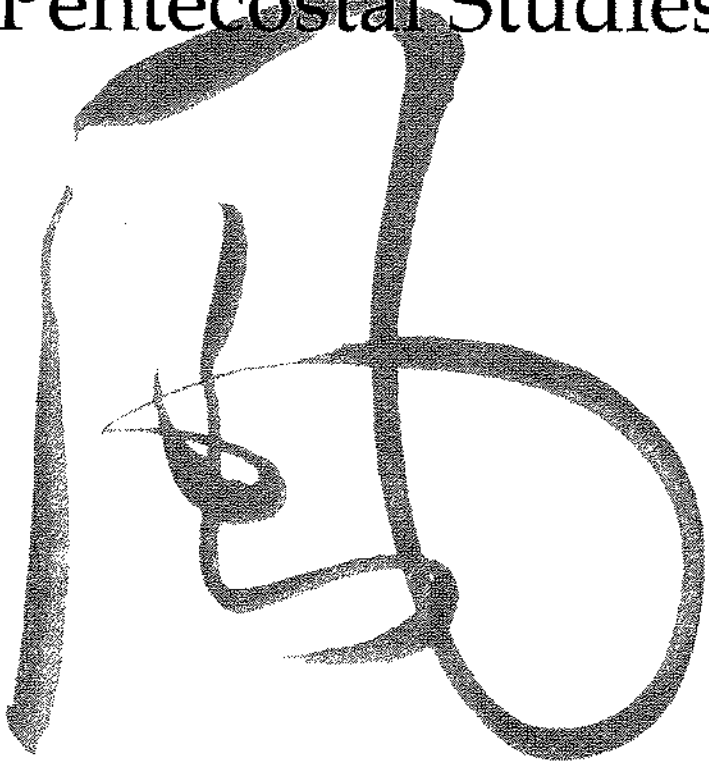


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Yannick Fer, *Pentecôtisme en Polynésie française. L'Évangile relationnel*. Genève : Labor et Fdes, 2005. 498 pp.

The history of Pentecostalism in French Polynesia, more precisely in Tahiti and the surrounding islands, is fascinating. This book, written by French sociologist Yannick Fer, is worth reading for various reasons. One of them being, that it is not written by a theologian, missionary or church leader, permitting a different angle, an other approach, to the development of Pentecostal churches and charismatic groupings in this part of Polynesia.

Dr. Fer begins the book by positioning Pentecostalism as a typically protestant phenomenon, emphasizing the importance of the Bible, the christocentric focus and the common priesthood of believers. Later he will come back to these premises in order to compare the charismatic live style and ecclesial dynamics of Pentecostal churches with that of the historic churches. In the end he will argue that Pentecostals have (and to a lesser degree also charismatic believers in the Protestant churches) brought their respect for the "Word of God" and their individual faith commitment to its logical consequence by reconfiguring their lives in view of their relationship with God, the community of believers and society at large.

But let us begin properly with the first section of the book (pp. 21-182). Yannick Fer presents a detailed historical account of how the Pentecostal movement came to French Polynesia. It began with the Hakka Chinese who were originally brought there to work on the plantations. It is fascinating to go through the sociological dynamics and see how Pentecostal practices gave these Chinese Christians, quite literally, a new lease on life. This historical section is entitled "L'invention du pluriel" and carries the development through to three phases of pluralization. First because Protestantism, brought by the White missionaries, received a Chinese dimension. Second, because the Chinese Pentecostals were faced with communicating the gospel to the Polynesians, and thirdly, because the introduction of the French Assemblies of God and later the work of Youth with a Mission brought about a trans-cultural religious reality to Tahiti. As a result we can follow in Fer's account how Pentecostal faith contributes to a radical emancipation of their believers. This section alone is worthwhile studying, for everyone that is interested in missionary dynamics, especially as it applies to multicultural urban centers in our times, finds a wealth of comparative information.

The author focuses in the second section (pp. 183-336) on the institutional role of the church by educating the believers to apply their faith to the development of their new life. Again, the sociological approach, including anthropological sensitivities, allows for a reflection of how the faithful experience nurture and development in the context of the religious family and in the face of God. Much attention is given to the importance of evangelism, the use of charismatic gifts, and the formation of the believers for ministerial activity. All of this happens in the community and the authority of the institution (church or denomination) is present: in an almost invisible, but very effective way. It is in this part of the book where its subtitle "Relational Gospel" is filled with meaning.

Yannick Fer and Gwendoline Malogne-Fer talked with many church goers and pastors alike. The third section "Mobilis in Mobile" (pp.337-469) focuses on the conversion experiences shared and in what ways the believers began to invest in their living relationship with God and the "brothers and sisters". The book sheds light on the social consequences that result. Most significant of all, however, is the development of the believers into persons that are "curious" to go further, to experience more with the Lord, experience a new calling or simply achieve a religious mobility that is at its core part and parcel of the Protestant gospel, encapsulated in its focus on a personal God, the Scriptures, and the redeeming quality of grace. In the end it is argued that Pentecostalism is a force to be reckoned with in terms of its power to individualize faith and de-institutionalize religious structures in the twenty-first century. For a Pentecostal with a historical awareness, it will be evident that the charismatic tension between the individual and institutional order was already present during the Azusa Street revival.

Dr. Fer's book is a masterful piece of fieldwork that took several years to compile and where more than 130 interviews were analyzed and eventually brought in to the book itself to provide the narrative basis for his reflections. To study this book would give any Ph.D. candidate an idea how to proceed if he or she would want to research the faith and practices of a particular group. Although the author is always at pains to make clear that his findings apply to the French Polynesian context, I have a hunch that it would be quite similar in the streets of Manchester, the barrios of Mexico or the slums of Manila.

Jean-Daniel Plüss

Book Review

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004. 144 pp.

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, a professor of systematic theology at Fuller Seminary and a docent of ecumenics at the University of Helsinki, in this work strives to find the common ground between the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and certain Lutheran and Free Church soteriologies in reference to the doctrines of Justification and Deification. The author starts his work with an introduction with the concept of 'Union with God' in various religious traditions, various denominational divisions and the potential for ecumenical unity on this topic.

The second chapter is a summary of the recent research on the concept of Justification in the New Testament. Kärkkäinen's interlocutors in this chapter included J.D.G. Dunn, E.P. Sanders, Krister Stendahl and N.T. Wright. In the third chapter, the author gives an extensive discussion of the concept of Deification and *theosis* within the Eastern Church tradition. Starting from the biblical texts, the Eastern Church fathers and Gregory Palamas, Kärkkäinen deals with the role of the incarnation, 'christification,' and *theosis* in reference to salvation and pneumatology.

In the following 4th chapter, Martin Luther's theological understanding of Justification and Deification through the lens of the Tuomo Mannermaa school of thought from the University of Helsinki was examined. It is argued from the Mannermaa school that Luther was much more conducive to an 'effective justification'; it was the later Lutherans that emphasized 'forensic justification'.

As such, this reading of Luther allows for a potential of a pneumatology and a more ecumenically inclusive doctrine of salvation. In the 5th chapter, the author describes the concept of Deification (albeit in their own terms) among the Anabaptists, John Wesley, and the Methodists (citing besides Wesley, Jürgen Moltmann, A.C. Outler, and Theodore Runyon among others), and Evangelical theology (citing notably Don Fairbairn and Clark Pinnock).

Kärkkäinen then focuses on the Lutheran-Orthodox conversations (notably being Finnish Lutheran and Russian Orthodox discussions) especially on the area of Justification and Deification. Further conversations between the Roman Catholic and Lutheran positions were delineated, including the Oct 31, 1999 *Joint Declaration on the*

Doctrine of Justification. Finally in this chapter was Edmund Rybarczyk's study of the Orthodox-Pentecostal perspectival overlap. The concluding chapter is a summary, insofar as the author argues the importance of the ecumenical potential and benefits of the 'Union with God' motif as defined in both Eastern and Western traditions. This ecumenical feature is pneumatologically possible and theologically sound in light of the previous discussion.

The comparative discussion between the Western church traditions and the Eastern church traditions has its own difficulties and benefits. One of the great benefits of this work is a very clear summary of the various traditions, and from that comes the realization that the positions are not as divergent as once thought. There are opportunities to discuss similar concerns theologically. Further, our respective perspectives related to the doctrines of Deification and Justification can be broaden and deepen because this interaction.

One of the great difficulties is that in order to draw the theme together only certain perspectives of a tradition are highlighted (e.g. Tuomo Mannermaa's Lutheran school of thought, University of Helsinki, Finland). To Kärkkäinen's credit, he does mention that certain branches of Lutheran thought (e.g. German on pages 87-88) have reservations about the stated reading of Luther. Essentially Kärkkäinen argues following the Mannermaa school that "for Luther the forensic imputation of Christ's righteousness is not the key to his view of justification.

Rather, the key is Christ present in faith and the consequent union; as a result of Christ's righteousness, the believer will become one with Christ." (54) The argument is that Luther's understanding was much more similar to the Eastern Orthodox's 'Union with Christ' than usually assumed. Further, it was later Lutheran theology that highlighted forensic justification exclusively. As the author quotes Simo Peura when he states "the FC [Formula of Concord] and modern Lutheran theology have not correctly communicated Luther's view of grace and gift. . . . God changes the sinner ontologically in the sense that he or she participates in God and in his divine nature, being made righteous and "a god."" (57) Whereas this is a helpful perspective in regards to Luther, the question is 'Is it ecumenically satisfying to have one perspective of Lutheranism highlighted when Lutheran traditional belief and even other contemporary perspectives do not necessarily endorse this rendition?'

John Wesley and the Anabaptists did have the 'Union with Christ' theological emphases. The former very probably due to his openness to

the Eastern Church fathers (74). While aware that Evangelical theology tends to feel uncomfortable with the formulations, Kärkkäinen cites Clark Pinnock as one who is open to the perspective. It seems apparent, however, that this perspective is not widely accepted within Evangelicalism. Notably the 'Reformed tradition' was missing in the discussion. Can Protestantism be accurately ecumenically discussion without the Reformed tradition being included at the table?

As in his previous work, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, Kärkkäinen cites and makes assessable into English the fascinating work of Tuomo Mannermaa and his students. For this alone this work is a very helpful work.

Aside from this, the important interaction between the various traditions on the concept of Deification and Justification makes this work a very helpful dialogue partner in the arena of ecumenical understanding and comprehension of salvation and 'Union with God'.

I highly recommend this work as an important contribution on the concept of 'One with God' within the various branches of Christianity. It is both well-research and well-written, as such it is an important addition to theological, ecumenical dialogue.

Paul W. Lewis