

Michael A. Tapper, *Canadian Pentecostals, the Trinity, and Contemporary Worship Music: The Things We Sing* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). xi + 418 pp. \$102 USD paper; \$99 USD EBook

Does worship in the churches of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) reflect the trinitarian theology of its *Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths*? Michael A. Tapper says, “no.” The PAOC are confessional, but not functional trinitarians. What is the basis of this claim? The worship songs that Pentecostals sing. Tapper surveys the lyrics of the top songs used in PAOC churches between 2007 and 2015. This survey shows that PAOC worship favors contemporary Christian music (CCM) and contemporary worship music (CWM). It also highlights the leading role that three Pentecostal churches (Calvary Chapel, Anaheim Vineyard, and Hillsong Church) played in popularizing CCM and CWM worship style in Pentecostal churches (ch. 5). The music Pentecostals sing reflects and shapes their vision of God and the way they imagine relating to God. Worship song lyrics reveal how people think about God, their relationships with other people, and their life in this world. What type of God does Pentecostal worship music reflect and how does Pentecostal worship portray life in human community and in this world?

Tapper turns to Colin Gunton’s theology to answer these questions. Tapper first shows that Gunton’s diagnosis of the problem of Western theology correlates with the problems of PAOC worship lyrics. Under the legacy of Augustine, western theology emphasizes the unity of God over the plurality of the persons, tends toward dualism of spirit/mind and body as well as portraying God as serving the needs of the individual worshipper, and denigrates or, at best, marginalizes the material life of this world for hope of life in the ever after (chs 3 and 4).

Gunton’s critique of Western theology provides three critical and constructive categories for Tapper—theology proper, anthropology, and cosmology. Chapters six through ten are the constructive heart of the book. Drawing on Gunton, Tapper alternates between critical analysis of and constructive proposals for Pentecostal worship. He conducts the critical analysis of Pentecostal worship in chapters six, eight, and ten. Theologically, Pentecostal worship is either Christocentric, with little mention of the Father and the Holy Spirit, or directed to a vague, undefined, and modalistic God. Traditional patterns

of worship that indicate the trinitarian mediation of worship and relationship with God (to/for the Father, in/with the Son, through/by the Holy Spirit) are generally absent from PAOC worship songs (ch. 6). In terms of the human participant, worship songs are individualistic in respect to relationship with God and give little attention to the community dimension of the Christian life (ch. 8). Song lyrics moreover have an other-worldly focus that seldom connect the worshipper with God's interaction with the world (ch. 10).

What is the solution to the modalistic, anthropocentric, and spiritualized nature of Pentecostal worship? Chapters seven, nine, and eleven detail Tapper's answers. Pentecostal worship should narrate the wider redemptive work of God in the world. Songs that display the comprehensive work of God in the economy of redemption will necessarily draw the worshipper into a richer trinitarian vision of God. Tapper is not calling for Pentecostal worship song lyrics to indulge in speculative treatises on the inner life of the divine persons. They should, however, draw on the biblical portrait of God as a loving community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and what this means for redemption (ch. 7).

In place of the individualistic view of inner-spiritual salvation, chapter nine proposes a *perichoretic* view redemption. Pentecostal worship needs to recognize that the triune God redeems people in their relations with others and for their wider life in this world. The chapter proposes resourcing ecumenical theology and contemporary Pentecostal theologians and ministry leaders (e.g., Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Amos Yong, and David Wells) to reform PAOC worship. Doing so can help Pentecostal worship incorporate trinitarian patterns of God's immanent life and interaction with the world and encourage an orientation to the wider community of the church and areas of life beyond individual religious consumption. Tapper also addresses the almost exclusive emphasis on the human-centered nature of Pentecostal worship. Namely, that Pentecostal worship is a human-induced experience with God serving the needs of personal spiritual experience. He suggests that Pentecostals need to ground their worship experience in the redemptive work of the triune God. Lyrics should recover the mediated nature of traditional Christian doxology, which invokes worship that is to/for the Father, in/with Jesus Christ, and thorough/by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter eleven considers the implied theology of creation in Pentecostal worship and highlights two tendencies: dualism and divine immediacy. The dualism has two facets. On the one hand, Pentecostal worship lyrics portray God as outside of time and creation; but on the other hand, they characterize faithful Christians as aliens in the world waiting for the imminent return of Christ to transport them out of the darkness of the world and into the light of heaven. The theology of Pentecostal worship is, therefore, ironic (perhaps contradictory?). Its dualism alienates them from the world, which can lead to a mind-set of eschatological escapism and of indifference to social justice concerns. Its expectation of divine immediacy can lead to the triumphalism of divine power encounters and spiritual warfare. Gunton again provides the pathway forward. God transcends creation, but is also intimately involved with and will eventually redeem creation. Tapper suggests that Pentecostal worship lyrics should articulate the participatory relationship between God and creation. They should also affirm that this world is not a satanic no-go zone, but the place for the coming kingdom of God.

Although drawing on Gunton's relational trinitarian theology for the critical analysis of and constructive work on Pentecostal worship, Tapper is also occasionally critical of Gunton (ch. 4). Tapper argues that Gunton's eclectic and interdisciplinary manner sometimes led to superficial adaptation and understanding of sources and figures. Thus, his resourcing of Gunton's theology is critical yet sympathetic.

This review was my second opportunity to read Tapper's work. During an earlier version of this project, I served as the external examiner for Tapper's dissertation at Saint Paul University (University of Ottawa). Although an excellent dissertation, this book improves on its earlier form.

Overall, Tapper engages an important subject in Pentecostal worship studies by resourcing a major figure—Colin Gunton—in contemporary trinitarian theology. He demonstrates mastery of the literature of several fields of research—North American Pentecostalism, worship studies, and trinitarian theology, especially the trinitarian thought of Colin Gunton. He successfully integrates these fields of research for the purpose of investigating the place of the Trinity, theological anthropology, and cosmology in the worship

experience of churches in the PAOC. He effectively presents the results of the research project and, based on empirical analysis of PAOC worship song content, puts forth a constructive proposal for correcting the deficit in trinitarian theology as well as the excessively individualistic and otherworldly oriented nature of PAOC worship songs. Tapper's interdisciplinary work, which brings the world of theological discourse into conversation with church practices, is vital. His project promises to renew Pentecostal worship practice in particular and the broader field of liturgical studies. Furthermore, it provides a model of the integration of theological and pastoral/liturgical studies. Although focusing on the PAOC, Tapper's work speaks to the theology in worship in the wider Pentecostal communities that exhibit similar characteristics.

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