

What is distinctive about Pentecostal Theology? – 22 years later

Mathew Clark

Director of Postgraduate Studies, Regents Theological College

1. Introduction

In the mid-1980's the Institute for Theological Research at University of South Africa launched the Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism Project. It was managed by the Department of Systematic Theology, with Henry Lederle as Project Leader. The Project was advised by a board which included a number of Pentecostal church leaders.

In January 1987 I was sponsored by the Institute to research and write the work that was eventually published in hardcover by Unisa in 1989 as *What is distinctive about Pentecostal Theology?* It was the first publication from the project and appeared under both my name and Lederle's.

In the 1970's and 1980's the notion of Pentecostal *propria* or distinctives was very much in vogue. Scholars such as Lederle (e.g. Lederle (1981)), who was of traditional Reformed background and theological education, were attempting to understand the implications of the experiential aspects of neo-Pentecostalism for theologising, while an emerging Pentecostal scholarship was equally keen to articulate the essentials of *their* theology as distinct from the non-Pentecostal varieties. This led to a flowering of serious theological literature – systematic, Biblical and historical - from Pentecostal scholars or about Pentecostalism, e.g. monographs from Cronje (1981), Dayton (1987), Lederle (1986), Stander (1985) and Stronstad (1984), and collections from Spittler (1976) and Elbert (1985). It was also a standard topic at theological conferences such as SPS, and in many journal articles on Pentecostalism.

This paper is the beginning of my own serious attempt to revisit the issue, something I have intended to do for a number of years now. It is prompted by a basic question: is it still relevant to Pentecostal studies to scratch where it itched 2 decades ago? If not, why has the itch gone away, and has anything replaced it?

2. The relevant issues of the late 1980's

A major spur to Pentecostal research in the 1970's and 1980's was the growth of the neo-Pentecostal and charismatic movements. An initial concern of scholars involved in these movements was how to incorporate their new-found experiential dimension of Christianity into the theological frameworks of their traditions. How could one articulate, in the language of rational western theology, the **relationship between doctrine/tradition and experience** Linked to this was the question of emotional expression: is strong emotion inevitably linked to charismatic experience? If so, how can we live with or express this in our own very prosaic traditions and liturgies? Lederle (1981) approached this challenge from his own experiences as a Reformed theologian in South Africa.

Most Pentecostal graduates at that time had studied at non-Pentecostal universities under non-Pentecostal professors, and on their graduation the movement had not always assimilated them without some tension. It is significant that a number of the first generation of Pentecostal graduates either became post-Pentecostals or continued in their denominations in ongoing tension with many of their peers in Pentecostal ministry. In South Africa some anti-intellectual ministers would actually boast "I have been to the *braambos* (the burning bush) not the Stellenbosch (seat of a Reformed theological faculty)" The **search for a Pentecostal hermeneutic** that marked the 80's and 90's threw some light upon this matter by highlighting the problems involved in applying a hermeneutic learned in a Protestant/Evangelical/Reformed environment within the dynamics of Pentecostal ministry, e.g. McClean's (1984) and

Sheppard's (1984) contributions in *Pneuma*. The role and use of the Bible in a movement whose ethos is rooted in Anabaptist-Wesleyan-Holiness method and values may be significantly distinct from groups whose roots are in classical Protestantism. On the other hand there is some debate today as to whether the roots of 20th century Pentecostalism *should* be sought in one of these camps or the other – e.g. Menzies (2007) argues that the Reformed-Evangelical roots are more significant than any others, whereas Dayton (1987) argues for the primacy of the Wesleyan-Holiness roots and Clark (2004) adds to this the relevance of the Anabaptist-Moravian roots for Wesleyanism and thus for Pentecostalism.

By the second half of the 20th century, **Pentecostal missions** were being hailed as a remarkable success story in comparison to the mission efforts of most other Christian groups. Research into the planting and growth of Pentecostalism outside of the North Atlantic world focussed attention upon the distinctive aspects of Pentecostal evangelisation, preaching, liturgy, and community. The astonishing growth of Pentecostal-type churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America was reducing the North Atlantic churches to an insignificant minority – in terms of numbers if not of resources, research, publications and money. Today there are probably more Pentecostals within 100 miles of Seoul, Sao Paulo, Johannesburg, Lagos or Accra than there ever have been in the whole of Europe and the UK. Pentecostals also overwhelmingly outnumber evangelicals in most of these contexts, the opposite of the situation in the North Atlantic region. This means that how they preached, prayed, evangelised and worshiped in achieving this remarkable situation became vital for Pentecostal self-understanding. McClung (1986) was among those who focussed upon this area of Pentecostal research.

The extension of Pentecostalism in significant numbers into the so-called Third World also confronted the movement with **demands of social justice** within this region. This was an area that apocalyptic movements either avoided as far as possible, or lost themselves in totally. Pentecostalism had generally adopted the former course. In White-ruled countries in Africa such as Rhodesia and South Africa the White-dominated Pentecostal denominations were faced by the attraction to Black, political and liberation theologies on the part of their Black colleagues. In Latin America the growth of Pentecostalism was paralleled and challenged by the growing popularity of theologies of revolution and liberation among churchmen of that region. The study of Pentecostalism and socio-political issues thus became an area of crucial interest for Pentecostals at that time. My own doctoral research (Clark 1989), prompted by the contrasting attitudes of Pentecostals and Evangelicals in the Rhodesian war to those of the ecumenically aligned churches, addressed this by investigating the political theology of Jurgen Moltmann from a Pentecostal perspective. Pentecostal leader Chikane recounts his own involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa (Chikane 1988), and was also a motivator behind the publication of the *Kairos Document* (Kairos Document 1985), a declaration that challenged all Christians to overtly join the liberation struggle, to the extent of using or condoning violence if necessary.

Crucial, if not always central, to addressing all of these concerns lay the notion of “**encounter with God.**” Pentecostals were essentially people who claimed to have had a particular encounter with God. Not a “new” encounter, but an encounter such as that modelled in e.g. the gospels and Acts – an encounter that occurs within parameters defined by the Christian scriptures. The challenge for Pentecostal theologians has thus been to articulate theology as people who have had this encounter, while neither diminishing the dynamic aspects of the encounter nor playing fast and loose with the technical demands of theological science and its disciplines. This has probably been one of its most difficult assignments, particularly in those intellectual contexts dominated by post-Enlightenment categories, as Kelsey (1974) pointed out. The temptation has been either to reduce the encounter to some sort of sociological, anthropological or psychological phenomenon, or (in reaction) to reject a “dead” theological system that refuses to take God seriously.

These were all issues that naturally presented themselves to my research in 1987, and I attempted to address them as thoroughly and relevantly as possible.

3. A plurality of Pentecostals: regional and cultural diversity of burning issues?

Any approach to the matter of Pentecostal *propria* in this decade of the 21st century is faced by a number of complexities that render it difficult, if not impossible, to treat Pentecostalism simplistically as a monolithic movement. The theme of this conference highlights one of those areas: non-western Pentecostalism.

The spread of Pentecostalism into the developing world, where the overwhelming majority of Pentecostals are now to be found, and the increasing competence of developing-world theologians to record and articulate their own belief and practice, offers an alternative approach to the self-understanding of Pentecostalism that can no longer be ignored. Are there not perhaps at least two disparate sets of burning issues that need to be dealt with? And what will determine *who* documents the process normatively, and how?

My personal journey illustrates the challenges of living, researching and articulating Pentecostal issues in two different worlds. In South Africa I served in a denomination of over 1 million members with 2000 ministers, at least 50 of whom held PhD or equivalent in theology (2007 data.) I am now accredited as a minister in a UK Pentecostal denomination that has less than 60 000 members nationally, with about 600 ministers, of whom 2 or 3 have PhD or equivalent in theology (2008 data.) But just 2 UK-grown contemporary Pentecostal scholars (Warrington and Kay) have published and edited as many theological collections and monographs as all the South African scholars combined.

The picture is similar if one takes the scholar/publication ratio of North American Pentecostals and compares it with Asia, Africa and Latin America, even within a single multinational denomination such as Assemblies of God. In the developing world Pentecostal scholars are more likely to be local (large-) church ministers, national leaders, or teachers intensely involved in meeting the massive training demands in an environment of rapidly growing churches, than tenured scholars in seminaries or universities. This has the rather odd effect that students researching issues in the developing world are using, as the primarily available published sources, works that originated outside of, and often with little or limited reference to, their own ministry and existential situation. The migration to the North Atlantic region of developing-world scholars with prolific publication records, such as Amos Yong, Allan Anderson, Wonsuk Ma and others, may still have something of an ameliorating, if attenuated, effect.

A case in point is the typical North Atlantic Pentecostal-Evangelical debate on issues such as hermeneutics and initial evidence. In the North Atlantic world these are crucial areas of debate and revisiting them is relevant to the normal ministry situation of most Pentecostal ministers. However, in the developing world many elements of the Pentecostal-Evangelical debate are simply irrelevant to most ministry situations. On the interface between a dynamic Pentecostal form of Christianity and animism or Islam or Buddhism or Hinduism (or even folk Catholicism as encountered in e.g. Latin America and the Philippines) these may be peripheral rather than central matters.

Two monographs that appeared in 2008 illustrate this divide, Warrington's *Pentecostal Theology* and Kalu's *African Pentecostalism*.

Warrington describes his aim as "to focus on a Pentecostal theology which is defined by distinctive elements of Pentecostal belief and praxis but especially by an undergirding Pentecostal philosophy" (Warrington 2008:vii). Chapter headings then include God, the church, the Bible, Spirituality and ethics, mission, Healing, exorcism and suffering, and eschatology.

The longest chapter is on God, in which 16 pages deal with the Father and Jesus, and 86 pages deal with the Holy Spirit, and of those 35 pages deal with the baptism in the Holy Spirit and especially the issue of subsequence. While at certain “relevant” places in the work non-Western scholarship is indicated or referenced (such as in the overview of world Pentecostalism and the discussion of mission) the sources he lists for the majority of the work are overwhelmingly Western and the issues that are raised are described and discussed from primarily that perspective. For Warrington the burning issues of Pentecostalism are the burning issues of North Atlantic Pentecostalism. Even in the discussion on mission the sources and topics are oriented predominantly toward the Western perspective. Within Warrington’s own culture and context this is a valuable and insightful work. But as an adequate representation of complex and diverse global Pentecostalism(s) it is not so convincing.

Kalu’s work aims at presenting a comprehensive overview of the complex historical, social, political and theological influences that have shaped African Pentecostalism. In his conclusion he states “The effort has been made to retell the story of African Pentecostalism by paying attention to space, time, themes, and various scholarly discourses. The overarching conceptual scheme indicates that African Pentecostalism emerged from African indigenous and cultural responses to the gospel message.” (Kalu 2008:291.) In outlining the burning issues that Pentecostal theology in Africa seeks to address, he asks: “How do Pentecostal theologies connect the conception of salvation with issues of contemporary significance like poverty, wealth, prosperity, health, healing and the reconstruction of daily life? Is African Pentecostalism a genre of fundamentalism? Finally, how do Pentecostals read and preach the Bible and claim the enduring, archaic power of its oral nature?” (:250.)

Kalu provides in his select bibliography an impressive list of Pentecostal writings relating to Africa, an equally impressive African contribution among them. The manner in which he shapes his history and theological discourse in conversation with these sources provides a cogent model for contemporary Pentecostal theologising. It is more than just aware of cultural distinction: it offers an account and analysis of the Pentecostal thinking of a major portion of the Pentecostal church that can be read by those who are not African and still be understood to recognisably represent Pentecostalism as they too know it.

Kalu contends that Pentecostalism in Africa has recently changed at a pace as rapid as it has grown. The following significant shifts in its shape and ethos have occurred since the later 1990’s:

1. Prosperity theology is widely criticised;
2. there has been a return to a holiness ethic;
3. there is a blossoming of intercessory ministry;
4. evangelism has intensified;
5. there is wide engagement of the public space;
6. there has been a massive charismatisation of the mainline churches.

(Kalu :19)

It may well be that Kalu is here reporting his own West African context, as in e g Southern Africa not all of these changes might be as evident. However, they do indicate how the burning issues have migrated within part of the African region of the Pentecostal movement.

Kalu (:21) reports Martin (2005:121) with regard to the ambiguities born of the dynamism of a movement that is called to articulate itself relevantly in different parts of the world:

1. even when it crosses borders, it goes native;
2. there are some cases of Anglo-Saxon origins, but many more where it is free-standing;
3. in some places it expresses folk religiosity but also ingests it;
4. the class content of its membership cannot be easily classified;
5. it may be varied but retains family likeness;

6. it fuses the modern mode with an ancient spirit or primal piety; and
7. it recovers the Word but also transcends it.

It is in the notion of “family likeness” that one may find a rationale for looking for itches that are common to the wider family, and not just to the North Atlantic clan on the one hand or to the African (or Asian or Latin American) clan on the other. This is a quest that, as Warrington’s (2008:12-13) list of dissenters and sceptics indicates, might well seem simplistic at best and impossible at worst. Does this mean we need to despair of achieving it?

In revisiting the major issues of 1987, and in awareness of the regional and cultural pluralities within Pentecostalism, it might nevertheless reasonably be suggested that a common ethos and some common burning issues can still be identified. For instance, Kraus’ (1979:173-174) description of the Anabaptist ethos might well be appropriated by wider Pentecostalism as its own identifier, and as such be able to provide a common understanding of “Pentecostalism” that could suffice for the purposes of this analysis: a radical, Jesus-centred, martyr movement (see my detailed argument for this appropriation in Clark (2004)). However, even this is merely articulation of a common ethos (a symptom) and not of a common worldview (the disease?)

4. What is distinctive about early 21st century Pentecostalism?

4.1 Can a distinctive Pentecostal world-view be identified?

In the realm of philosophical studies it is possible to identify major world-views and their derivatives, and to utilise them to gain some understanding of diverse cultures and religions. There is a recognisable Buddhist world-view (a subjective world-view) and a recognisable Judaeo-Christian world-view (an objective world-view.) Within the Christian family there are recognisable variations of the Judaeo-Christian world-view, and even some possible adaptations (Islam) and some major apostates (the dualistic world-view of E W Kenyon and the Faith Movement, and the Buddhist-type world-view undergirding some of the “positive confession” schools of doctrine.)

Since so much of the diversity within Pentecostalism is an expression of the various regional, ethnic, cultural or class diversities embraced by the movement, it might well be possible to proceed further than the search for distinctive doctrine or even ethos, and find out at what philosophical level Pentecostalism operates. For instance, if it is pre-modern as some indicate (Poloma 2003:22), how does it then so regularly facilitate modernisation, as others have noted? (e.g. Wedenoja 1980:41-43.) If it is postmodern (a popular categorisation) then why are so many Pentecostals convinced of particularist and absolute Truth e.g. a literal understanding of John 14:6?

While one encounters many references to “the Pentecostal worldview” in the literature, as a simple internet search will demonstrate, rarely does one encounter a serious attempt to outline the nature of that worldview in any detail. One encounters either a rather glib “it is premodern” or “it is postmodern” comment in passing, or an assumption that it entail notions of pneumatology (especially tongues-speaking!) or of magic and mysticism or of encounter. One even finds it discussed under the traditional headings of Christian doctrine. Despite offering to highlight “an undergirding Pentecostal philosophy” Warrington does not seem to avoid this typical limitation. Johns (1995), in conversation with those who urge Pentecostals to accept their place in the postmodern way of thinking and acting, has (in my reading) come the closest to presenting a philosophical approach to a Pentecostal world-view, as opposed to a list of its doctrinal and experiential differences, or simply a description of its ethos.

Kalu (2002) and Khathide (2003) have both presented useful descriptions of the African worldview and the manner in which Pentecostalism has interacted with it. Onyinah (2002)

shows how worldviews may interact in Africa when deliverance as part of Pentecostal ministry comes to be understood in terms of an alternative worldview that sees the “deliverer” as a Christian shaman – an alarming syncretism in Africa. The question as to whether Paul Yonggi Cho represents a shamanisation of Pentecostal practice confronts Pentecostals with the challenge of defining its worldview in contrast to the worldviews of Asia. Klauck (1994) demonstrates the discontinuity in worldview, and Luke and Paul’s efforts to highlight it, between the oracular and thaumaturgical practices of first century Christians and those of their pagan counterparts. For Pentecostal ministry in a non-western setting this latter demonstrates that the Biblical material is as crucially involved with this issue as is Pentecostal self-understanding.

Until Pentecostal scholarship is able to clearly define a Pentecostal worldview that successfully illustrates the core of the “family likeness” of global Pentecostalism, the two worlds of Pentecostalism may continue to drift on in isolation from each other, each thinking it’s *a priori* realm of ideas is the only (or at least most important) one.

4.2 Pentecostal involvement in socio-political issues

The most common comment by South African lecturers on any research paper, article, thesis or dissertation in theology offered in the 1980’s and early 1990’s would be: “But what are the socio-political implications of this?” The expected answer would be that somehow your research should show you how Christian theology could be harnessed into the service of the anti-apartheid struggle. Research that did not serve such a purpose was often dismissed as irrelevant, and a sort of “correctness” meant that it would receive little priority for publication or other dissemination.

At the same time the dominant paradigm for conceptualising Christian involvement in politics was the particular Marxist perspective on social-analysis and the resolution of the “people’s struggle.” Within Pentecostalism there was an obvious attraction to such a simplistic and virile approach to resolving “liberation” issues such as apartheid or oppressive land-ownership practices in Latin America. The *Kairos Document* (1985), motivated by a Pentecostal pastor, insisted that the weakness of evangelical-Pentecostal apolitical options was their failure to do a social-analysis before doing theology – but uncritically implied that the only valid social analysis was the Marxist one.

In the post-Soviet era, where Marxism in Europe has been recognised as a political, economic and environmental failure, this simplistic notion that the Marxist understanding and solution is the only viable one, has come to be questioned in many areas of Christian thinking. In the context of Christian missions West (2000) asks outright: Should Christian’s take Marxism seriously anymore? Scholars often note (apparently on the basis of a comment by an Argentinean pastor) that “Liberation theology opted for the poor, but the poor opted for Pentecostalism” (quoted e.g. by Miller & Yamamori 2007:215.) This present-day relativisation of the oppressor-oppressed paradigm provides space for Pentecostal socio-political involvement to develop within in own particular genius rather than to be one more assenter to the liberation bandwagon.

Miller & Yamamori (2007) present a sociological perspective upon the manner in which Pentecostals around the world are dealing with social need as they encounter it. They recount numerous cases of people of various races, classes and gender engaging in context-modifying activities either because of the unbearable pressure of compassion, or simply because “God told me/us to do it.” Rather incautiously for secular sociologists, these authors note:

... they (Pentecostals) frequently say that the Holy Spirit speaks directly to them about their social involvements in the community. Therefore, the most economical explanation may simply be that social theorists should include some reference to the

spiritual realm in their attempts to understand social movements. Perhaps the demographer's toolbox, loaded with the variables of race, class, ethnicity, and social location, is inadequate. The primary motivator for those joining Pentecostal churches, based on our interviews, seems some type of encounter with the sacred, with all of these other elements simply contextual variables.

(Miller & Yamamori 2007:37-38)

This motivation for 20th century Pentecostals to work in a context of social need was documented at least as early as David Wilkerson's Spirit-led mission into New York's ganglands, culminating in the Teen Challenge enterprise which now spans the world. This ministry, like so many founded by Pentecostals, demonstrates the intervention of God not only in the calling that originated it, but also in the manner in which it operates – drug addicts experience miraculous rehabilitation from hard drugs by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Charismatic direction” in becoming involved in social issues and politics in modern time is at least as old as the Methodists such as the Clapham Sect. In the face of a consistent anti-politics stance by Pentecostals, I noted 20 years ago:

It must be acknowledged that the sovereignty of the Spirit to direct individuals must preclude limiting the scope of that calling by declaring politics off-limits. ... it is consistent with the notion that the God who has control of the strategy of the history of the world can call men to obedience in tactics in any area in which he wishes.

(Clark 1989:223-224) (see also Clark 1988:82-83.)

Is there a “family likeness” in this area of human endeavour that might enable Pentecostals everywhere to articulate and practice the divine intervention of their God in every aspect of human existence, including social and political need? Does Pentecostalism hold a distinctive view of God, humanity and the cosmos that permeates the entire diverse family?

4.3 The challenge of operating as people of both text and Spirit

The African Kalu (2008:249-255) and the British Warrington (2008:180-205) both take note of the importance for Pentecostals for understanding their relationship to the Christian Scriptures. Kalu (2008:254-5) notes a number of reasons why African Pentecostals (at least) cannot be branded Fundamentalists, either ideologically (e.g. as right-wing conservatives) or hermeneutically:

1. The character of African expressions of Christianity is often branded as conservative, but the meaning of the terminology remains ambiguous;
2. The movement's focus is experiential and charismatic driven – this sits uneasily upon Fundamentalist shoulders;
3. Its recovery of the pneumatic resources of the Scriptures has reshaped the religious landscape and charismatised mission-founded churches;
4. The variety of theologies and practices within a movement that is notable for its diversity defies easy labelling;
5. The movement is noted for its lack of ideological militancy in the social and religious spheres – it has great political import but does not promote a strong political agenda;

Yet African Pentecostals do emphasise church-growth, winning converts, healing, deliverance, signs and wonders and other expressions of divine power – they are literalist in their use of the Bible, but not fundamentalist. They are also ethically conservative in their understanding of Biblical norms – witness the ongoing debate in the Anglican communion with regard to homosexual priests, where the (primarily charismatic) African bishops have taken a stand that might easily be stereotyped as conservative, reactionary and fundamentalistic. Perhaps the

search for a Pentecostal hermeneutic that once was so popular in the west needs to be revived, in conversation with non-western partners?

4.4 Sacrificial life and ministry, or acquisitive?

The last two points to be made in this paper are in a certain sense nostalgic. The early history of Pentecostalism indicates that involvement in Pentecostalism in general, and in its ministry in particular, demanded a price of the person who undertook it. That there are heroes in Pentecostalism is not a myth, it is a reality. This may be as simple (but hurtful) as perseverance in the face of social exclusion – only recently could a young Afrikaner Pentecostal in a South African school ever hope to play for the First XV rugby team – or dogged commitment in the face of life-threatening persecution. A Mozambican Pentecostal mother told me how, because the village shaman and elders opposed Pentecostals, her 12 year old daughter was taken from her and dedicated as “bride of the ancestors” – effectively shunned by the clan to go insane in isolation. Many pioneers of Pentecostalism braved poverty by giving up their (often lucrative) careers to undertake Christian ministry or mission.

Some more recent paradigms operating within Pentecostal and charismatic circles, e.g. the Prosperity Gospel and the so-called New Apostolic Paradigm, have provided an alternative and diametrically opposed view of the spiritual hero: a person of great wealth and influence, of almost wizard-like autonomous spiritual potency, a celebrity who is never defeated or depressed, a leader of God-given anointing and authority. Through their influence an apocalyptic movement which in its origins was inimical and subversive to the dominant western paradigm of capitalism, consumerism, media- and celebrity-driven culture has been in danger of becoming one of its chief exponents and source of role-models.

Pentecostals, and Pentecostal leaders and ministers in particular, need to make it clear whether the “family likeness” of global Pentecostalism is going to extol the virtues of an egocentric populist acquisitive form of spirituality, or continue to model the sacrificial form that was bequeathed it by its founders. If Kalu (2008:19) is correct that African Pentecostalism is turning from Prosperity Theology during the last decade, this would be good news indeed. In the diversity of ministry philosophies that currently influence Pentecostal leadership paradigms and ministry, the movement might well benefit by weeding out those that extol the popular notion of hero and return to the Biblical model of the *doulos* of Christ, the humble and sacrificial disciple that demonstrates the heart of a servant and not of a king.

4.5 Is there still place in the heart of Pentecostal liturgies for the notion of a simple “encounter with God”?

Warrington subtitles his work *A theology of encounter*. The spread of the movement in the developing world redounds with narratives of the ongoing encounter with God that changes lives and communities. However, in the west, where Pentecostalism is at best moribund, it is a notion (in liturgy at least) that rarely seems to find expression. Where once no-one had to be told in a Pentecostal gathering that “God is here”, in recent years it seems that it requires powerful orators and charismatic celebrities to assure the audience that “what is happening shows that God is here.” Previously Pentecostal worshippers were loathe to leave the service and go home, because they could feel the presence of God. Today it seems more likely that, despite the best efforts of musicians and “worship leaders” to programmatically lead the congregation into the presence of God, and despite the assurances of “anointed” leaders that “God is truly doing something here today”, at the end of the service there is a mass exodus to get away as rapidly as possible and return home to more exciting and fulfilling pursuits and experiences than one has in church. Rarely, too, does one encounter recent Pentecostal research that discusses the previous ideal of “preaching the Word in the power of the Spirit.” This seems to have been abandoned by the wider pastorate in the west to the “great men of

God”, the media-sponsored icons of Pentecostal ministry, or to seeker-sensitive conversational “tips for living.”

In this area too a conversation between non-western and western Pentecostals might be fruitful in directing the movement back to its experiential roots.

5. Conclusion:

22 years after *What is distinctive about Pentecostal theology?* was written it may well be that not only is there a need and a hope for articulating a unifying Pentecostal worldview, a “family likeness” that transcends the movement’s diversity, but that some of the old itches might still need to be scratched.

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