

Richie, Tony. *Essentials of Pentecostal Theology: An Eternal and Unchanging Lord Powerfully Present & Active by the Holy Spirit* (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2020). 238 + xii pp. AU\$42 paperback.

In *Essentials of Pentecostal Theology*, Tony Richie, who is a lecturer in theology at Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, Tennessee, and senior pastor of New Harvest Church in Knoxville, Tennessee, outlines some of the fundamental elements that he believes makes up a Pentecostal theology. Acknowledging the diversity of the Pentecostal movement—that Richie attributes to a number of factors such as “historical roots and geographical settings, denominational emphases, exceptional leadership influences, and racial and gender identities” (4)—and the lack of a “monolithic definition of Pentecostal identity” (3), the aim of *Essentials of Pentecostal Theology* is to outline some of the consistent themes present in this diverse community while at the same time, “critiquing the tradition and challenging it to move toward greater maturation” (13). This, Richie does well. In fact, a key strength of this book is the way in which Richie outlines some of these key themes, comparing and contrasting them with other historical and current theological conversation partners (while at the same time, highlighting areas where Pentecostal theology aligns with these other conversation partners), as well as providing cogent critique of Pentecostal thought and praxis as someone within the Pentecostal movement, but without being unduly negative in his critique. As he states, a key aim of *Essentials* is “to be theologically articulate with pastoral attention to spiritual devotion and formation” (13).

The Introduction includes discussion on various definitions of Pentecostalism. While these are as diverse as the movement itself, Richie proposes the idea of “popular religion” (also called “folk religion”) as a way to define the experiential and contextual nature of the movement. “Popular religion may be defined both by a negation (not necessarily a negative) and by an affirmation. In the former vein, popular religion does not focus on the abstract, conceptual, dogmatic side of religion. In the latter vein, popular religion does focus on the lived faith of people—their relationship with God, their faith community, family, and on their real needs—in more direct fashion.” (20) While this idea may unsettle some, the dynamic and contextual nature of many of the concepts inherent in Pentecostal theology—including a tendency of Pentecostal theology to reflect and succeed experience.

Essentials is then organised in 3 sections. Part 1 (Chapters 2–3) considers various “accents” and conflicts that are evident in intra-Pentecostal theological discussions. Part 2 (Chapters 4–8), “A Description Not a Definition”, explores key elements important to any Pentecostal theology. Part Three (Chapters 9–12), “Crucial Commitments”, discusses the baptism of the Spirit.

Chapter 1 discusses representative voices of the various perspectives on Pentecostal theology from different perspectives. These include, 1) the “orality of Pentecostal worship and thought

... expressed primarily in songs, testimonies, preaching, worship, and prayer” (20). This is “not so much discursive as it is affective and intuitive” (19); 2) A Wesleyan Holiness model focuses on “crisis-process soteriological schemas” (23). These schemas include the redemptive, transformative and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit leading to witness, worship and mission. 3) Through the lens of Spirit Baptism. 4) Social ethics as a primary lens, including from the perspective of issues of race and gender. 5) Engagement with egalitarian and feminist critiques (26–28), or through the perspective of ecumenism. Richie argues that “ecumenical theology appears close to Pentecostal appreciation for participation with the Spirit in the person and work of Jesus Christ” (34). 6) A Pentecostal theology that take seriously “the realities of cultural and religious pluralism in today’s world” (34).

Chapters 2–3 discuss major controversies within Pentecostalism. While there are points of similarity and agreement such as the issue of spirituality, there are areas that evoke significant debate. “Pentecostals are far from unanimous regarding the role of women in ministry, political activism, social responsibilities, environmentalism, ecumenical relations, or dialogue with non-Christian faiths” (39). Two areas that evoke strident debate include sanctification (chapter 2) and the godhead (chapter 3).

The sanctification debate began with William J. Seymour with William H. Durham in the early stages of the rise of Pentecostalism. Durham’s view entailed a “finished work” theology of sanctification (41). It insisted that one is granted positional sanctification in Christ at conversion as the beginning of a lifelong pursuit of actual sanctification. While he discusses Durham’s position, Richie provides little of Seymour’s opposing view. Richie then identifies how this is played out in Pentecostal circles today.

Chapter 3 discusses classic Trinitarian Pentecostalism and Unitarian Oneness Pentecostalism. Following an outline of the key tenets of Oneness Pentecostalism is a comparative discussion of the various theological arguments from both sides. Richie suggests the centrality of Jesus the baptism of the Holy Spirit represent a potential point of unity for both groups.

Chapter 4 explores the place of Jesus in Pentecostal theology. Chapter 5 explores the importance, centrality and dynamic vitality of Pentecostal worship. Richie notes that while Pentecostal worship is dynamic and central, “the actual practice of Pentecostal worship requires management and guidance, according to biblical guidelines, and that fact requires those able to administer and supervise in wisdom, prudence, and patience” (106).

Chapter 6 discusses the importance of prayer and a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. “Pentecostal prayer may well be described as being first liturgical, then transformational, and finally missiological/ vocational—but, prayer is always theological” (109). A number of distinctive characteristics define Pentecostal prayer. These include: “praying in the Spirit, the role of the altar in prayer, tarrying prayer (or “praying through”), laying on of hands in prayer, use of anointed cloths in prayer, fasting in prayer, prayer as spiritual warfare, and concert

prayer” (113). Richie discusses the various ways these are practised by different Pentecostal contexts.

Chapter 7 begins with the idea of the fivefold gospel that underpins many Pentecostal theologies—what Richie describes as an “essentially Christocentric, pneumatologically charged paradigm” (132). Richie then discusses the life of discipleship under the rubric of the spiritual life as a journey (133). He then explores the biblical theme of fullness, being filled and to fill. “From Genesis to Revelation and everywhere in between fullness is a central and critical theme in Scripture which is richly suggestive for understanding God’s approach for accomplishing and completing redemption’s wonderful purpose” (138). With this framework, Richie then explores the Christian life of conversion sanctification and spirit baptism, from the perspective of a journey. Chapter 8 concludes with further discussion of various positions on sanctification and the importance of the Holy Spirit to this.

Chapter 8 outlines the fivefold nature of the gospel. This “full-gospel” approach does not denote a set of doctrinal positions. Instead, it represents more “a narrative of how Pentecostals experience the gospel or, put another way, participate in the gospel” (148). The fivefold nature of the gospel includes: salvation—individual, corporate and cosmic; sanctification/holiness; Spirit baptism, which Richie describes as “the most distinctive and well-known marker of the movement” (155); Divine healing and, finally, Christ’s second coming. Adequate space is given to each of the various Pentecostal positions on these areas. The chapter concludes with Richie’s own position on eschatology that is balanced, non-dualistic and faithful to both the biblical narrative and contemporary shifts in recent discussion of eschatology.

Part Three completes *Essentials* with nearly a quarter of the book exploring the various aspects of the baptism of the Spirit. Chapter 9 discusses the doctrine of subsequence of the Spirit; Chapter 10 explores the purpose of Spirit baptism; Chapter 11 examines the various positions on tongues as initial evidence and chapter 12, discusses the significance of glossolalia. There is nothing new in these chapters. However, both classic Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals alike will find Richie’s discussion informative, balanced and non-polemical. Overall, *Essentials of Pentecostal Theology* is a well-written contribution to an increasing number of books on Pentecostal Theology from a seasoned Pentecostal Scholar. The clarity with which Richie identifies outlines and discusses the various ideas and positions within contemporary Pentecostal conversations, and the way he concludes a clear articulation of his own position meets his aim that this book is “theologically articulate with pastoral attention to spiritual devotion and formation” (13), and that it can be read by the person in the pew (14). He has included sufficient footnotes that add to his discussion and included a significant bibliography. There is no formal conclusion, however, each chapter has an adequate conclusion that draws the various strands of the various discussions together. If I can critique anything is the lack of a scripture index and a general index. Apart from this, *Essentials of*

Pentecostal Theology is accessible to academics, students, pastors and the general public and I recommend this to anyone looking to understand, study or consider further essential elements in Pentecostal Theology and praxis.

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