

Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies



“Initial Evidence”

Volume 1, Number 2 (July 1998)

INTRODUCTION

Classical Pentecostals are often defined by their deeply felt conviction that baptism in the Spirit is accompanied by speaking in tongues. In the Assemblies of God, U.S.A., for instance, this conviction finds expression in The Statement of Fundamental Truths, point 8, entitled, "The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Ghost":

The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-10, 28), but different in purpose and use.

It is evident, however, that this doctrine has not found universal acceptance within the Pentecostal movement and has been largely dismissed by non-Pentecostal brothers and sisters in the wider Evangelical world. This fact highlights the need for further discussion of this important issue. Indeed, there is a need, experienced within each ecclesiastical tradition and by every generation of adherents, to reflect upon and rearticulate our theology in a manner, which is relevant to the contemporary context and faithful to the Scriptures. The rich heritage embodied in Pentecostal theology, and more specifically in the doctrine of evidential tongues, is no exception at this point.

This issue of the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, then, seeks to explore this keenly felt and, at times, controversial doctrine. It is hoped that this collection of articles will help Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals better understand one another, and stimulate further reflection on this issue. With this goal in mind, we have intentionally included a wide range of articles, including those that clearly critique the traditional view of classical Pentecostalism. David Lim and Max Turner, both open and sympathetic to much within Pentecostalism, offer Evangelical critiques of the "initial evidence" doctrine. These articles helpfully point out key areas of disagreement and seek to stimulate responses from the Pentecostal community.

This volume begins, however, with essays from classical Pentecostal perspectives. My own article focuses on largely hermeneutical issues related to the tongues question and seeks to point future discussion in what is hoped will be a fruitful direction. Roli dela Cruz, a minister of the

Philippine Assemblies of God, offers a response article, which seeks to interact, not only with my article of this issue, but also with previous works which I have written. Frank Macchia, an American Assemblies of God minister, offers a stimulating article discussing the theological significance of the doctrine. Tan May Ling, an Assemblies of God minister and academician from Singapore, offers her insights on the matter by way of response to Macchia. Harold Hunter, the Director of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church Research Center, offers an historical sketch of Holiness Pentecostal perspectives on the "initial evidence" doctrine. And Mathew Clark, a minister of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and an instructor in their Theological College, helps us understand aspects of the experience and theology of Pentecostals in the region of Southern Africa. Finally, as noted above, **this** issue ends with two contributions from sympathetic, but critical friends: David Lim, a prominent Filipino theologian, and Max Turner, a Baptist scholar in Britain, both provide articles which will undoubtedly stimulate much discussion and hopefully a number of response articles from our *AJPS* readers.

Of course the perspectives presented in these articles reflect the viewpoints of the various authors; they do not necessarily reflect the official stance of any **particular** church or institution. It is hoped that through this free **exchange** of ideas, we can move a bit closer to mutual understanding and a fuller apprehension of the divine truth. We do look forward to and encourage our readers to respond to the **articles** contained in this issue.

Robert P. Menzies
Guest Editor

Vol. 2, no. 2 (July 1999) issue is tentatively set to publish responses and additional relevant articles – editors.