

Clark H. Pinnock: A Canadian Charismatic Pilgrim

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Introduction

My first encounter with Clark H. Pinnock's theology happened in the fall of 1995, during my first week as a new graduate student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. I was perusing the religion section at a local Borders Bookstore and came across Pinnock's edited volume, *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*.¹ As I stood among the bookshelves drinking my latte, I read his essay "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology." I found myself initially enthralled as I agreed with his evaluation of the implications of Calvinism and then conflicted as I was convinced by, but also disturbed by his Free Will Theist conclusions. Little did I know then that I would later not only present a paper on him as part of the Canadian Pentecostal Symposium, but also teach at McMaster Divinity College where he was professor of theology for over thirty years. At the moment I read that essay, and later through his other writings, Pinnock became a theological mentor. Not a direct one of course, as I would not personally meet him for nearly a decade, but nonetheless a leading evangelical theologian who pointed the way toward constructive theological reflection that

¹ Minneapolis: Bethany, 1989.

was neither dismissive of traditional evangelical theology nor restricted by it. This essay explores ways that Pinnock also can serve as theological guide for the Pentecostal theological community.

He is important for Pentecostals, as a leading evangelical theologian, because traditional Pentecostal theology largely followed evangelical theology and added on the Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts.²

² For just a few criticisms of this tendency, see Matthew S. Clark, Henry Lederle, et al., *What is Distinctive about Pentecostal Theology* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989), 100; D. Lyle Dabney, "Saul's Armor: The Problem and Promise of Pentecostal Theology Today," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 23 (2001): 115–17; Donald W. Dayton, "The Limits of Evangelicalism: The Pentecostal Tradition," in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, eds. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 48; Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 19; David R. Nichols, "The Search for a Pentecostal Structure in Systematic Theology," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 6 (1984): 57; Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 240; and Russell P. Spittler, "Suggested Areas for further Research in Pentecostal Studies," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 5 (1983): 43.

Pinnock remarks in general that Pentecostals have not developed a Pentecostal theology as such and, more specifically, he suggests that Pentecostals have an undeveloped theology proper and ecclesiology and recommends directions for these two projects: Clark H. Pinnock, "Divine Relationality: A Pentecostal Contribution to the Doctrine of God," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16 (2000): 3 and 5 and Pinnock, "Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit: The Promise of Pentecostal Ecclesiology," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (2006): 149. Pentecostal theologian, Terry L. Cross, agrees with Pinnock in his response to Pinnock's "Divine Relationality," in "The Rich Feast

Indeed, as Robert P. Menzies maintains that Spirit baptism is a *donum superadditum* to the salvation provided by Christ, so traditional Pentecostal theology has been a *donum superadditum* to traditional conservative evangelical theology.³ Pinnock's efforts in expanding evangelical theology, although for the most part not Pentecostal per se, have served, and can continue to do so, as a catalyst and a role model for Pentecostal theologians who endeavour to develop unique Pentecostal contributions to theology that are not sequestered by conservative evangelical theology. Pinnock's theological contributions have been surveyed, analyzed, and critiqued by a host of scholars.⁴

of Theology: Can Pentecostals Bring the Main Course or Only the Relish," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16 (2000): 28.

In the decade after Pinnock's call for Pentecostals to develop a Pentecostal theology, notable advances have been accomplished: e.g., Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006); Keith Warrington, *A Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T & T Clark, 2008); Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); and the new Pentecostal Manifestos Series co-edited by James K. A. Smith and Amos Yong and published by Eerdmans.

³ Robert P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology, with Special Reference to Luke-Acts*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 54 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 48.

⁴ A number of treatments that track Pinnock's theological career are available. The most thorough is Barry Callen, *Clark H. Pinnock: Journey toward Renewal: An Intellectual Biography* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel, 2000), but others include: Robert K. Johnston, "Clark H. Pinnock," in *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 427–44; Robert M. Price, "Clark H. Pinnock: Conservative and Contemporary," *Evangelical Quarterly*

This essay does not endeavour to canvass terrain ably covered by others but to highlight Pinnock's identity as a Pentecostal theologian and his contribution to Pentecostal theology. It pursues this goal by charting four ways that Clark Pinnock's theology reflects and contributes to Pentecostal theology.

Pinnock's Charismatic Identity

The modern Pentecostal movement (at least in North America) has three primary forms that have developed diachronically and now co-exist. These three variations

60:2 (1988): 157–83; Robert V. Rakestraw, "Clark H. Pinnock," in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 660–84. For works that assess his theological contribution, see Gary Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 129–46; Tony Gray and Christopher Sinkinson, eds., *Reconstructing Theology: A Critical Assessment of the Theology of Clark Pinnock* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2000); Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 134–50; Roger E. Olson, *The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 56–61; and Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross, eds., *Semper Reformandum: Studies in Honour of Clark H. Pinnock* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2003); and see the analytical essays by Daniel Strange and Amos Yong with a response by Pinnock in Strange, "Clark H. Pinnock: The Evolution of an Evangelical Maverick," *Evangelical Quarterly* 71 (1999): 311–26; Yong, "Whither Theological Inclusivism? The Development and Critique of an Evangelical Theology of Religions," *Evangelical Quarterly* 71 (1999): 327–48; and Pinnock, "Response to Daniel Strange and Amos Yong," *Evangelical Quarterly* 71 (1999): 349–57; also see Daniel Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation among the Unevangelized: An Analysis of Inclusivism in Recent Evangelical Theology*, Paternoster Theological Monographs (2002; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 137–290.

are Classical Pentecostalism, the Charismatic movement, and the Third Wave or Neocharismatic movement. Classical Pentecostalism derives directly from the revivals that occurred among Charles Fox Parham's (1873–1929) students at Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas in January 1901 and the series of revivals in 1906–1909 and 1911–1912 at Azusa Street under the leadership of William J. Seymour (1870–1922). Classical Pentecostals, whether Wesleyan-Holiness, which affirm three works of grace (salvation, entire sanctification, and Spirit baptism) or Finished Work groups, which affirm two works of grace (salvation and Spirit baptism), define the doctrine of Spirit baptism as an experience subsequent to conversion that empowers for ministry with speaking in tongues as its proper evidence.⁵

The Charismatic movement was the first major development after the consolidation around the doctrine of Spirit baptism achieved in Classical Pentecostalism. The Charismatic movement emerged in the 1950s as Christians within the traditional mainline Protestant churches and Roman Catholic Church came into the Pentecostal experience, but also remained within their churches. Through this trend the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism and broader charismatic experience spread through the traditional Protestant denominations and the

⁵ The holiness denominations that formed are the Pentecostal Holiness Church (now International Pentecostal Holiness Church), Church of God in Christ, and the Church of God (Cleveland). The Finished Work denominations are the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

Roman Catholic Church. The Charismatics share much in common with the Classical Pentecostals, but are unique in that although they affirm Spirit baptism, they more often understand Spirit baptism as a fuller experience of grace received in conversion rather than as a work of grace distinct from conversion and are less stringent on speaking in tongues as its initial evidence.

The early-1980s saw the emergence of the most recent development within Pentecostalism: The Neocharismatic movement or 'Third Wave' (the first and second waves being Classical Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Renewal). Key leaders in the rise of the 'Third Wave' are C. Peter Wagner (1930–), and John Wimber (1934–1997), who founded the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Anaheim, CA. The emphasis on spiritual renewal through the Holy Spirit without the traditional Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit baptism appealed to many within evangelical churches in North America, Britain, and Australia. Ne-charismatics generally have no clear connection with traditional Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal churches, but nevertheless embrace charismatic forms of spiritual experience and worship. Familiar manifestations of the Neocharismatic movement are the 'Toronto Blessing' led by former Vineyard pastor John Arnott (1940–), the Brownsville Revival led by pastor John Kilpatrick in Pensacola, Florida (although the revival occurred at an Assemblies of God church, which is a Classical Pentecostal denomination, it reflects the ethos of the Neocharismatic movement), spiritual warfare movements, and new church

networks such as the ‘apostolic churches’ and restoration of the fivefold ministry offices.

Pinnock’s Pentecostal experience and spirituality has been mostly within the Charismatic movement and Third Wave (Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship). He describes his experience with Pentecostalism in the following terms: “I, like so many, have been touched by the renewal. Without becoming charismatic by affiliation, I have long been sure that God is pouring out the Spirit in Pentecostalism.”⁶ The Charismatic movement provided a way for Pinnock to correct the imbalance he perceived in his expression of the Christian faith as a one-sided rationalistic and doctrinaire form to one that embraced a dynamic and heartfelt piety. An important catalyst for this transformation was his struggle with a detached retina that left him nearly blind in one eye. This condition occurred in 1967 while he was professor of theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and attending Canal Street Presbyterian Church, which was participating in the charismatic movement within the mainline churches.⁷ In the charismatic worship and experience of the Presbyterian church, Pinnock testifies to a healing and an awakening to a more vibrant Spirit filled life that he likens to John Wesley’s Aldersgate experience in which Wesley felt his heart “strangely warmed.”⁸ Although he has re-

⁶ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 240.

⁷ Callen, *Pinnock: Journey toward Renewal*, 77.

⁸ Pinnock, “Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit,” 148 and Callen, *Pinnock: Journey toward Renewal*, 78.

mained a Baptist, he continued to participate in and advocate for charismatic renewal in the church.⁹

Over the next few years, although his charismatic experience did not match the Classical Pentecostal focus on speaking in tongues nor did he adopt the Classical Pentecostal understanding of Spirit baptism, he gradually began to become a cautious proponent for rapprochement between Evangelicals and Pentecostals.¹⁰ He increasingly saw the Pentecostal movement as an authentic work of the Spirit and as a source of revitalization for the evangelical movement, which after its emergence from Fundamentalism had tended to favour Christian rationalism and doctrine over dynamic spirituality.¹¹ Upon returning to Canada to teach at Regent College in Vancouver, B.C. (1974–1977) and then McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, ON (1977–professor emeritus), he continued to appreciate the Pentecostal movement and believed that it could serve as a catalyst for renewal within the Canadian Baptist churches and the broader evangelical movement.¹²

⁹ Pinnock, “Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit,” 148.

¹⁰ E.g., Clark H. Pinnock and Grant R. Osborne, “A Truce Proposal for the Tongues Controversy,” *Christianity Today* 8 (Oct. 1971): 6–9; Clark H. Pinnock, “The New Pentecostalism: Reflections by a Well-Wisher,” *Christianity Today* 14 (Sept. 1973): 6–10; and Pinnock, “Charismatic Renewal for the Radical Church,” *Post-American* (Feb. 1975): 16–21.

¹¹ Callen, *Pinnock: Journey toward Renewal*, 79.

¹² Clark H. Pinnock, “Baptists and the ‘Latter Rain.’ A Contemporary Challenge and Hope for Tomorrow,” in *Costly Vision: The Baptist Pilgrimage in Canada*, ed. Jarold K. Zeman (Burlington, ON: Welch, 1988), 255–56 and 258.

Pinnock's Pentecostal Pilgrimage

Although Pinnock moved from a more exclusive experience of North American evangelical spirituality to embrace the charismatic renewal, his identity as a Pentecostal pilgrim takes in more than his charismatic experience per se. Barry Callen suggests that “Pinnock is probably the most prominent pioneer of a fresh mood, maybe even fresh movement in contemporary North American evangelical theology.”¹³ Pinnock has traveled in a theological odyssey from a strident apologist for conservative Reformed Neo-Evangelicalism to an irenic, ecumenical, post-conservative, and charismatic theologian. In a recent autobiographical essay, he described his theological journey in the following way: “Mine is the story of a man’s theology which...began in the ‘conservative-evangelical’ camp with the scholastic tendency and is finishing up (it appears) in the ‘post-conservative’ camp with the pietists and pentecostals.”¹⁴ Along the way, he also was a temporary proponent of the radical politics among certain Evangelicals in the early 1970s, such as Jim Wallis, and advocate for mutual respect and dialogue between Evangelicals and Liberals.¹⁵ His transitions in theology include a move from biblical inerrancy and emphasis on right doctrine to a narrative hermeneutic, an emphasis on the Spirit’s illumination of the text, and the necessity of con-

¹³ Callen, *Pinnock: Journey toward Renewal*, 5.

¹⁴ Clark H. Pinnock, “Confessions of a Post-Conservative Evangelical Theologian,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 45 (2006): 382.

¹⁵ Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 139–48.

vertive piety for authentic evangelical Christianity.¹⁶ He travelled from firm commitment to exclusive Calvinism, to Arminianism, and then onto inclusive Free-Will Theism and Open Theism.¹⁷

Pinnock's theological pilgrimage embodies a Pentecostal character that is open to the leading of the Spirit that can serve as a model for Pentecostal theologians. Indeed, Pinnock encourages Pentecostals to break loose from their inherited scholastic approach to theology, which reflects their practice of relying on traditional Neo-Evangelical approaches to theology, and to pursue a method and content for their theology that is more reflective of their experience of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸

One of the characteristics of the Spirit is to work in ways that contravene establishment religion. In Matthew

¹⁶ For his earlier affirmation of inerrancy, see *Biblical Revelation: The Foundation of Christian Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1971); for his later more dynamic view of inspiration and emphasis on illumination, see *The Scripture Principle* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984). For his move from a rationalistic and propositional view of theology to a narrative one, see *Tracking the Maze: Finding Our Way through Modern Theology from an Evangelical Perspective* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 182–87.

¹⁷ For Pinnock's theological trajectory, see Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1989), 15–30. For his inclusivism, see Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). For Open Theism, see Clark H. Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 101–25 and Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Pinnock, "Divine Relationality," 22.

12:1–23, Jesus’ willingness to heal on the Sabbath both demonstrates that he is the Spirit anointed messianic figure described in Isaiah 42:1–4 (Jesus declares to the Pharisees, “if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” [Matt 12:28]) and draws the ire of the Pharisees, who judged his healing activities as a violation of Sabbath work prohibitions. In this story, his identity and activity as the Spirit anointed messiah leads him into conflict with the reigning religious orthodoxy of his day.

In the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit operates beyond the pale of the church’s expectation. When the Samaritans receive the gospel, the Jerusalem church is dubious and dispatches Peter and John to verify and ratify it. Later, the report of Peter’s preaching with the conversion of Cornelius’ household is met with suspicion by the Jewish Christians, who “were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles” (Acts 10:45). Peter testified to the Jerusalem leadership that “the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning” and the leadership accepts what the Spirit had already completed with its declaration, “so then, God has even granted the Gentiles repentance unto life” (Acts 11:15 and 18). Later, a council of the church convened in Jerusalem to deliberate and condone the reception of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit by the Gentiles (Acts 15:1–29). The point is that, as Jesus exhorted Nicodemus, the Spirit is not bounded by one religious group’s sensibilities, but rather “the wind blows wherever it pleases . . . so it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). Nico-

demus could not comprehend the notion that redemption consisted in being “born again,” nevertheless, as Jesus chided him, the work of God’s Spirit is not restrained by the powers of human imagination, but transcends it.

The Pentecostal movement also reflects the willingness to transcend the status quo religion. The two revivals (1906–1909 and 1911–1912) led by William J. Seymour (1870–1922) at Azusa Street caused a sensation not only because they amplified charismatic spirituality, but also because they violated the ethnic and class bigotries and hierarchies that were prevalent in early-twentieth century North America.¹⁹ Although the Pentecostal doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit was not new (the Pentecostals adopted it from their Wesleyan-Holiness and Reformed Revivalist predecessors), the way the Pentecostals experienced Spirit baptism, especially at Azusa Street, was something unique.²⁰ As Walter J. Hollenweger convinc-

¹⁹ Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (2004; reprint, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40.

²⁰ For the Wesleyan-Holiness roots of the doctrine of Spirit baptism as post-conversion work of grace, see Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury, 1987), 48–54. For precedents of the doctrine among Reformed evangelical revivalists, see R. A. Torrey, “The Baptism with the Holy Spirit,” in “*The Higher Christian Life: Sources for the Study of the Holiness, Pentecostal, and Keswick Movements*,” ed. Donald W. Dayton, *Late Nineteenth Century Revivalist Teachings on the Holy Spirit* (New York: Garland, 1985), 12–16; Edith L. Waldvogel (née Blumhofer), “The ‘Overcoming’ Life: A Study in the Reformed Evangelical Contribution to Pentecostalism,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 1 (1979): 7–19 and “The ‘Overcoming Life’: A Study in the Reformed Evangelical Origins of Pentecostalism” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1977) and Roland Wessels, “The Spirit

ingly argues, Seymour's class, racial, and religious transcending love is the true nature of Pentecostalism.²¹ Moreover, Seymour's experience of social transcending love is consistent with the Spirit's work in Christ and the Acts of the Apostles that confronts and contravenes fashionable cultural and religious sensibilities.

Pinnock's journey as a theologian who pushed beyond the boundaries of evangelical "orthodoxy" can be interpreted as the theological expression of being carried along with the "wind . . . wherever it pleases" and refusing to be stifled by stultifying religious leaders and theories. Theological activity, at least within a Pentecostal context, needs to be understood as a human activity prompted and assisted by the work of the Spirit. As such, we should ex-

Baptism, Nineteenth Century Roots," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 14 (1992): 127–57.

²¹ Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 18–23. In contrast to Hollenweger, James R. Goff, Jr. advocates Charles Fox Parham (1873–1929) as the progenitor of Pentecostalism because his views that Spirit baptism provides power for end-time evangelism and tongues are the initial evidence of Spirit baptism became Pentecostalism's defining characteristics. The debate over whether Seymour or Parham reflects the essence of Pentecostalism is largely a difference between a theological and a historical account of the movement. From a theological perspective, Hollenweger's judgment that Seymour's social transcending love represents the heart of Pentecostalism seems correct in light of the content of Joel 2:27–28 that Peter cites to define the nature of the Pentecost event and subsequent narrative of Acts. And yet, from a historical perspective, Goff is accurate that Parham's emphasis on Spirit baptism and tongues as its initial evidence for the purpose of facilitating an end time revival became the unique theological datum of Classical Pentecostalism. For Goff's argument, see *Fields White unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988).

pect that theological reflection will push beyond the accepted theological protocols and positions. Pinnock's theological temperament and pilgrimage represents the theological manifestation of Paul's encouragement to "keep in step with the Spirit" as you "work out your faith with fear and trembling" (Gal 5:25 and Phil 2:12). Casting Pinnock's theological pilgrimage in terms of following the wind of the Spirit does not carry with it the elevation of Pinnock to canonical status. As Pinnock insists, theology is an ongoing, contextual, and partial effort; theology proceeds in fits and starts, stutters and stammering. Nevertheless, his willingness to resist theological ossification and to press forward into new theological terrain is a Pentecostal sign and a model for Pentecostal theologians.

Pinnock's Charismatic Style

One of the features of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost is that the Spirit inspired a multitude of tongues. For the celebration of the festival of Pentecost, Jerusalem hosted multitudes of converts to Judaism ("God-fearing Jews") from across and beyond the Roman Empire. Upon receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples "began to speak in other tongues" to the multitudes gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 2:4). The crowds who witnessed this charismatic display responded with a mix of scepticism, derision, and astonishment. Particularly the latter wondered: "'Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?'" (Acts 2:7-8). From the beginning, the Spirit of Pentecost is an inclusive Spirit. Indeed, the thematic statement of Acts 1:8 "you will receive

power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,” sets the structure for the following narrative that showcases the inclusive nature of the outpouring of the Spirit on all people.

Acts 1:8 and the many tongues spoken on the Day of Pentecost recommend an ecumenical approach to theology for two reasons. First, the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and the subsequent inclusion of the Samaritans and Gentiles show that a common experience of the Spirit of Pentecost does not depend upon a common language, ethnic heritage, or religious background. Second, experience of the Spirit among those who are perceived as outsiders, but in fact have already received the Spirit of Pentecost, becomes the source for theological development and insight. In respect to the latter, the story of Cornelius and the Jerusalem council is instructive.

The Jerusalem council, described in Acts 15:1–29, is the early church’s effort to come to terms with the inclusive nature of the Spirit of Pentecost. At issue, is whether Gentile converts needed to conform to the Jewish expectation of circumcision. During the deliberations, Peter testifies before the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 and draws on his experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius’s household.²² Although ten years had elapsed between Peter’s ministry with Cornelius and the Jerusa-

²² I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (1980; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 249.

lem council, the narrative time compresses them.²³ In Acts 15:7–11, Peter recounts his experience with the Gentile Cornelius to encourage the early Christian leaders in Jerusalem to adopt a more inclusive practice toward the Gentile Christians.²⁴ Prior to this experience, his belief, reflecting a traditional first century Jewish attitude, seems to have been that the Gospel was for the Jews. Though he does not explicitly make the claim, the vision he receives while relaxing on the roof top of Simon the Tanner makes sense only when it is presupposed (Acts 10:9–22). His declaration to Cornelius also implies it: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (Acts 10:34). At the Jerusalem council, he announced that “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them [i.e., Cornelius’s household/Gentiles] by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8–9). James, the principal leader of the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem,

²³ David K. Strong, “The Jerusalem Council: Some Implications for Contextualization: Acts 15:1–35,” in *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context*, ed. Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, American Society of Missiology Series, 34 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 201.

²⁴ In respect to Peter’s recourse to his experience with Cornelius, F. Scott Spencer put it this way, “the conclusions he now draws from this experience are similar to those advanced in ch. 11...[s]ince God gave the Holy Spirit to these uncircumcised Gentiles...then clearly God ‘has made no distinction between them [Gentiles] and us [Jews]’ within the community of God’s people” (Spencer, *Journeying Through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004], 165).

concludes the discussion by agreeing with the theological point drawn from Peter's experience with Cornelius; the Christian community should take an inclusive attitude toward the people of God.²⁵

The Jerusalem council suggests an ecumenical approach to theology. It does so because it shows that a reflection on the Spirit's work among those who are initially considered outsiders to the true community of faith leads to a fuller understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Had the Jewish believers failed to integrate the Spirit's inclusion of the Gentiles into the church, their theology would have remained blinkered and out of step with the Spirit of Pentecost. However, through what was essentially an ecumenical encounter between their preconceived theological assumptions and Peter's experience with Cornelius' household and Paul and Barnabas' work among Gentiles in Antioch, the Jerusalem leadership arrives at an understanding of the Gospel that recognizes the inclusive nature of the Spirit of Pentecost.

Listening to the many tongues of Pentecost yields a more holistic and *Pentecostal* theology. Ecumenical theological voices are like the diverse tongues of Pentecost. They all seek to proclaim the "wonders of God" in their "own language" (Acts 2:11). Although the languages are different, they speak of the same outpouring of the Spirit. Pinnock's theological style is eminently ecumenical and thus also Pentecostal. His willingness to engage in dialogue with the liberal theologian Delwin Brown is exem-

²⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed. (1988; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 293.

plary of ecumenical pneumatology.²⁶ Pinnock's ecumenical style shows an appreciation of the many theological tongues of the Spirit of Pentecost and tacitly recognizes the diversity of the theological gifts of the Spirit that operate in the body of Christ. Pinnock's willingness to draw on a variety of Christian theological sources is a Pentecostal approach to theology. It is so because it shows a willingness to listen to what the Spirit is saying *to* the churches and *through* the churches (e.g., Rev 2:7 and 11).

Pinnock's Charismatic Substance

Although his identity is primarily as an evangelical theologian, Pinnock describes his major text on pneumatology, *Flame of Love*, as "charismatic in celebrating Pentecostalism as a mighty twentieth-century outpouring of the Spirit."²⁷ Pinnock has made several specific contributions to Pentecostal theology and several Pentecostal theologians have drawn on Pinnock's theology to develop certain areas of Pentecostal theology. In this final section, I first want to outline briefly the specific contributions and conversations between Pinnock and Pentecostal theologians and second to add to these exchanges by looking at what Pinnock understands about the relationship between religious experience, theology, and Pentecostal theology.

Pinnock has made contributions to Pentecostal theology in the areas of theology proper, ecclesiology, and theological hermeneutics. His first direct contribution to

²⁶ See Clark H. Pinnock and Delwin Brown, *Theological Crossfire: An Evangelical/Liberal Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

²⁷ Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 18.

Pentecostal theology was in the doctrine of God. The *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* published Pinnock's article, "Divine Relationality: A Pentecostal Contribution to the Doctrine of God," with Pentecostal theologian Terry Cross' response. In this piece, Pinnock suggests that Pentecostals have a natural affinity for Open Theism.²⁸ In a dialogue with Frank D. Macchia, Terry L. Cross, and R. Hollis Gause, which first occurred in March 2005 at the 34th annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies and was later published in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, he outlines the contours of a Pentecostal approach to ecclesiology.²⁹ Additionally, Pinnock has proposed the contours of a Charismatic approach to theological and biblical hermeneutics.³⁰ Moreover, Pentecostal theologians have drawn on Pinnock's theology to propose Pentecostal approaches to certain areas of theology, such as theology of religions and Spirit Christology.³¹

²⁸ Pinnock, "Divine Relationality," 3–26 and Cross, "The Rich Feast of Theology," 27–47.

²⁹ Pinnock, "Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit," 146–65. For the responses, see Frank D. Macchia, "Pinnock's Pneumatology: A Pentecostal Appreciation," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (2006): 167–73; Terry L. Cross, "A Response to Clark Pinnock's 'Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit,'" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (2006): 175–82; and R. Hollis Gause, "A Pentecostal Response to Pinnock's Proposal," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (2006): 183–88.

³⁰ Clark H. Pinnock, "The Work of the Spirit in the Interpretation of Holy Scripture from the Perspective of a Charismatic Biblical Theologian," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18 (2009): 157–71 and "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2 (1993): 3–23.

³¹ Amos Yong has constructively drawn on Pinnock to develop a Pentecostal theology of religions in *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a*

In a call that is more fundamental than a contribution to one area of Pentecostal theology, Pinnock urges Pentecostals to let their Pentecostal experience inform the nature of Pentecostal theology. This encouragement is within the context of Pinnock's advocacy for the Pentecostal movement as a catalyst for church renewal. Pinnock indicates a shift in his understanding of the critical issue for church renewal. Early in his career, he saw recovering conservative-evangelical doctrinal fidelity and a high view of Scripture (i.e., the doctrine of biblical inerrancy at this early stage of his career) as the primary program for church renewal. During this period, he was a leading figure in moving the Southern Baptist Convention back to a conservative theological posture. His first publications illustrate this phase of his career: *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967) and *A New Reformation: A Challenge to Southern Baptists* (Tigerville, S.C.: Jewel Books, 1968). The focus on biblical inerrancy and doctrine for church renewal coincided with his tenure at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (1965–1969) and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1969–1974). However, he gradually came to the conviction that doctrinal reformation and pu-

Pneumatological Theology of Religions (Carlisle, UK/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Baker Academic, 2003), 32–33. I have engaged with Pinnock's Spirit Christology in Studebaker, "Integrating Pneumatology and Christology: A Trinitarian Modification of Clark H. Pinnock's Spirit Christology," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 27 (2006): 5–20.

rity by themselves were insufficient for renewing the church.

Pinnock began to see the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements as sources for church revitalization. No doubt influenced by his charismatic experience, he also based this belief on theological grounds. He maintained that, "Theologically, the basis for seeking renewal is the simple fact that, according to the New Testament, the church is a charismatic community. It exists by God's grace and functions as the gifts of the Spirit manifest themselves in people. The normal Christian experience involves a lively faith in the Spirit as the pivotal reality in human lives."³² Pinnock's point is very important in respect to developing a Pentecostal ecclesiology in particular and Pentecostal theology in general.

In terms of Pentecostal ecclesiology, the church is not defined by adherence to an attenuated list of conservative evangelical doctrines, but as a community of the Holy Spirit. The presence and redemptive activity of the Holy Spirit and positive response to that presence among the community of believers is the primary character of the church. At the same time, he does not abandon his evangelical roots. Reflecting on the shift in his call for renewal, he explains that the twin desires for doctrinal fidel-

³² Pinnock, "Baptists and the 'Latter Rain,'" 266; he also makes this point later in "Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit," 157. In his response to Pinnock, Terry Cross recommends that the doctrine of the Trinity, which gives a prominent role to pneumatology, should ground a Pentecostal ecclesiology rather than relying exclusively on pneumatology (see Cross, "A Response to Clark Pinnock's 'Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit,'" 176-77).

ity and spiritual vitality should not be viewed as mutually exclusive nor construed in terms of a hierarchy of concerns. Rather, Pinnock suggests a “pietist orthodoxy” in which “God’s truth is not just something objective but a matter of subjective experience and appropriation.”³³

More significantly though, Pinnock recognizes Pentecostals should have a *Pentecostal* theology and that the Pentecostal way of experiencing God should shape the content of their theology. He warns Pentecostals to avoid walking down the path of conservative evangelical rationalistic approaches to theology. He encourages Pentecostals that “Pentecostals are now in a strong position to make contributions to theology, distinctive contributions reflecting their own ethos and experience.”³⁴ What is important to this recommendation is that Pinnock perceives that Pentecostal experience has theological implications.³⁵ Terry Cross concurs with Pinnock when he remarks that “Pentecostals insist that ‘theology follows experience not the other way around’ . . . [b]ecause we know and experience God in the existential reality of our lives, we are prepared to construct our theological understanding of God with this experiential reality in mind.”³⁶ Reflecting the connection between Pentecostal experience and theology, Pinnock suggests that the dynamic God of Open

³³ Pinnock, “Baptists and the ‘Latter Rain,’” 267–68.

³⁴ Pinnock, “Divine Relationality,” 4.

³⁵ Clark H. Pinnock, “The Holy Spirit as a Distinct Person in the Godhead,” in *Spirit and Renewal: Essays in Honor of J. Rodman Williams*, ed. Mark W. Wilson (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 34.

³⁶ Cross, “The Rich Feast of Theology,” 30 and 33–36.

Theism coheres better with the way Pentecostals experience God than with God conceived “as an unblinking cosmic stare or metaphysical iceberg” assumed in conservative and “paelo-Calvinist” evangelical theology.³⁷

Pentecostals have intuitively sensed that their experience and theology are interrelated, but they have not always been effective at identifying the theological rationale for that interrelationship or drawing out the theological implications of that connection. Indeed, many Pentecostals deny that Pentecostalism can be defined in theological terms and must rather be understood in terms of experiential categories—e.g., charismatic spirituality. According to this view, Pentecostals are about charismatic religious experience and not theology.³⁸ However, as Pinnock points out, the community of believers is a manifestation of the work of the Spirit; the “church is a charismatic community.”³⁹ The notion that the church is a charismatic community, a community whose life is a product of the Holy Spirit’s activity, provides a theological foundation for drawing on Pentecostal experience in the effort to construct Pentecostal theology. Pentecostals should follow Pinnock’s advice to let their experience of God inform their theology because their experience is an experience of the Holy Spirit.

³⁷ Pinnock, “Response to Daniel Strange and Amos Yong,” 353 and “Divine Relationality,” 25. Cross is less sure that Open Theism is palatable to Pentecostals (Cross, “The Rich Feast of Theology,” 39–46).

³⁸ E.g., Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 18–27 and Anderson, *Pentecostalism*, 9–15 and 60.

³⁹ Pinnock, “Baptists and the ‘Latter Rain,’” 266.

Historically, Pentecostals have been largely satisfied with adopting traditional evangelical theology and adding to it their unique take on Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts.⁴⁰ In this respect, Pentecostal experience has contributed a Pentecostal addendum to evangelical theology. Thus, Pentecostals have correctly sought to recognize the theological significance of the narratives of the Spirit in Luke-Acts and have done so precisely because those texts have shaped their Christian experience and yet, ironically, they have been reluctant to press home the importance of their experience of the Spirit for the task of articulating a Pentecostal theology in general. I maintain that Pentecostal experience, inclusive of both individual and collective experience, should inform Pentecostal theology. Pentecostals should give theological significance to what they take as the manifestation and experience of the Holy Spirit within their incipient tradition.⁴¹

⁴⁰ An excellent example of this approach to doing Pentecostal theology is J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

⁴¹ In taking this view, I join with others who have sought to develop Pentecostal theology in terms of the concrete experience and practices of the Pentecostal movement. E.g., Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Burlington, VT and Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), *The Spirit poured out on all Flesh and Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008) and Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (2005; reprint, Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009).

Conclusion

Clark H. Pinnock's theological career encapsulates the larger story of the evangelical and Pentecostal movements in the late-twentieth and early years of the twenty first centuries. He followed paths that led him from conservative Evangelicalism to post-conservative Evangelicalism. Included in this transition was an embrace of the Pentecostal movement both in terms of personal experience and theological content. Pinnock's theological odyssey can be understood as a theological effort to "keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal 5:25). His theological trajectory embodies several Pentecostal characteristics—e.g., charismatic experience, openness to theological change, and ecumenical style—that can serve as a model for Pentecostal theologians.

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