Pentecostal Theologies of the Three Articles

The Theological Maturation of a Christian Tradition

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.¹

The above quote is from the opening lines of Wolfgang Vondey’s recently published long-form encyclopedia entry on “Pentecostal Theology” in St. Andrew’s Encyclopaedia of Theology (online). Vondey’s statements point to a turning point in pentecostal theology that will be affirmed in this editorial introduction to this special double issue of Pneuma on Pentecostal Theologies of the Three Articles: namely, that pentecostal theology started to come of age at the turn of the twenty-first century so that it now exists as a religious and theological Christian tradition that participates in the ecumenical theology of the entirety of the Christian tradition, which is evidenced by the content of this journal edition. The first quarter of the twenty-first century has seen the rise of a pentecostal theological tradition that holds pentecostal particularities


² That Pentecostalism is now fully recognized as a major subtradition of Christianity is demonstrated by its inclusion as such in the major sources on world Christianity today, including Douglas Jacobsen’s The World’s Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are, and How They Got There, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021), which recognizes Pentecostalism as one of the four major Christian traditions (along with the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant), and Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, The World Christian Encyclopedia, 3rd ed. (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), consider Charismatic-Pentecostals as one of six contemporary traditions (along with Catholics, Independents, Orthodox, Protestants, and Evangelicals).
together with ecumenical theology in dialogical interactions. The authors who have contributed to this issue especially represent a significant portion of the key contributors to this pentecostal theological emergence, which will perhaps be looked back on as the first major layer of global pentecostal theology that has developed after a century of earlier developments.

In the Spring 1995 issue of *Pneuma*, Cheryl Bridges Johns’s Presidential Address from the 1994 Annual Meeting of the Society was published, and it has since turned out to be an influential interpretation of the status of the pentecostal Christian tradition. It was entitled “The Adolescence of Pentecostalism: In Search of a Legitimate Sectarian Identity,” and it provided, among other things, a narrative assessment of the status of the pentecostal tradition in analog to human lifespan development, taking some cues from psychology while providing a socioreligious evaluation of the tradition. A key constructive point in this address is that there is a positive function of private sectarian conversations in the language of one’s own tradition and within one’s own story that provides it with “a counter-perception of reality” that allows for its “primal narrative” to be addressed with this internal work within the tradition.

The problem, of course, for Johns, writing in the mid-1990s with a focus on North American Pentecostalism but a view toward global Pentecostalism, is that the Pentecostalism she knows has been functioning in some immature patterns in this regard. Rather than doing this internal work in a manner that

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would see growth and maturity, her reading of the socioreligious realities was that Pentecostalism in this time and place, for all its successes, was also functioning in "a turbulent adolescence characterized by a search for new identity which has often led into fads, clubs, and cliques." Such especially came from coping strategies that sought to imitate friends and make pseudo-enemies, along with acculturation to dominant cultures not only in North America but even in many areas of the world where populist leaders and military dictators have courted Pentecostals in exchange for acceptance and a measure of freedom to evangelize and worship. In the United States, Pentecostals through their association with their peer groups have been courted by the religious right. Here again, mirroring is an important phenomenon. The religious right mirrored to the Pentecostal movement a larger identity of “political correctness.” In exchange for a measure of political power, Pentecostals were promised that “their values” would be upheld and “their freedom of religion” maintained. As the movement faces the twenty-first century, Pentecostals are no longer resident aliens. Rather, Pentecostals have become masters of accommodation.

To Johns, this all has an analog in adolescent shame-based identity, so that an identity that originated in the singular holiness of God and human humility was exchanged for an identity based on a quest for glory. This represented “growth by substitution” that “constructs identity by the simple addition of feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and actions which are copied from others” in “a patchwork identity” that reflects the values and situations and attitudes of others. In short, this sounds a lot like what often occurs in a certain stage of adolescence when a young person is trying to find an identity but lacks a core sense of self.

Maturation, on the other hand, comes when there is growth through integration. This happens when persons or traditions have a core identity and can find likeness and differences from others. This is the grief work that was done behind the wall in the Hebrew language during the crisis facing them in the form of a looming Assyrian siege and invasion in 2 Kings 18–19. Sometimes, in a crisis, persons or traditions can find themselves, though it requires the use

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of their own language. For Pentecostalism, according to Johns, this includes an imaginative proposal that is “to model the coming age” and “a mature people to be strong enough for the world to strike hard against them and not come apart at the seams.”9 It also includes a mature self-understanding that understands the primal pentecostal identity and yet joins in the “shared Christian oikumene” so that “Pentecostals could feel free to bring to the Christian table their own imaginative proposal for ordering the Christian household without bringing with it a pervading sense of shame. Pentecostals would truly be able to dialogue, to hear the Spirit speak to them in the voice of others, and to allow the Spirit to speak through them. Such is the mark of mature ecumenism.”10

The orienting question of Johns’s address was “What are the signs/markers emerging within the movement which would indicate its maturing?”.11 While the last thirty years have seen mixed signs in the process of the maturation of Pentecostalism, the turn of the twenty-first century has marked the theological emergence of the pentecostal tradition, an emergence that has drunk from its own wells, developed a dialogical relationship with other Christian theological traditions, and reflects the particular journeys and interests of the key theologians who have been at its vanguard. Liked the lived experiences of so many of the world’s Pentecostals, these theologians have each lived in a dialectical tension between their own concerns, convictions, and interests, on the one hand, and those of the pentecostal movements with which they have been associated. They simultaneously reflect, dissent from, and advance the tradition comprised of the vast aggregation of these movements.

If there was an indication of the emerging development, it might have been the 2002 volume entitled Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission,12 which was the repackaging of a series of essays by the Finnish pentecostal and Lutheran theologian who has been teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena since 2000, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, in a collection edited by Amos Yong, then a newer theology professor at Bethel College (now University) in Minnesota, who had recently finished his Ph.D. at Boston University. Yong’s short introduction to this collection of Kärkkäinen’s early writings was entitled

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“Pentecostalism and a Theology of the Third Article,”¹³ and on the opening page Yong claimed that “Pentecostal theology as a systematic enterprise is finally coming of age” as pentecostal theologians had begun to speak from a more authentically pentecostal and pneumatological theology while also doing theology for the whole, ecumenical church.¹⁴ This early collection of seventeen articles from Kärkkäinen and Yong’s introduction provided an anticipation of what was to come in the next two decades.

The task of the authors of this special issue of *Pneuma* has been, for the three primary authors, to offer up a theology of each of the three core articles of the Christian faith, yet one that represents their unique contributions to the emergence of pentecostal theology in the first decades of the twenty-first century. While Kärkkäinen was assigned the First Article, Frank Macchia the Second, and Steve Studebaker the Third, in a sense, each has been authoring pneumatological theologies, theologies of the Third Article since around or not too long after the turn of the twenty-first century. And perhaps what is indicative of the confidence now found in a maturing theological tradition is the range and breadth of theological concerns that have increasingly moved beyond the demonstration of the pneumatological renewal, itself reflective of the charismatic-pneumatic renewal in world Christianity over the past century-and-a-quarter or so, into all quarters of Christian theology. A mature pentecostal theological adulthood has emerged that takes responsibility, has a centered identity, and is unafraid of growth and engagement with others. So, also, the dialog partners and respondents to each of these—Christopher A. Stephenson to Kärkkäinen, Oyan Simatupang to Macchia, and Daniela Augustine to Studebaker—represent the growing breadth and maturation of the theological tradition. The concluding and summative contribution from Amos Yong provides us with not only immediate interpretation of these six contributions but a way of accounting for the diverse models and

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¹⁴ Key precedents of this pneumatological theology that Yong specifically alludes to include Karl Barth and Paul Tillich’s pointing to the possibility of doing Christian theology from a pneumatological starting point, and then the more recent attempts by the Jesuit theologian Donald Gelpi, the charismatic Baptist theologian Clark Pinnock, and the charismatic Methodist theologian D. Lyle Dabney’s initial efforts along these lines (it might be noted that Dabney was the *doktorvater* to Christopher A. Stephenson, one of the contributors to this special issue). Yong, “Pentecostalism and a Theology of the Third Article,” xvi–xvii. If there is a clarion call for a pneumatological theology among Pentecostals, it may be found in Dabney, “Saul’s Armor: The Problem and the Promise of Pentecostal Theology Today,” *Pneuma* 23, no. 1 (2001): 115–146.
witnesses provided by pentecostal theological pluralism, from the theologian who coined the “many tongues” principle for pentecostal theology. The authors in this issue will speak for themselves, the pentecostal theological tradition, certain pentecostal movements, and not for others. A mature and maturing tradition includes differences. It will thus be beneficial to locate each of the contributors.

Kärkkäinen leads with a theology of the First Article. Professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California and Docent of Ecumenics at the University of Helsinki, in recent years he has produced a five-volume systematic theology, *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World*, along with a large single-volume version, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction*. This comes on the heels of over a dozen other major works. Pentecostal and Lutheran, Kärkkäinen's person represents the many hybridizations among Pentecostals in his ecumenical theology. His project has been to offer up “a Christian dogmatics ... a novel, dynamic constructive Christian theology for the pluralistic world shaped by cultural, ethnic, sociopolitical, economic, and religious diversity, as well as the unprecedented influence of the sciences,” p. 355. In a number of ways, Kärkkäinen is the appropriate selection for a theology of the First Article even as his work can be said to have christological and pneumatological emphases. This is because of the encompassing nature of his project and also because of his concern for “method,” as he explains in this article, that searches for coherence and integration while it recognizes the ubiquity of contextualization for the theological task. In this article, Kärkkäinen articulates a doctrine of God in a communion theology that considers the God-world relationship in a trinitarian panentheism where the Trinity is the first and last word of the Christian God. Kärkkäinen models how to engage contemporary theology with the sort of confidence in identity that can learn from and engage with others that Johns called for in her late-twentieth-century Presidential Address, concluding the article with an epistemology concerning ascertaining truth in the late modern world. The opening article of this issue is a ranging theological work that represents much of what has emerged among pentecostal theologians in the first quarter of the twenty-first century.

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15 *Christ and Revelation*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013); *Trinity and Revelation*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014); *Creation and Humanity*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015); *Spirit and Salvation*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016); and *Hope and Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).
If Kärkkäinen has been among the leading constructive theologians in the pentecostal tradition, then Christopher A. Stephenson, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee, has been one of the leading voices assessing and framing the theologies that have emerged from it. Stephenson’s *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit* is one of the foremost works to account for the developments that have led to contemporary pentecostal theology. His more recent *Profiles of Pentecostal Theology* further advances this discussion. Stephenson’s response to Kärkkäinen especially draws on his ecumenical orientation as a pentecostal theologian, as he experiments with what a First Article theology could further look like for Pentecostals drawing from Thomistic insights. He works backs and concludes with a return to the liturgical axiom of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, that the way of worship is the way of belief, a theme that has been emphasized in his own work and a session of the International Roman Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue.

No discussion of contemporary pentecostal theology of our era could be without the singular contribution of Frank Macchia, Professor of Systematic Theology at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, California, whose work on Christology is without parallel among Pentecostals, particularly in the advancement of Jesus as the Spirit Baptizer, in a Spirit Christology that draws on patristic, modern, and pentecostal sources in a Christology “from below” that complements a Logos Christology “from above.” His 2006 *Baptized in the Spirit* is a landmark work that considered Christ as the king and the Spirit as the kingdom in a deepening and broadening of the pentecostal theology of Spirit baptism. The last two decades have seen an expanse of his corpus that fleshed out his significant advancement of pentecostal theologies of Trinity, a pneumatological Christology, ecclesiology, and the integration of theological loci. The follow-

In pouring forth the Spirit, Christ fulfills his mission to baptize others “in the Holy Spirit.” In so doing, he also opens himself to history, to his ecclesial and cosmic identity, in a new way, but in a way that is faithful to that which has gone before. Though fundamentally defined by his own sojourn in the Spirit to Pentecost as the divine Son of his Father in flesh, victorious over sin and death, he is now, at Pentecost, to be experienced in contextually diverse ways. Pentecost is therefore the pivot point from the Christ as bearer of the Spirit who gave himself for the salvation of the world to Christ as the one who pours forth the Spirit so as to take humanity in all of its diversity up into the divine communion, p. 392.

Macchia’s Christology of Jesus as Spirit Baptizer presents a vision of the reconciling Second Adam whose risen life overflows in the koinonia of Pentecost.

Florian M.P. (Oyan) Simatupang is a Lecturer in Theology at Satyabhakti Theological Seminary in Indonesia and Pastor of IES Christ the King in South Jakarta, Indonesia. He has been educated in Indonesian and American institutions, and he represents emerging theological work from Asian context in dialogue with Western, with a focus on ecclesiology. His first major work is due for publication in 2024. Simatupang responds to Macchia with a postcolonial interpretation of key Lukan, Pauline, and Johannine texts that Macchia also reads, in which he provides “a teleological assist” drawing on Jesus’s Jewish particularities that anchors the universality of Christ and the Spirit poured out on all flesh. Simatupang provides a constructive approach as to what this looks like through a reading of Jesus’s inaugural address in Nazareth in Luke 4, offering a vision of what this kind of christoformic telos looks like in forming Christian character among those who confess Jesus the Spirit baptizer. There are parts of his vision here that will resonate with most if not all of Pentecostals, and there are parts that many would likely contest; nevertheless, he plays out his vision of what this kind of liberative christological praxis looks like in dialogue with Macchia’s Christology of Jesus the Spirit baptizer.

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Steven M. Studebaker’s “A Pentecostal Third Article Theology” exemplifies what a theological response to Johns’s call looks like as he works out what a pentecostal theology that starts from pentecostal praxis looks like while retaining an ecumenical orientation. Studebaker, who recently became Professor of Theology at Multnomah University in Portland, Oregon after seventeen years at McMaster Divinity School in Toronto, Canada, including holding the post of Bentall Chair in Evangelical Thought, has already been worked out his pneumatology in his From Pentecost to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian Theology,23 as well as in other chapters, articles, and books.24 Studebaker's contribution to this issue identifies the very problem that Johns did, as he finds pentecostal theology that has drawn on the inherited theologies from traditional Western categories to have contributed further to the pneumatological neglect rather than correct it. Specifically, the problem has been that it “1) is inherited from its predecessors, 2) abstracts the work of the Holy Spirit from the work of redemption, and 3) ignores the theological significance of the experience of the Holy Spirit within the pentecostal tradition,” p 429. Or, as he puts it otherwise, “Classical Pentecostalism represents the colonization of the pneumatological character of pentecostal praxis by the Christocentrism and crucicentrism of Protestant evangelical theology,” p. 429 and “Classical pentecostal theology obfuscates the place of the Spirit in pentecostal praxis. It did so because the theological framework of Classical Pentecostalism arises not from pentecostal praxis but from the Protestant evangelical tradition,” p. 430. Studebaker’s solution is to suggest Pentecost as the organizing principle to a narrative of redemption, especially as “the experience of the Holy Spirit is central to global pentecostal praxis and the Spirit of Pentecost (Spirit baptism) is the biblical category used to indicate that praxis,” p. 433. Studebaker does not want to displace Christology with pneumatology but to integrate them in a pentecostal theology that moves past inherited traditions. He thus provides a short biblical pneumatology and trinitarian theology that concludes that “[t]he Holy Spirit’s personal agency in the

triune God shapes the telic and eschatological character of the Spirit’s role in the narrative of redemption. Conversely, the Holy Spirit’s telic and eschatological agency in the history of redemption reveals and reflects the Spirit’s role as the divine person who consummates the fellowship of the trinitarian God,” p. 446.

The response to Studebaker comes from Daniela Augustine, one of the key contributors to the development of pentecostal pneumatology in recent years. Originally from Bulgaria, Augustine is Reader in World Christianity and Pentecostal Studies at the University of Birmingham (UK); she is also associate editor of the Journal of Pentecostal Theology, and coeditor (with Wolfgang Vondey) of Bloomsbury’s T&T Clark series in Systematic Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology. Her work has brought together theological ethics, pneumatology, and Jewish and Eastern Orthodox theologies with pentecostal theology. Augustine’s The Spirit and the Common Good: Shared Flourishing in the Image of God integrated these in a significant advancement in pentecostal theological ethics that was secure enough to dialogue robustly with other theologies. Her earlier Pentecost, Hospitality and Transfiguration: Toward a Spirit-Inspired Vision of Social Transformation provided another model of this kind of theological integration. Augustine finds Studebaker’s telic pneumatology to reflect not only this trajectory among contemporary pentecostal theologians but also “the very core of Eastern Orthodox pneumatology that has primed the theological imagination and sacramental life of many Eastern European Pentecostals,” p. 451.

Like Stephenson and Simatupang, Augustine provides a constructive way forward drawing on a stream of ecumenical Christian theology that might pair with the pentecostal. For Stephenson, it was the Thomistic; for Simatupang, it was postcolonial liberation theology; for Augustine, it is Eastern Orthodox theology. Drawing on Vladimir Lossky, Sergius Bulgakov, and others, Augustine draws upon the Eastern Church’s theology as an assist to Western (and global) pentecostal theologies (and yes, a little ironic historical pun on her name and the Latin Western theologian’s is intended here). Contributing her own biblical theology as it emerges into constructive pentecostal theology, Augustine provides a theological reflection on speaking in tongues as a “pathway” that “harmonizes” with Studebaker’s work. What follows in the concluding pages of her response article is a reading of Pentecost, tongues, language, and a vision of the Spirit’s work in community that draws together pentecostal and Eastern Orthodox intuitions in “the mystical union of the redeemed creation with its

26 Cleveland, TN: Centre for Pentecostal Theology Press, 2012.
creator and experiencing the in-breaking of the eschatological fullness of the Spirit in the communal body of the Spirit-bearer,” p. 446.

While at least several dozen other pentecostal theologians have made significant contributions to this constructive era of the maturation of pentecostal theology, there would be a notable lack if the voice of Amos Yong, Professor of Theology and Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, were not present. Yong has been a living *tour de force* of constructive pentecostal theology in the past quarter century, a centerpiece of which has been his “many tongues” principle, sprinkled throughout his writings, that has emphasized a pentecostal pluralism at the center of his theology, exemplified here in the subtitle of his summarizing “Afterword ~ Pentecostal Systematic or Constructive Theology: Many Models, Many Witnesses.” Yong is a singular voice in his massive contribution to pentecostal theology. To understand Yong well is to understand his constant attending to methodology and hermeneutics, and so his afterword begins by considering the task that was just performed in the preceding pages as he crafts a constructive framework to assess the six contributions that form the major body of this issue. He assesses them along the lines, on one axis, of their pentecostal, systematic, and constructive contributions and, on the other, of their theological foci. For Kärkkäinen, it is a trinitarian one, for Macchia it is Christology, for Studebaker it is pneumatological theology, for Stephenson it is patrological theology, for Simatupang it is christological theology, and for Augustine it is pneumatological theology. He concedes that these are heuristic starting points that run the danger of reducing these contributions but holds that they are nonetheless helpful. Yong’s analytical, summative, synthetic, and interpretive abilities are on display in this afterword; his methodological reflections on systematic and constructive theologies, among other topics, offer valuable considerations for those considering the ongoing task of pentecostal theology in the late modern world.


28 Yong’s over two dozen authored or coauthored books, his nearly three dozen edited or coedited books, his five years as co-editor-in-chief (with Dale Coulter) of this journal (2010–2014), and his dozen years as its book review editor (2000–2011), his coediting five book series, his 250 or so articles/essays/book chapters, hundreds of book reviews and notes, hundreds of presentations, his theological leadership as dean of two leading seminaries/divinity schools are listed on his CV, which is updated on the Fuller Theological Seminary website: https://www.fuller.edu/faculty/amos-yong/.
Theologies both reflect the faith of a religious tradition and are productive of faith and religious traditions. The directions and degrees of reflection and productivity, of course, vary. This issue of *Pneuma* shows how mature pentecostal and ecumenical theologies have emerged so that Pentecostals now have rich, ecumenical theologies to draw upon for all kinds of potential fruitfulness for generations to come. Making such a claim here does not presuppose that everything in this issue will do so as much as it is a suggestion that the overall work in pentecostal theology by these and a number of other pentecostal theologians in the first quarter of the twenty-first century has begun to fulfill Johns’s call to maturity, at least theologically, as pentecostal theologians have for some time been writing confidently and helpfully for Pentecostals and all Christians—for the academy, the church, and the world.

This issue is both an intellectual and spiritual endeavor, so we offer up Yong’s concluding words here as our opening as well: “Come Holy Spirit upon our ongoing theological endeavors,” p. 475.

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