

Neo Pentecostalism • Emotionalism
ECI Conference • October 1-2, 2018 • Cullman, AL

Many aspects of what we are as physical/spiritual beings involves both multiple parts and the intricate balance of several systems.

Physically, our bodies are comprised of hundreds of bones, organs, blood vessels, tissues and multiple interconnected systems, the combined interaction of which determines the extent and manner of our health.

Socially/psychologically, we are an admixture of our upbringing, culture, teaching and practice, all of it, hopefully, working in balance.

Spiritually, we are composite beings, with deeply-rooted, God-oriented and God-originated characteristics reflective of God's nature. As God's own character entails rational, emotional, moral, and volitional facets that determine his behavior, so does our possession of these same traits affect our behavior and life. These traits reflect, in varying degrees, that deep-rooted theological underpinning that we just referenced.

As individuals created in God's likeness, we must possess a sense of balance, reflecting more than deflecting God's nature.

Collectively, individuals — with their associated beliefs and practices — constitute a wide range of religions, with an equally wide range of doctrine and praxis. Some are notably more ascetic, denying bodily pleasures, marriage, certain foods, etc. Others are more libertine. Rather than advocating abstinence and austerity, they appear to be rather indulgent in engaging and experiencing sense oriented pleasures.

Lying behind each of these two extremes lies a theology, or theologies, that support/endorse — at least allegedly — conduct. The respective foundational theology might assume that the less you are involved in physical pleasures, the more holy you are. Or the theology might assume that the more grounded you are in certain philosophical/theological understanding/s the less likely you should concern yourself with how you live.

For better or worse, Pentecostalism has a reputation, admitted even among its adherents, that there has been an over emphasis on the miraculous, on power, and on external demonstrations and signs of one's faith.

This over emphasis has impacted their theology/theologies to the point that there has been, in some (if not many) cases an intentional building of their beliefs based on what they practice rather than the other way around.

Undergirding all of that are some inherent assumptions about what Pentecost means in Scripture, namely how Pentecost must be *experienced* even today.

The assumption: Pentecost, starting with the great First Testament feast, foreshadowed an outpouring of spiritual blessings that, once started, would never end.

Though we are not discussing secessionist versus non-secessionist theologies, the assumption among Pentecostals that charisma continues today — indeed, must continue today to be biblical — undergirds their thinking and their theology.

Their advocacy/practice of charisma drives their theology.

More than inspiration-revelation-authority-interpretation/exegesis driven theology, praxis — what they do — determines theology. In effect, they might be said to reverse engineer theology from praxis.

Though this appears to be overstatement, the recent work, “Pentecostal Theology: Living The Full Gospel” by Wolfgang Vondey takes this approach.

Our *initial* purpose: To investigate Vondey’s line of thought as follows: First, summarize key elements of this theology; second, explain the reasoning behind those key elements; and third, explore how and why they are either in, or out of, sync with biblical principles and conduct.

Our *primary* purpose: To determine whether or not some of the issues raised by studying Vondey’s presentation of Pentecostalism, namely praxis driven theology, has impacted churches of Christ today and in the recent past.

Along the way, as time permits, we hope to introduce (some of) the following:

Defining terms:

1. What do we mean by Neo-Pentecostalism?
2. What do we mean by Pentecostalism?
3. What do we mean by Emotionalism?

Biblical texts:

1. Origin of Pentecost (OT)
2. Day of Pentecost (NT)
3. Significance of Pentecost (NTff)

Pentecostalism Overview:

1. Brief History of Contemporary Pentecostalism
2. Theology of Pentecostalism: Wolfgang Vondey

Issues of Agreement

1. Theology
2. Christology
3. Pneumatology
4. Inspiration
5. Soteriology
6. Ecclesiology
7. Holiness/Righteousness
8. Mission

Issues of Concern

1. Theology
2. Christology
3. Pneumatology
4. Inspiration
5. Soteriology
6. Ecclesiology
7. Holiness/Righteousness
8. Mission

Principles/Thought That Cannot Be Ignored

1. God-Scripture-Authority-Interpretation/Exegesis: Logically/chronologically prior to praxis.
 1. The primacy of revelation.
 2. The secondary role of the miraculous.
2. Mature versus immature faith
 1. God without signs = God with signs
 2. Faith without signs = faith with signs
 3. God's design for signs
 1. Confirmatory
 2. Convincing
 3. Cessation: initial, but not necessarily continuing
3. Interpreting Acts 2
 1. The principle thing
 2. God's eternal purpose
 3. The atoning blood of Christ
 4. The miraculous in context

Primary Reference:

Wolfgang Vondey, "Pentecostal Theology: Living The Full Gospel" (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017. ISBN: HB: 978-0-5672-7539-4)

Jody Apple • Jody@TheBible.net