation (Milton 2015). The praxis of salvation is typically oriented around the altar call and response rite, which reinforces the soteriological narrative of divine initiative and human response (Vondey 2016). The altar serves as a theological metaphor for participation in the salvific work of God and highlights the tension between personal and public, spontaneous and ritual forms of conversion, catechesis and spiritual formation (Bennett 2000). Important to this broad praxis of salvation is the emphasis on embodiment

of divine and human initiative in personal and communal forms of expression (Trementozzi 2018) which testify to and extend the experience of salvation in the past ('I was saved') to the present ('I am saved') and the future ('I will be saved'). Soteriology is therefore a comprehensive category that also includes the discussion of other Pentecostal doctrines.

3.2 Sanctification

Classical Pentecostals inherited the concerns for holiness and Christian perfection from the nineteenth-century Holiness Movement (Dieter 1998) and placed sanctification at the heart of their experience of salvation. Experientially grounded, sanctification unfolds along the tension between a deliverance and cleansing from sin and an ontological transformation and growth towards holiness (Coulter 2020: 244). The language of sanctification as a 'second crisis' grew out of the experience that conversion (as the first crisis) often does not eradicate sinful actions (Dieter 1987). At the same time, Pentecostals embrace the possibility of 'perfection' to underscore the unity of God's consecrating and sanctifying grace as a measurable external and internal work in the human person. Outwardly, sanctification embraces the development of virtues manifested in a forsaking of sin and pursuit of a righteous life; while inwardly sanctification is an awakening of the soul and rightful ordering of the affections toward union with God (Land 1993: 117–134). God's sanctifying grace is initiated with regeneration and continues through a process of formation and transformation through works of deliverance, piety, mercy, and love (Castelo 2013). Pentecostals hold different views on the exact moment of sanctification in the *ordo salutis* (Vondey 2017a: 68), and the Wesleyan Holiness tradition tends to speak of a 'second blessing' following regeneration, while some see it as synonymous with justification or others with Spirit baptism, and again others prefer to view sanctification as a progressive act of God throughout the believer's life.

Key elements of the doctrine of sanctification include Christology, with its prominence of the image of Jesus as the ground of sanctification; pneumatology, with an accent on the Holy Spirit as the agent who transforms the person into Christ's image; anthropology, with an emphasis on both the weakness and the ability of the human being; ecclesiology, with its stress on the church as the communion of saints; and eschatology, with its expectation of glorification as the final sanctification of all creation (Vondey 2017a: 72). Through the lens of Pentecost, sanctification is inherently viewed as a work of the Holy Spirit who restores the image of Christ in the human person (Coulter 2020: 245). However, the adoption of a Reformed perspective by some Pentecostals has led to a weakened emphasis on the Spirit as constitutive of sanctification (Studebaker 2003: 260–265). Affinities with Eastern Orthodox views have strengthened a Pentecostal ontology of sanctification in the form of a 'deification' by grace (Rybarczyk 2004: 127–171). The means of sanctification interpreted as deification are embedded in ritual practices of the church, revivals, personal piety, and ascetic practices (Augustine 2012: 15–41), although

often with strong emphasis on the individual. Tarrying services, foot washing, soaking prayer and anointing with oil integrated in a disciplined life reinforced by communal prayer, fasting and commitment to personal holiness form the general response to God's grace and expression of the sanctity of the believer (Vondey 2017b: 105–107). Such practices also build a bridge from sanctification to empowerment and form the foundation for the doctrine of Spirit baptism.

3.3 Spirit baptism

Spirit baptism refers strictly speaking to the experience of the outpouring and reception of the Holy Spirit by the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost. Traditionally seen as a baptism of holiness through sanctification given to those who already received a baptism of regeneration, the close association with Pentecost has directed the doctrine primarily to the biblical rhetoric of power and charismatic endowment (Acts 1:8) under which sanctification became assumed (Menziez 1994; see *Charismatic Gifts*). The shift to the notion of charismatic endowment identifies the primary purpose of Spirit baptism with the reception of power for *witness* to the gospel. The original moment of this baptism, identified when the disciples 'were all filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:4), is interpreted as the fulfillment of God's promise of the Spirit (v. 16–21; Joel 2:28), attributed to the resurrected and ascended Jesus (v. 33; Acts 11:16), and extended as eschatological gift to all followers of Christ (v. 38; see Acts 10:44–46). The history and content of the doctrine of Spirit baptism is dominated by debates about its doctrinal position, purpose, and praxis in the Christian life (Macchia 2006).

The explanation of biblical events in light of the personal experiences of Pentecostals, raises for many of them the question of a normative logical, or chronological, subsequence of Spirit baptism to conversion and regeneration (Fee 1985). In the Pentecostal view of the Christian life as several distinct crisis moments, Spirit baptism is considered a second (or third) work of grace following justification (and sanctification). The different moments suggest a distinct manner of reception of the Spirit and a different soteriological purpose for Spirit baptism (Petts 1998). Classical Pentecostals, in particular, insist that Spirit baptism is manifested by speaking with other tongues as its initial (physical) evidence. Speaking with tongues highlights the observable nature of the experience and situates Spirit baptism as the source of the charismatic life and empowerment of the church (Friesen 2013: 154–193). Recent interpretations of glossolalia as a sacramental sign have provided theological grounds to view Spirit baptism less in evidential or causal categories than in existential and dialogical terms (Macchia 1998). Oneness Pentecostals emphasize that both water baptism and Spirit baptism form part of Christian initiation, the former as expression of faith and repentance and the latter as a definite, empowering and transforming experience (Bernard 2020: 204). These debates about subsequence, empowerment, and initial evidence have marked the boundaries of doctrinal discussions

on Spirit baptism for most of the history of Pentecostal theology (Studebaker 2012). Among some Pentecostal groups, seeking an experience of the Spirit subsequent to conversion, manifesting charismatic empowerment, and speaking with tongues have become detached from a larger theological narrative and other spiritual realities and ritual practices (Clifton 2007). In the global recognition of a chief Pentecostal theological distinctive, Spirit baptism is gradually replaced by the emphasis on divine healing.

3.4 Divine healing

The Pentecostal teaching of divine healing is rooted in the nineteenth-century healing movements and their emphasis on the provision of physical healing in the atonement (Alexander 2006). Situated in the larger categories of soteriology, Christology, and pneumatology, healing is understood principally as a metaphor for salvation and the concrete manifestation of regeneration made possible by the death and resurrection of Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit to the believer (Petts 1993). While, for example, Pentecostal Finished Work soteriology looks to Calvary as the historical realization of healing already accomplished at the atonement, Wesleyan Pentecostal soteriology speaks of healing in eschatological terms as a foretaste of the coming kingdom of God (Alexander 2020: 259). The healing of the body thus manifests a visible sign of both the victory of the cross and the future resurrection and healing of all creation (Alexander 2006: 235–329). The emphasis on divine healing occupied a significant role in Pentecostal mission (Anderson 2007: 215–219) and the establishment of healing ministries in the twentieth century (McGee 2010). Pentecostal theology of healing is highly contextualized, resonating particularly with the worldviews and Indigenous practices of the majority world (Gunther Brown 2011). The globalisation of Pentecostalism has expanded, diversified, and popularized Pentecostal teachings and practices, particularly in the form of the Word of Faith teaching of the so-called health-and-wealth gospel. Divine healing has become a universal metaphor for the liberation and redemption of not only the physical body but of wider individual, communal, socioeconomic, political, and religious circumstances.

Pentecostal healing doctrine arises from the affirmation that wholeness and restoration belong to the universal salvific will of God for all creation, even if they are not experienced in the present (Warrington 2003). The divide between the contrasting experience of sickness in the world and God's will is the consequence of the fall. Sickness may be attributed to the devil, as an act of oppression, or to God, as a means of instruction, punishment, or sanctification, as well as to natural and relational causes (Alexander 2006: 88–93). Christ overcame the divide with his own suffering and victory over death, and as the divine healer imparts the effects of healing to believers, so that the experience of healing forms a foretaste of their own resurrection (Warrington 2000). The theology of divine healing emphasizes the continued healing power of Christ, the redemption of the body, spiritual and physical transformation, and the tangible encounter and anointing

with the Holy Spirit. In turn, healing manifests the volatile nature of the present world, and some Pentecostals have traditionally rejected biomedical approaches to health in favour of faith healing communities and rituals (Alexander 2020: 263). As an experience of the Spirit, divine healing is a confrontation with spiritual powers manifested in deliverance, liberation, and exorcism taking place in the spiritual realm but manifested in the physical world (Vondey 2017a: 118; see Charismatic Gifts). The broadening of healing doctrines beyond the concerns for the body challenges anthropocentric and individualistic forms of soteriology and any eschatology that ignores God's redemptive will for the whole of creation.

3.5 Eschatology

Pentecostal theology originates from an abundant eschatological, radically apocalyptic, imagination and expectation of the return or the 'second coming' of Jesus Christ and the consummation of the kingdom of God. This 'passion for the kingdom' (Land 1993) embraces not only a future expectation of the imminent coming of Jesus but the belief that the presence of the kingdom is already realized in history with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal eschatology stands in an uneasy relationship with the classical dispensationalism of the nineteenth century. Some groups have closely adopted premillennial dispensationalism (see Millenarianism), while others have modified or rejected it (Althouse 2020). Modifications tend to appropriate the biblical image of the 'latter rain' outpouring of the Spirit (Deut 11:10–15) as an illustration of Pentecostal pneumatological and eschatological beliefs (Dayton 1987). Rejections tend to focus on the problematic idea and hermeneutic of a secret rapture of the church (Sheppard 1984). In contrast, traditional Pentecostal theology highlights the eschatological significance of Pentecost understood as the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days (Althouse 2003). Pentecost therefore functions as a critical eschatological metaphor for wider soteriological, ecclesiological, and socio-political concerns.

A dispensational hermeneutic has provided Pentecostal theology with a sense of urgency highlighted not only in a future-oriented apocalypticism but also a historically critical restorationism (Wacker 2001). Central to Pentecostal sensitivities is the allocation of both continuity and discontinuity between the apostolic community and the historical church, on the one hand, and the institutional church and the kingdom of God, on the other. Pentecostalism itself occupies an instrumental role in this tension as an eschatological revival movement heralding the kingdom in dramatic signs and wonders (McQueen 2012) with charismatic manifestations leading to an unprecedented evangelization of the world (Thompson 2010: 9–58). While this eschatological fervor led to a withdrawal from transformative missiological practices during the middle of the twentieth century, subsequent attempts to rediscover the prophetic and socio-critical ethos of the movement have contributed to developing a socially and ethically responsible eschatology (Althouse

2003: 61–107). From the perspective of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit is a consequence of the mission of Jesus to send the church to the ‘end’ (eschaton) of the world. Identifying Pentecostal eschatology broadly as a form of premillennial pneumatological restorationism, therefore points to an apocalyptic mandate of the church to participate in the realization of the kingdom of God through the charismatic ministry made possible by the Spirit (Vondey 2017a: 144). The accommodation of classical Pentecostals to their dominant culture and consequent waning of eschatological fervor has shifted the apocalyptic hermeneutic from a focus on the future to interpretations of present history (Thompson 2005). Nonetheless, apocalyptic concerns contrast with any purely conceptual eschatology by highlighting the charismatic, socio-critical, and evangelistic missionary praxis and fellowship of the church in a world confronted with the coming of God’s kingdom.

4 Contemporary Pentecostal theology

The development and shape of contemporary Pentecostal theology is greatly influenced by the doctrines of classical Pentecostalism confronted with the continuing growth and expansion of the Pentecostal movement, internal diversification and tensions, and considerations of social ethics, politics and economics, the possibility of global theology, ecumenical dialogue, and wide-ranging interdisciplinary conversations and challenges.

4.1 Pentecostal theology as global theology

Although Pentecostalism emerged through a series of worldwide revivals that spread globally through missionary networks and local Indigenous ministries (Anderson 2013), conscientious attempts to contribute to and to construct Pentecostal theology as a global theology emerged in the West only with the beginning of the twenty-first century (Vondey 2010a; Macchia 2006; Yong 2005a). The roots of this attempt can be traced back to the origins of academic research on global Pentecostalism in the work of Walter J. Hollenweger (1927–2016). His initial attempt to map the Pentecostal movement worldwide (Hollenweger 1972) led to the development of a practical contextual and intercultural theology and typology (1997) which identified six structural identifiers of global Pentecostalism: (1) oral liturgy, (2) narrative witness, (3) reconciliatory and participant community, (4) dreams and visions, (5) healing and deliverance, and (6) liturgical music and dance (Anderson 2020: 23–25). Contemporary constructive and systematic attempts by Pentecostals in the West and the northern hemisphere focus predominantly on methodological choices as a basis for global theology including the day of Pentecost (Vondey 2017a), the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Yong 2005a), and Spirit baptism (Macchia 2006). Contextual proposals share an emphasis on Pentecostal theology as the expression of ‘many tongues,’ ‘many voices’ and ‘many senses’ (Yong 2005a) fielded by

discussions about identifying a universal Pentecostal theological narrative (Archer 2007), hermeneutics (Oliverio 2012), and tradition (Vondey 2020b; Chan 2000).

Voices from the Global South have offered different perspectives and alternative priorities, emphasizing especially closer consideration of existential questions and Indigenous Pentecostal concerns in different contexts (Medina and Alfaro 2015; Asamoah-Gyadu 2013; Kalu 2008). Global perspectives emphasize the need to let Indigenous voices speak for themselves without enforcing a Western missionary paradigm (Asamoah-Gyadu 2015) and to trace the localized particularities of Pentecostal theology (Cleary and Stewart-Gambino 2019; Yang, Tong and Anderson 2017). Indigenous Pentecostal thought engages with traditional religion (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013) and dominant cultural models (Solivan 1998) often shifting inherited classical Pentecostal ideas towards lived theologies dominated by the concerns of postcolonial societies (Estrada-Carrasquillo 2021; Lindhardt 2014). The global landscape witnesses a cohesive tendency of Pentecostal theology to go beyond the historical roots of classical Pentecostalism. Although the classical Pentecostal doctrines are not abandoned in this process, isolated themes can be overemphasized or underrepresented at the expense of integrative theological models. This development is further complicated by the diversification of beliefs and practices since the middle of the twentieth century among the Charismatic Movement in the established churches, independent Free Churches, neo-Pentecostal groups, new prophetic churches, and diverse fringe groups with often selective affinities toward some or all of the others (Anderson 2013: 171–201). The exclusion of extreme theological positions has tended to dismantle global stereotypes at the cost of identifying Pentecostals theologically in harmonious patterns more closely aligned with established traditions and oversimplifying the global diversity of the movement (Vondey 2013a: 3). Pentecostal participation in ecumenical dialogues has both unified and sharpened theological debates among Pentecostals and with other traditions (see 4.2). Advocacy for socioeconomic and socio-political issues has widened the theological spectrum of Pentecostal concerns (see 4.3). Global debates exist in particular about theological tensions between a holistic spirituality and charismatic extremism, public and individual welfare, miracles and rituals, denominationalism and ecumenical ethos, social engagement and Pentecostal elitism, egalitarian ethos and institutionalization. These debates are indispensable for understanding the global shape and state of Pentecostal theology.

4.2 Ecumenical theology

Pentecostalism emerged in both continuity and discontinuity with various existing theological traditions, doctrines, and practices, and the resulting character of Pentecostal ecumenical theology does not immediately form a homogeneous picture. Widespread initial efforts toward Christian unity characterized by a fundamental ecumenical optimism were soon followed by scepticism and confusion (Jacobsen 2010). Underlying the

changing attitude was a restorationist impulse that emerged as an emphasis on the need for a return to the practices of the apostolic community and was based on a critical view of contemporary Christian practices which were perceived as stifling spiritual growth, deemphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit, and altering the original forms of Christianity (Wacker 1988). Organized contributions to ecumenical conversations returned slowly after the Second World War (Robeck 2004). The rise of the charismatic movement opened Pentecostalism to worldwide ecumenical recognition and participation in official and semi-official association with the World Council of Churches, national councils, commissions, and fellowships (Vondey 2010b; 2013b). The international Roman Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue since 1972 is the most significant long-term ecumenical commitment among Pentecostals to address a large and diverse array of topics (Creemers 2009). The international dialogue between Pentecostals and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has focused on the relationship between the Word and the Holy Spirit, as well as the church and the world (Macchia 2001), and experience in Christian faith and life with particular focus on worship, discipleship, community, and justice. Conversations with the Lutheran World Federation since 2005 have engaged the nature of ecumenical theology and dialogue concerned less with explorations of traditional doctrinal themes, which often force Pentecostals to speak a different theological language, than with allowing space for a genuine expression of faith and explorations of mutual practices of worship, proclamation, sacraments, and spiritual gifts (Institute for Ecumenical Research, The David du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality and The European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association 2010). Other ecumenical conversations serve primarily as mutual introductions, for example, between Pentecostals and the Synodal Committee for Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Christian Affairs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople or the dialogue with the Mennonite World Conference. Most recent among Pentecostal ecumenical endeavours is participation in the Global Christian Forum (van Beek 2009). Especially problematic is the lack of reception, discussion, response, and implementation of ecumenical documents among Pentecostal churches. Institutional ecumenical theology generally does not envision immediate full, visible unity but focuses on spiritual union to provide cooperative fellowship and ministry (Richie 2020). The ecumenical history of Pentecostalism has added an important apologetic, evaluative, and critical dimension to Pentecostal theology.

4.3 Social ethics, political, and economic thought

The intersection of political and economic thought with the concerns of theological ethics is a hallmark of recent Pentecostal thought. A Pentecostal political theology has emerged only gradually along different, sometimes conflicting, paths including sectarian apolitical, conservative political, and progressive alternative political ideologies (Yong 2010: 4–14). Global concerns for political and economic welfare are compounded in urban contexts and the Global South and generally accompanied by the use and abuse of power (Adelakun

2021; Cleary and Stewart-Gambino 2019; Sahoo 2018; Wariboko 2014b). Pentecostals insist that the political and economic realm are not morally neutral but demand a rigorous ethical and theological vision of a pneumatic cosmology, human charismatic ontology, the economics of the Spirit, and a corresponding political-economic praxis (Augustine 2019; Wariboko 2012: 107–129). Theological models develop from an increasing dominance of prosperity theology in the life and community of Pentecostals in North America and the Global South driven by the Word of Faith movement and a socioeconomic vision of material abundance (Heuser 2015). Indigenous responses to the prosperity gospel emphasize the importance of developing a responsible biblical hermeneutic, anthropology, and ecclesiology (Barnes et al. 2021; Attanasi and Yong 2012) oriented towards a Pentecostal theology of the common good (Augustine and Green 2021; Augustine 2019: 13–60; Cartledge 2016; Wariboko 2014a: 1–28). The socio-cultural and historical contexts that have driven the Pentecostal identification with power are theologically enmeshed in contrasting discourses of atonement and healing, demons and deliverance, salvation and welfare enforced by traditional rituals of offering and tithes alongside expectations of miracles and blessing as a personal experience embedded in expectations of national economic prosperity (Adelakun 2021: 29–65; Heuser 2015; Attanasi and Yong 2012: 35–60). In response, Pentecostals have directed attention away from theological principles of individual prosperity and national exceptionalism to ethical questions of renewal shaped by justice, leadership, and education (Studebaker 2016: 199–278) and reshaped by the classical Pentecostal doctrines of the full gospel (Yong 2011: 121–358).

4.4 Pentecostal theology and science

Pentecostals have avoided engagement with modern science for most of the twentieth century. The authority of science and technology was generally perceived as a threat to foundational Christian beliefs, and initial forays among Pentecostal scholars have dealt primarily with identifying the divide (Yong 2009; Smith and Yong 2010). The theological motivation for engagement with the sciences has come from Pentecostal interest in countering the forces of late modernity, advancing the intelligibility, credibility, and validity of the movement's worldview, shaping their own theological methodology, and developing a Pentecostal pneumatological imagination (Yong 2005b; 2009; 2011). Amos Yong (2000b) suggests that the sciences can identify the cosmological causes in the world, but because the presence and activity of God is not scientifically verifiable, they rely on theology to speak teleologically about creation. His pneumatological theology of creation based on the theory of emergence has become a dominant but also contested trajectory for viewing the Spirit as the divine activity and agency that allows for a hierarchical, pluralistic, and interconnected view of the cosmos consonant with the biblical and eschatological sensibilities of Pentecostal theology (Yong 2011: 133–172; Leidenhag and Leidenhag 2018). Primary issues for the continuing theological discussion include the question of divine supernatural agency (Smith 2008), the supervenience of divine activity on human

agency (Attanasi and Yong 2012; Yong 2009: 17–29), the agency and personhood of the Holy Spirit (Vondey 2009; Yong 2011: 89–100), the theological and scientific understanding of the origins and properties of nature (Yong 2009: 117–174; 2011: 102–132), the implications of Pentecostal hermeneutics for the theology and science interface (Ware 2020: 461), the compatibility of ‘Western’ science with non-Western Pentecostal worldviews (Bom 2019), and the intellectual and moral challenges posed by modern science (Charles 2017). Whether the theological, scientific, and Pentecostal communities will engage in mutual conversations remains to be seen.

4.5 The boundaries of Pentecostal theology

The critical debates in this section define the boundaries of the contemporary Pentecostal movement and its theological self-understanding. Other conversations and challenges exist where Pentecostal theology has broadened its global, ecumenical, political, economic, and ethical sensibilities. In some cases, Pentecostals have only just begun theological reflection, while in others, varying, and sometimes disagreeing theological perspectives exist (Vondey 2020a: 3). Most of these theological debates are the consequence of shifts in Pentecostal eschatological expectations, missiology, ecclesiology, and ecumenical relations which have opened the movement to social engagement in different areas (Miller and Yamamori 2007). Among the first critical theological reflections were concerns about race that viewed the birth of Pentecostalism as a post-racist interracial and multiracial movement with innovative theological anthropologies and ecclesiologies (Daniels 2020). The often radically inclusive ethics of early Pentecostal communities offers a social vision of love, equality, and unity that has been challenged by evangelical, liberation, and prosperity theology (Sanders 2020). Similarly, attempts to deconstruct the patriarchal gender paradigm prominent among Pentecostals have led to specific Pentecostal feminist theologies (Stephenson 2012). The concerns for divine healing and redemption have extended to explorations of a theology of disability (Yong 2007a; Clifton 2018) as well as the beginnings of a Pentecostal ecotheology and environmental praxis (Swoboda 2009). Elsewhere, Pentecostals have embarked on conversations between theology and philosophy (Smith 2010), theology and aesthetics (Félix-Jäger 2015), and the theology of religions (Yong 2000a; Richie 2011). The dynamic range of these conversations and challenges confirms that Pentecostal theology is developing rapidly along still largely undefined territory as an emerging global tradition.

Attributions

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