

Editorial: Renewing Holiness in Pentecostal Studies

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In Isaiah chapter 6, the prophet experiences an overwhelming vision of God from which he is called to participate in God's mission for the world. This passage begins with the self-revelation of God as the divine king whose glory fills the earth (6:1-4). Isaiah sees this thrice-holy God surrounded by heavenly creatures in worship. Yet for Isaiah, this encounter in Israel's worship space of the Temple reveals his own inadequacy and uncleanness. So, Isaiah calls out in his anguish, identifying his own unclean lips and that of his community, in response to God's transcendence (6:5). Then the unexpected occurs: one of the heavenly creatures touches Isaiah's mouth and removes his guilt (6:6-7). Isaiah is transformed by this experience, so much so that when the Lord speaks, seeking a spokesperson to go to Isaiah's community on his behalf, Isaiah volunteers to serve as God's prophet (6:8).

This passage provides a springboard from which to consider the intersection of the themes of Pentecostal worship, holiness and transformation that form the heart of this issue of *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*. The Pentecostal community, who hold to a high view of Scripture, often model their activities and experience of encountering God on the narratives of the Bible. This is particularly true of the formative role of the narrative of Acts on which Pentecostals base their emphasis on Spirit baptism. In circular fashion, Pentecostals look to the biblical text to inform their experiences, then see their own experiences in the biblical narrative and declare, like Peter in Acts 2, "this is that."¹ By modelling their worship on the biblical testimony, the early Pentecostals saw themselves as recovering and restoring what they considered to be a more biblical pattern of worship and thereby instigating renewal for the broader church community in preparation of the return of Jesus Christ.²

Keith Warrington writes, "Indeed, Pentecostal theology may be best identified and understood as a theology of encounter - encounter of God, the Bible and the Christian community."³ Isaiah's testimony describes a highly sensory experience in his encounter with God. He sees, hears, feels, is shaken, is overwhelmed then relieved, his lips are burnt, and he is affectively moved to volunteer his life for God's purposes. Experience, particularly a sensory experience felt in the body and affections, is core to Pentecostal worship. That is, for Pentecostals, worship is a holistic encounter with the living God. It is not only an intellectual assent to theological truths, nor simply ritual, even though rituals are important in Pentecostal

¹ For further discussion, see Jacqueline Grey, *Three's A Crowd: Pentecostalism, Hermeneutics, and the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011).

² Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 1993), 122.

³ Keith Warrington, 'Experience: The *sina qua non* of Pentecostalism,' Paper Presented to the 36th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 2007, 4-5.

worship. Similarly, worship does not just occur on the Sunday service but is expressed in the whole life of the believer. This connects with Smith's description of a Pentecostal worldview including a "radical openness to God — especially an openness to a God who exceeds our horizons of expectation and comes unexpectedly."⁴ This openness is reflected in the anticipation of the Spirit moving spontaneously in worship. Yet even though God is experienced spontaneously and personally in corporate worship it is not an individualistic encounter. As Félix-Jäger notes, "Worship both responds to God and to one another in response to God, so together the community joins in solidarity for spiritual formation."⁵ This sense of the immanent presence of God in Pentecostal worship is often connected to Christian mysticism and described as a mystical encounter.⁶

These themes are evident in the various articles that form the current issue of this journal. Beginning with Blaine Charette's exploration of baptism and holiness on 1 Corinthians, emphasises that for the Corinthian believers to faithfully live out the meaning of their baptism they are required to be more mindful of the call to holiness now expected of them. Similarly, Pentecostal Christian formation is the focus of the article by Jean-Daniel Plüss. He explores the sacramental nature of Pentecostal spirituality through the lens of the fivefold gospel. Jacqueline Grey considers the prophetic activity of Miriam in her role of worship leader following the exodus from Egypt. She considers Miriam's activity a prophetic performance that embodies liberation and freedom from Pharaoh's oppression as preparatory for being a new covenant community. Finally, Johnny Kumar explores the nexus between the practice of a Pentecostal academy and Pentecostal ecclesial praxis within the Australian context. Through a study of the interpretive practice of graduands of Alphacrucis University College (AC), Kumar highlights a seeming tension in their hermeneutical practices as they oscillate between conviction and critique.

⁴ Smith, 34.

⁵ Steven Félix-Jäger, *Renewal Worship: A Theology of Pentecostal Doxology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2022), 106.

⁶ Daniel Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/ Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 239. See also Daniel Castelo, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).