

## INTRODUCTION

### Lee Roy Martin\*

*How shall they hear without a preacher?* (Rom. 10.14) <sup>1</sup>

Preaching has played a crucial role in the Pentecostal movement and continues to be a vital component of the Pentecostal experience.<sup>2</sup> The significant place of preaching is due in part to the prominence of orality in the Pentecostal tradition. Walter Hollenweger argues that Pentecostalism emerged out of the African-American oral context and that Pentecostal theology is primarily oral in nature.<sup>3</sup> Like the first Christian communities, early Pentecostalism was a ‘charismatic community which placed emphasis on *hearing*, not reading’.<sup>4</sup> The orality of Pentecostalism has led, in part, to a celebration of preaching as a mode of divine revelation. In the Pentecostal tradition, therefore, preachers have served as authoritative interpreters of Scripture and formulators of ground level theology for a

---

\* Lee Roy Martin (DTh, University of South Africa) is Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, TN, USA.

<sup>1</sup> Biblical quotations are translations of the author.

<sup>2</sup> See Walter Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (trans. R.A. Wilson; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), who writes that it is in the ‘sphere of liturgy and preaching, that the Pentecostal movement [has made] its most important contribution’ (p. 466).

<sup>3</sup> Walter Hollenweger, ‘The Critical Tradition of Pentecostalism’, *JPT* 1 (1992), pp. 7-17.

<sup>4</sup> James K.A. Smith, ‘The Closing of the Book: Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and the Sacred Writings’, *JPT* 11 (1997), p. 50 (emphasis Smith). Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ‘Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Making: On the Way from Fundamentalism to Postmodernism’, *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 18 (1998), p. 79, points out that orality ‘still dominates [Pentecostalism] in the Two Thirds World’.

mostly uneducated constituency. Although Pentecostalism's oral character may have been diluted to some degree in the West because of greater access to education, preaching remains a dominant gene in the Pentecostal DNA.

## **The Need for Pentecostal Resources on Preaching**

A few years ago, I taught a seminary course entitled 'Preaching from the Old Testament'. My preparation for that course alerted me to the scarcity of Pentecostal resources on preaching. Although several scholarly works on Pentecostal preaching have been written,<sup>5</sup> the subject has not received the attention that it deserves, and much work remains to be done. While the lack of scholarly treatment of Pentecostal preaching may be due to any number of reasons, I would suggest at least three. First, Pentecostal preaching has not always been exemplary – abundant examples of poor exegesis, faulty theology, and emotional excesses among Pentecostal preachers have opened the door to criticism and have overshadowed the beneficial and powerful elements of a Pentecostal approach. Second, Pentecostal scholars, for the most part, received their graduate and post-graduate educations at non-Pentecostal schools where they were steeped in a western, rationalist, deductive, propositional, linear model of hermeneutics and preaching. Pentecostal preaching, however, often corresponds to an entirely different model, which is based on non-western, non-linear, inductive, affective, and narrative strategies. Ralph Turnbull exemplifies the Evangelical assessment of

---

<sup>5</sup> E.g. see Joseph K. Byrd, *Formulation of a Classical Pentecostal Homiletic in Dialogue with Protestant Homiletics* (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990); *idem*, 'Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory and Pentecostal Proclamation', *Pneuma* 16.2 (1993), pp. 203-14; Vincent Beng Leoh, *Ethics and Pentecostal Preaching: The Anastatic, Organic, and Communal Strands* (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990); *idem*, 'A Pentecostal Preacher as an Empowered Witness', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 9.1 (2006), pp. 35-58; Aldwin Ragoonath, *Pentecostal Preaching in North America* (DTh thesis, University of South Africa, 1999); John Gordy, 'Toward a Theology of Pentecostal Preaching', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10.1 (October 2001), pp. 81-82; Cheryl Bridges Johns, 'What Makes a Good Sermon: A Pentecostal Perspective', *Journal of Preachers* 26.4 (2003), pp. 45-54; Roli G. dela Cruz, 'A Historical-Doctrinal Perspective of Filipino Pentecostal Preaching', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 10.2 (2007), pp. 197-217; and Adam White, 'Not in Lofty Speech or Media: A Reflection on Pentecostal Preaching in Light of 1 Cor. 2.1-5', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 24.1 (Spring 2015), pp. 117-35.

Pentecostal preaching when he describes it as ‘simplistic in style, abundantly illustrated from experience, manipulative in emotional appeal ...’<sup>6</sup> Many Pentecostal educators have viewed Pentecostal preaching with a similar suspicion, and have attempted to reshape their students into a western Evangelical image. Third, Pentecostal scholarship is still in its early stages of development; and, up to this point, scholars have focused primarily upon key theological concerns instead of upon spirituality and worship practices. We simply have not had enough scholars with sufficient time to engage constructively and deeply with every Pentecostal doctrine and practice.

It is hoped that this volume will make a significant contribution to the literature on Pentecostal preaching and push the conversation forward in ways that encourage discernment and creative theological construction. In its theology, spirituality, and practices, the Pentecostal tradition shares much with historic Christianity. In some ways, however, Pentecostalism is a unique movement, and that uniqueness has produced a rich heritage of Pentecostal preaching. I would argue that our construction of a theology of preaching should be part of a larger project of revisioning all of Pentecostal theology and all of the Pentecostal practices. Evangelical theology does not serve the interests of the Pentecostal movement, and Evangelical theologies of preaching are not entirely appropriate for the Pentecostal community. The goal of Pentecostal scholarship should be to construct a contemporary holistic Pentecostal theology that appreciates the tradition handed down to us but that refines and reshapes it in ways that are contextually relevant. It is in this spirit that we offer our exploratory models for the theology and practice of Pentecostal preaching.

## **Contours of a Pentecostal Theology of Preaching**

In what remains of this brief introduction, I will offer a few suggestions for further development of a Pentecostal theology of preaching. My theological reflections on preaching have been shaped largely through pastoral praxis, in which I have integrated the Bible,

---

<sup>6</sup> Ralph Turnbull, *A History of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), III, p. 316. I find it amusing, however, that comparable criticisms were leveled against the Baptist preacher C.H. Spurgeon and the famous Presbyterian pastor T. DeWitt Talmage.

theology, and practice. My struggle to become a better preacher has motivated me to examine the sermons of great preachers and to ask why those preachers are considered to be great. Also, because I am trained as a biblical scholar, I have devoted a great deal of energy in the study of biblical texts that relate to preaching. Integrated with my examination of great sermons and my study of Scripture is my own experience of preaching. I preached my first sermon in 1973, and I served as a Church of God pastor for twenty-seven years. From my experience of preaching over five thousand sermons, I have arrived at what is, for me, the most crucial component of a Pentecostal theology of preaching, which is that preaching is an unfathomable mystery. The divine-human synergy that brings together the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, the preacher, and the listener is such a dynamic and mysterious interaction that cannot be understood fully or described precisely. Nevertheless, it is our task as scholars to make the attempt.

The purpose of this volume is to explore the ways in which Pentecostal theology should influence our views of preaching. Its purpose is not to promote a certain preaching method, style of delivery, or sermon type. The richness of the Pentecostal preaching tradition testifies to the broadness of God's calling and the diversity of God's giftings; consequently, to place too many restrictions on contextually determined styles and models would be tantamount to quenching the Holy Spirit. Disagreements over what constitutes good preaching may be due to differing theological foundations, but sometimes the conflicts arise from myopic and unimaginative perspectives on preaching. A holistic approach to preaching is needed that looks at Pentecostal preaching from a variety of viewpoints, contexts, and academic disciplines.<sup>7</sup> We must allow for a broad diversity of preaching styles, and we must resist the temptation to argue for the superiority of our own personally preferred style and method. Not only should we acknowledge the diversity of Pentecostal preaching styles, we should celebrate it.

I would suggest that a fully developed Pentecostal theology of preaching should include explorations from a number of perspectives, including the following:

---

<sup>7</sup> I have attempted in this volume to include voices from a number of cultural contexts, but still, a more global perspective is required.

Preaching as biblical interpretation  
 Preaching as personal testimony (witness)  
 Preaching as Christian formation  
 Preaching as community building  
 Preaching as pastoral care  
 Preaching as evangelism  
 Preaching as a skill  
 Preaching as an art  
 Preaching as a prophetic word  
 Preaching as a work of the Holy Spirit  
 Preaching as theological construction  
 Preaching as worship.

Each of these approaches is touched upon in this modest volume, but much more development and elaboration is possible. I have a personal interest in several of the topics listed above. I will mention three at this point, and others will follow in chapter two, ‘Fire in the Bones: Pentecostal Prophetic Preaching’.

### **Pentecostal Preaching as Worship**

For example, in regard to preaching as worship, some Christian traditions view the Eucharist as the center of worship while others think of preaching as the center.<sup>8</sup> But in Pentecostalism, neither the Eucharist nor the preaching is the central feature of worship. Rather, encounter with God through the Holy Spirit is the center. In his article on ‘Community and Worship’, Jerome Boone argues that the ‘single most important goal of any Pentecostal worship service is a personal encounter with the Spirit of God’.<sup>9</sup> Keith Warrington agrees: ‘Two pertinent words when referring to Pentecostal spirituality are “expectancy” and “encounter”’. Pentecostals expect to encounter God. It undergirds much of their worship and theology and may even be identified as another way of defining worship.<sup>10</sup> That

---

<sup>8</sup> Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (JPTSUP 21; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), writes that in the evangelical model ‘worship is reduced to preaching’ (p. 37).

<sup>9</sup> R. Jerome Boone, ‘Community and Worship: The Key Components of Pentecostal Christian Formation’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (1996), pp. 129-42 (p. 137).

<sup>10</sup> Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), p. 219. Cf. Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (JPTSUP, 17; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 226, 38-39; *idem*, ‘Pentecostal Spirituality: Looking

encounter may come in a time of prayer; it may come during the music; it may come during the preaching; it may come during the celebration of the sacraments; it may come during the altar service. When it comes to preaching, this theology of encounter means that the preacher will expect a special presence of the Holy Spirit to be at work in the preparation of the sermon, in the delivery of the sermon, and in the time following the sermon.

As an act of worship, Pentecostal preaching is more than the dissemination of information. Both the preacher and the congregation worship God during the act of preaching. Both the delivery and the reception of the Word of God generate worship. Jeremiah testified as much when he said, ‘Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart’ (Jer. 15.16). David exclaimed likewise, ‘I rejoice at your word as one who finds great treasure’ (Ps. 119.162). The joy and wonder of preaching emerge from the realization that the Word of God is being proclaimed! The apostle Paul writes, ‘... when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as what it really is, the word of God’ (1 Thess. 2.13).

Pentecostal preaching is not a one-dimensional act of communication in which the preacher is speaking only to the listeners and the listeners are hearing only the speaker. In Pentecostal worship, the preacher exercises a priestly function, standing between God and congregation. The preacher speaks for God; but, at the same time, the preacher is one of the worshippers, offering up a ‘sacrifice of praise’ (Heb. 13.15). I expressed a similar thought in an earlier piece:

The act of preaching is an act of worship, in which the preacher stands in God’s holy presence, with one eye on God and the other eye on the congregation, with one foot on earth and the

---

through the Lens of Ritual’, *Pneuma* 14.2 (1992), pp. 107-25; Rebecca Jaichandran and B.D. Madhav, ‘Pentecostal Spirituality in a Postmodern World’, *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6.1 (2003), pp. 39-61; Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., ‘The Nature of Pentecostal Spirituality’, *Pneuma* 14.2 (1992), pp. 103-106; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ‘“Encountering Christ in the Full Gospel Way”: An Incarnational Pentecostal Spirituality’, *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 27.1 (2007), pp. 9-23; and Chris E.W. Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper: Foretasting the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), p. 289, who writes, ‘Pentecostal spirituality is nothing if not a *personal* engagement’ with God (emphasis original).

other foot in heaven, with one hand reaching up to God and the other hand stretched out to the people. The people also worship – they look both to the preacher and to God as they yield to the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup>

### **Pentecostal Preaching as Theological Construction**

In regard to preaching as theological construction, helpful models can be found in early Pentecostalism. The first Pentecostal preachers focused on the doctrine, practices, and spirituality of the developing tradition, with special emphasis upon the Fivefold Gospel.<sup>12</sup> They often used their sermons to explain Pentecostal phenomena such as glossolalia and divine healing.<sup>13</sup> However, the doctrinal preaching of early Pentecostals was more than a fundamentalist adherence to certain doctrinal statements and, in turn, indoctrination of their congregants in the same. The epistemology, worldview, and spirituality of Pentecostalism are different from those of fundamentalism and American Evangelicalism. Therefore, Pentecostal theological preaching takes on an orientation that is more narratively shaped and that exhibits more integration of theology and spirituality.

It was the preaching of the Full Gospel that transformed Pentecostalism from its small and humble beginnings into a worldwide constituency numbering over five hundred million.<sup>14</sup> The phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism is a direct result of effective Pente-

<sup>11</sup> Lee Roy Martin, 'The Uniqueness of Spirit-Filled Preaching', in Mark Williams and Lee Roy Martin (eds.), *Spirit-Filled Preaching in the 21st Century* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2013), pp. 199-212 (p. 207).

<sup>12</sup> Or the Fourfold Gospel in some streams of the movement.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the early treatments of healing, see Kimberly Ervin Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice* (JPTSUP 29; Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2006). On eschatology, see Larry R. McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology: Discerning the Way Forward* (JPTSUP, 39; Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2012). Regarding the Lord's Supper, see Chris E.W. Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper: Foretasting the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012). Concerning ecclesiology, see Dale Coulter, 'The Development of Ecclesiology in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN): A Forgotten Contribution?', *Pneuma* 29.1 (2007), pp. 59-85. The Fivefold Gospel was still the centerpiece of Pentecostal preaching (in the Church of God at least) when I joined the denomination in the 1970's.

<sup>14</sup> Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 11. Recent sources suggest the numbers now exceed six hundred million. See John Christopher Thomas, 'Pentecostal Interpretation', in S.L. McKenzie (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation* (2 vols.; Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), II, pp. 89-97 (p. 89).

costal preaching and the life-changing effects of that preaching. I contend that we should continue to preach Pentecostal theology, spirituality, and practice. Today's church member is influenced largely by non-Pentecostal perspectives that are espoused on television, internet, radio, and other media. If Pentecostalism is to survive as a distinguishable tradition, its preachers must be committed to Pentecostal theology broadly defined, and they must proclaim its central concerns from the pulpit of our churches.

### **Pentecostal Preaching as a Work of the Holy Spirit**

It is obvious that a Pentecostal theology of preaching should include an explication of the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching, and several writers in this volume explore ways in which the Holy Spirit is active in Pentecostal preaching.

When I think about the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching, the following activities come to mind immediately:

#### 1. The Holy Spirit Empowers

It was only after Jesus had been empowered by the Holy Spirit that he began his public ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing. He went down to the Jordan and was baptized by John, and when he came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. Afterwards, he fasted for forty days and nights in the wilderness, while being tempted by the devil. At the end of the forty days, 'Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee ...' (Lk. 4.14). Luke's wording suggests that the Spirit's activity in the life of Jesus extended beyond a symbolic presence – the Spirit endowed Jesus with power (*δυνάμει*) for ministry.

Similarly, after the resurrection of Jesus, his disciples did not preach until the Holy Spirit empowered them. Jesus gave them the following command: 'And behold, I myself send the promise of my father upon you; but remain in the city, until you are clothed with power (*δύναμιν*) from on high' (Lk. 24.49). The promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit. As soon as they emerged from the upper room, Peter, who had earlier denied that he knew Jesus, stood and preached fearlessly to the multitude. Peter's actions demonstrate that one aspect of the Spirit's empowerment is boldness to preach.

Boldness as result of Spirit empowerment is expressed clearly in a later narrative. After Peter and John had been arrested, threat-

ened, and ordered to cease all preaching about Jesus, the church gathered to pray. We read, ‘And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness’ (Acts 4.31). The threats from the Jewish leaders undoubtedly led to a certain amount of uncertainty and hesitation among these fledgling Christians, but their filling with the Spirit gave them the boldness necessary to continue preaching the gospel.

The Holy Spirit’s empowerment for preaching should be taken seriously in our construction of a Pentecostal theology of preaching. While natural human abilities are an advantage to the preacher, genuine spiritual effectiveness cannot be obtained without the power of the Holy Spirit.

## 2. The Holy Spirit Authorizes

When Jesus returned from his forty days of fasting in the wilderness, he entered into the synagogue, and at the designated point of the service he read the following text from the book of Isaiah: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed’ (Lk. 4.18). After reading his text, Jesus announced that it was fulfilled in his own ministry. Jesus, therefore, claimed that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him and that he was anointed to preach.

While Jesus’ claim does not explicitly include an endowment of power (though it seems to be implicit), it at least signifies divine authorization and calling. The act of anointing with oil is the biblical equivalent of ordination or appointment to an office. The priests were anointed when they entered the priesthood (Exod. 28.41); the kings were anointed at their coronations (1 Sam. 9.16; 15.1; 16.12; 1 Kgs 1.34); and at least some of the prophets were anointed as a sign of their divine calling (1 Kgs 19.16).

If we look back to Israel’s scriptures, we see that the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus places him within the trajectory of earlier leaders. The Holy Spirit had rested upon Joseph, Moses, Joshua, the judges, Saul, David, and the prophets; therefore, the Spirit’s anointing seems to be a necessary qualifier for leadership in Israel. Therefore, Jesus’ reception of the Spirit marks him as chosen and author-

ized by God. In the case of Jesus, he is specifically authorized to ‘announce good news’ (εὐαγγελίσασθαι), to ‘preach’ (κηρύξαι) deliverance to the captives, and to ‘set free’ (ἀποστειλῆναι) the oppressed. Because Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit, his actions of announcing, preaching, and setting free are not symbolic or empty proclamations – his preaching results in genuine forgiveness, healing, and liberty for those who receive his message.

The Pentecostal movement has traditionally placed a high value upon the spiritual authority that comes from the Spirit’s anointing, and rightly so. The words of Spirit-authorized preachers carry with them the power of salvation, deliverance, and hope for people who are lost, bound, and confused.

### 3. The Holy Spirit Teaches

One important work of the Holy Spirit is to teach believers. Jesus promised his disciples: ‘the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things ...’ (Jn 14.26). John Christopher Thomas comments on the teaching role of the Spirit:

We know from reading the Fourth Gospel that one of Jesus’ primary roles is that of teacher (1.38; 3.2; 6.59; 7.14, 28, 35; 8.20; 11.28; 13.13, 14; cf also 18.20; 20.16). Thus the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, the one who is sent by the Father, will do precisely what Jesus has done – teach! This function is necessitated by Jesus’ departure.<sup>15</sup>

The Spirit’s teaching ministry extends to all believers, including preachers. Therefore, the Holy Spirit empowers, authorizes, and teaches the preacher. The teaching ministry of the Spirit is especially valuable to the preacher during the process of study and sermon preparation. Unfortunately, the tendency toward anti-intellectualism had created a detrimental dichotomy between study and the work of the Holy Spirit. Many Pentecostal preachers boast in their lack of education and in their extemporaneous method of preaching. However, I would argue that education, study, and sermon preparation

---

<sup>15</sup> John Christopher Thomas, *‘He Loved Them Until the End’: The Farewell Materials in the Gospel According to John* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2015), p. 37.

are neither unbiblical, nor are they opposed to the teaching work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

Jesus goes on to say, ‘When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come’ (Jn 16.13). This second statement expands and clarifies the Spirit’s work to include guidance ‘into all truth’ and the announcement of ‘things to come’.

Thus, much of the additional teaching they need must be conveyed by the Paraclete, who may be trusted, for he is again identified as the Spirit of Truth (v. 13). Specifically, the Paraclete will guide into all truth. Such teaching will not be at variance with what Jesus has earlier taught, for the Paraclete’s teaching will come from Jesus. Not only is Jesus the origin of the teaching, but his teaching will also glorify him.<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, today’s Pentecostal preacher can rely confidently upon the integrity of the Holy Spirit and the truthfulness of the Spirit’s leading. The Holy Spirit will not lead into error. Our theology of preaching, therefore, should acknowledge the Spirit’s work in teaching and guiding both preacher and Church into the truth. What remains to be constructed is a fully formed theology of discernment.

#### 4. The Holy Spirit Produces Signs and Wonders

The apostle Paul serves as a helpful model as we construct a Pentecostal theology of preaching. Although Paul was apparently a gifted and trained orator, he chose not to focus his efforts on human modes of argument and reasoning. He preferred to preach the gospel plainly and to allow the Holy Spirit to demonstrate the power of the gospel through signs and wonders. Paul writes to the Corinthian church:

When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I de-

---

<sup>16</sup> For a helpful discussion on the need for both study and Spirit empowerment, see Vincent Leoh, ‘A Pentecostal Preacher as an Empowered Witness’, *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 9.1 (January 2006), pp. 35-58 (p. 39-44). Leoh states, ‘There must be no dichotomy between intensive preparation and direct illumination’ (p. 43).

<sup>17</sup> Thomas, *He Loved Them Until the End*, p. 39.

cided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my message and my preaching were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2.1-5).

Paul's preaching (κήρυγμα) did not rely upon human wisdom but on demonstration (ἀποδείξει) of the Spirit and power. Adam White explains, 'Paul refused to allow his rhetorical abilities to demonstrate the gospel. He was not persuasive in either his style or the content of his argument, but rather, he relied on the power of the Spirit to convince his hearers.'<sup>18</sup> He uses similar words in writing to the Thessalonians: 'For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit' (1 Thess. 1.5). Furthermore, Paul writes to the Romans: 'by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit ... I have fully preached the gospel of Christ (Rom. 15.19). Although Paul does not state the exact nature of the Spirit's demonstrations, they were apparently very powerful and convincing signs.

The demonstrations of power that accompanied the preaching of Jesus are identified clearly in the gospel narratives. We read that Jesus 'went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people' (Mt. 4.23). Jesus describes his own ministry in these words: 'The blind receive their sight; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear; the dead are raised up; and the poor have the gospel preached to them' (Mt. 11.5). The preaching of Jesus, therefore, was accompanied by signs and wonders.

In light of the ministry of Jesus, Pentecostals have insisted that the Full Gospel includes both preaching and miraculous signs. Early Pentecostals also pointed to the final verse of the Gospel According to Mark, which states that the disciples 'went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the

---

<sup>18</sup> Adam White, 'Not in Lofty Speech or Media: A Reflection on Pentecostal Preaching in Light of 1 Cor. 2.1-5', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 24.1 (Spring 2015), pp. 117-35 (p. 132).

word with signs following’ (Mk 16.20). J.C. Thomas and K.E. Alexander remark:

These Pentecostals, who understood themselves to be *apostolic*, restoring the faith of the New Testament church, were experiencing manifestations and phenomena delineated in the Mk 16.9-20 passage. In addition, they were urgently preaching the Pentecostal message everywhere they went. It should be expected, then, that they would identify with this particular commissioning text, which included preaching, speaking in tongues, healing the sick and exorcising demons.<sup>19</sup>

For example, A.J. Tomlinson wrote in his diary on Feb. 21, 1906, ‘I told Father on the way that I would willingly endure all this hardness if He would only give me great power in preaching and confirm my work with signs following’.<sup>20</sup>

The confirmation of the preached word with signs and wonders is narrated further in the book of Acts. When Philip preached in Samaria, ‘miracles and signs’ caused many people to accept the gospel. Regarding the ministry of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium, we read, ‘So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands’ (Acts 14.3). Furthermore, when Peter preached in the house of Cornelius, ‘the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word’ (Acts 10.44).

The examples of Jesus and the apostles suggest that a Pentecostal theology of preaching should include the expectation of powerful demonstrations of the Holy Spirit. Signs and wonders, in the form of healings, miracles, and charismata (1 Corinthians 12-14), should accompany the preaching of the gospel.

---

<sup>19</sup> John Christopher Thomas, and Kimberly Ervin Alexander, “‘And the Signs Are Following’”: Mark 16.9-20 – A Journey into Pentecostal Hermeneutics’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11.2 (2003), pp. 147-70 (p. 150, emphasis original). Thomas and Alexander provide a helpful overview of the use of Mark 16 in the early Pentecostal periodical literature. They also demonstrate that early Pentecostals offered quite sophisticated responses to the text-critical challenges surrounding Mark 16 (pp. 157-59).

<sup>20</sup> A.J. Tomlinson, *The Diary of A.J. Tomlinson: 1901-1924* (The Church of God Movement Heritage Series; Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2012), p. 49.

### 5. The Holy Spirit Makes Preaching Effective

Paul's rejection of human models of persuasion suggests that we should grant priority to the Holy Spirit as the one who convinces the hearers of the truth of the gospel. Jesus states that when the Spirit has come, 'he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment' (Jn 16.8). It must be remembered, however, that the Spirit's work of convincing the world is accomplished through the human agency of preaching. Paul acknowledges that 'the preaching of the cross ... is the power of God' (1 Cor. 1.18).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Josh P.S. Samuel points out that the effectiveness of the sermon cannot be judged by immediate responses because the Holy Spirit is at work not only in the present but also in the future.<sup>22</sup>

### 6. The Holy Spirit Forms the Preacher

Before sermon preparation even begins, the Holy Spirit is at work in forming the preacher, so that preaching emerges from a consecrated, Spirit-filled life (Acts 9.17; 2 Tim. 1.6-7). Moreover, the Pentecostal preacher should be formed in such a way that s/he is able to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in the worship context.

### 7. The Holy Spirit Forms the Worshiping Community

Finally, I would argue that the Holy Spirit is also at work in forming the Church, the community of faith, in which the preaching event takes place (Eph. 2.21-22; 1 Cor. 12.13-30). The effectiveness of preaching depends as much on the hearers as it does on the preacher (1 Thess. 1.5-6; Rev. 2.7; Jn 8.43-44). The Holy Spirit creates an environment in which the Word of God is loved and appreciated and in which the Spirit can move freely and unhindered, an environment in which the gifts of the Spirit are welcomed. The Spirit also leads the faith community in the process of discerning the voice of the Lord. Not every preacher speaks the truth, and the Church must be able to discern truth from error (1 Jn 4.1).

---

<sup>21</sup> Cf. White, 'Not in Lofty Speech or Media', pp. 117-35.

<sup>22</sup> See Josh P.S. Samuel, 'The Spirit in Pentecostal Preaching: A Constructive Dialogue with Haddon W. Robinson's and Charles T. Crabtree's Theology of Preaching', *Pneuma* 35.2 (2013), pp. 199-219 (pp. 215-16).

## Concluding Comments

I will conclude this brief introduction with a few summary statements that express what I consider to be necessary characteristics of a fully developed Pentecostal theology of preaching.

1. A Pentecostal theology of preaching should place preaching within the context of the Pentecostal movement and should define good preaching in ways that are consistent with the overall theology, ethos, and spirituality of the movement.
2. A Pentecostal theology of preaching should incorporate recent developments in Pentecostal biblical hermeneutics.<sup>23</sup> Evangelical, modernist, rationalist approaches to biblical interpretation are not sufficient resources for Pentecostal preaching.
3. A Pentecostal theology of preaching should take into account the global nature of the Pentecostal movement and should allow for cultural diversity of expression in worship and preaching.
4. A Pentecostal theology of preaching should appreciate the unique historical characteristics of Pentecostal preaching and should reform and revise those characteristics in ways that serve the contemporary Pentecostal movement.
5. A Pentecostal theology of preaching should take full advantage of the Holy Spirit's central role in Pentecostal worship and in preaching.

I contend that if we do not construct and adopt a Pentecostal theology of preaching, then we will adopt someone else's approach; and we will be like David trying to wear Saul's armor. We can choose either to adopt Evangelical models without considering the subsequent effect upon our tradition, or we can carefully and intentionally formulate contextual models of preaching that integrate available contemporary methods with the ethos of our tradition. I propose that we follow the latter course, and, thereby, construct a Pentecostal theology of preaching that employs methods that are more conducive to our epistemology, theology, and spirituality. I

---

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009); Lee Roy Martin (ed.), *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); and Chris E.W. Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation: Vocation, Holiness, and Scripture* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2015).

am calling for the kind of preaching that produces a genuine and vibrant Pentecostal faith. I am not suggesting that we preserve an old, idealized version of Pentecostalism. We cannot recover the past even if we wanted to do so. However, if the Pentecostal movement hopes to continue its growth and impact in the world, it must have preachers who understand and are committed to the distinctive heart of the tradition and who can hear and proclaim what the Spirit is now saying to the Church. We must continue to practice the Full Gospel if we are to fulfill the role for which God raised us up.

It is hoped that this volume will generate further dialogue and engagement. The Pentecostal tradition has a rich heritage of preaching, and we must engage that heritage with renewed vigor so that the next generation will be prepared to preach the Word of God to the ends of the earth.

*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel ... (Rom. 10.15).*