Christopher A. Stephenson  

Wolfgang Vondey (ed.)  

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. and Amos Yong (eds.)  

In case you have not noticed it yet, the past four decades have witnessed an explosive growth in Pentecostal scholarship, both in quantity and in quality. In the early 1970s, Pentecostal academicians were so scarce that the international ecumenical dialogue between Roman Catholics and Classical Pentecostals could not start without charismatic Protestant scholars strengthening the Pentecostal team. Today, there is no more need for such help. Pentecostal academia is here to stay. Three volumes that recently have been published by renowned publishing houses provide a powerful demonstration of this development.

A most helpful and critical insight into the development of Pentecostal theology in the past century has been written by Christopher A. Stephenson, currently serving as Assistant Professor at Lee University (Cleveland, TN). His monograph *Types of Pentecostal Theology* is based on his PhD dissertation. In four chapters, Stephenson introduces the reader to seven Classical Pentecostal thinkers who have had a major influence on the movement’s theological development between the late 1930s and today. After clearly written and insightful analytical overviews of the theological foci of the authors under consideration, each chapter offers a critical evaluation of the theological method that Stephenson has discerned to be underlying. This works very well for the first two chapters. Chapter one introduces the theological method of ‘Bible doctrines’ and focuses on the major systematic theological treatises of Myer Pearlman (1937), E.S. Williams (1953) and French Arrington (1992–94). Chapter two is devoted to ‘the method of giving primacy to articulating the relationship between theology and Christian spirituality’ (p. 8) and discusses the work of Steven Land and Simon Chan. In the next two chapters, it is notable that each ‘type’ knows only one representative. The absence of other theologians who have a similar approach makes the portrayal of the two theological methods as ‘types’ less convincing. The strength of these chapters, however, is the depth
at which the work of the theologians under consideration (Frank Macchia and Amos Yong, respectively) has been analysed. Stephenson discusses their entire corpuses to date, pinpoints the integrative themes (the Kingdom of God and a ‘foundational pneumatology’, respectively) and key systematic-theological loci, indicates influences and interlocutors, and assesses their strengths and weaknesses.

Stephenson's final chapter diverges from the former chapters both in form and in aim. It offers a proper contribution to Pentecostal theological method by drawing attention to the intertwining realities of spirituality and doctrine and by pleading for more consideration of the implications thereof in future Pentecostal constructive theology. Here it becomes clear that Stephenson's strong opinion on how theology and spirituality should be intertwined has in a way functioned as a measuring stick for the authors under consideration. It would have helped if this point, which is both structurally and evaluatively crucial to the work, was argued for clearly in the introduction. Still, his proposal to integrate a form of lex orandi, lex credendi in future Pentecostal theological method is certainly valuable. The lack of integration with the preceding chapters just leaves the reader slightly bemused at the close of this most informative volume.

Wolfgang Vondey's second volume of Pentecostalism and Christian Unity is again a strong witness to the growing involvement of Classical Pentecostals in ecumenical dialogue. In contrast to the former volume, theological reflection on the roles that Pentecostals do and should play in the ecumenical scene is limited to the introduction. The present volume offers foremost a fine demonstration of how relationships have been built and can be continued by way of a collection of ecumenical narratives and official ecumenical documents with Classical Pentecostal participation. The four narratives provide evidence that the discomfort 'ecumenicals' and 'pentecostals' have long felt in each other's presence can be overcome. It requires, however, consideration of how Pentecostals are best positioned at the large ecumenical round table. The narratives demonstrate that, as with other Christian families, constructive dialogue with Pentecostals requires mutual respect for the particularities of the dialogue partner and careful preparations. Each set of dialogue partners needs to go through the exercise of finding a method that works for them. In this regard, the reports of the consultations of Pentecostals with Lutherans (2004–2010), of the Joint Consultative Group with WCC and Pentecostal participation (2000–2005), of the Europe Consultation on the Global Christian Forum (2006) and of the Annual Meeting of Christian Churches Together in the USA (2012) offer helpful examples and practical guidelines.

For ecclesiological reasons, dialogue with Pentecostal involvement can seldom aim at the issuing of authoritative theological statements or the