

# Jesus i kærlighed og kraft i klassisk pinseteologi

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og må frit videreformidles, blot det sker uforandret

*Hvis man besøgte en gennemsnitlig dansk pinsekirke for otte år siden ville man finde en dynamisk kirke med mange aktiviteter og et homogent fællesskab fyldt med kærlighed. Man ville bl.a. finde gospelkor, helbredelsesmøder og Alpha-kurser, som primært var vendt mod åndeligt søgende mennesker, mens man skulle lede længere efter et kirkeligt engagement i lokalområdets sociale udfordringer. Kun få pinsekirker var i gang med det, som kaldes diakoni eller socialt arbejde.*

*I dag er billedet anderledes. Mange pinsekirker over hele landet laver diakoni i form af julehjælp for trængte familier; flere og flere tager et ansvar i forhold til flygtninge, og på vores årlige SommerCamp er vi alle blevet inspireret og motiveret af Mathew Barnett's Dream Center, der "ser et behov og møder det", og andre kirker, som engagerer sig i den sociale nød omkring os.*

*Det har aldrig været mere moderne at vise Guds kærlighed og kraft i det lokale igennem forskellige former for socialt hjælpearbejde. Men er denne barmhjertighed kun et kirkeligt modefænomen, eller er det kommet for at blive? Og er der nu fare for, at pinsekirker bliver et socialt hjælpecenter på bekostning af pinsekraften? Hvad sker der med vores karismatik, altså troen på at Guds kraft virker i dag?*

*I den følgende artikel vil jeg belyse "Jesus i kærlighed og kraft" udfra en tidligere undersøgelse af to repræsentative pinsekirker. Undersøgelsen og artiklen er langt fra fyldestgørende og skal derfor læses med dette forbehold. Hovedsigtet er lægge op til en videre teologisk overvejelse omkring hvorfor og hvordan vi praktiserer Jesu kærlighed gennem pentekostal karismatik og den voksende diakoniske tjeneste.*

*Artiklen er på engelsk, dels fordi den er en bearbejdelse af et kapitel i min engelske master opgave. Men for det andet håber vi, at vores engelsktalende ledere og medarbejdere fra især migrantkirker vil læse vores magasin, Teologik, og føle sig mere inkluderet i vores teologiske samtaler.*

*Spirituality* is about how we live our Christian life. Spirituality refers both to individualistic and community oriented expressions of faith and emphasises a quest for personal and spiritual transformation.<sup>1</sup> *Pentecostal spirituality* refers to the particular characteristics of the Pentecostal practice of faith. The Danish Pentecostal Movement has traditionally pursued *charismatic spirituality*,<sup>2 3</sup>, and is marked by a particular Danish ecclesiological praxis (eg. organised as local individual churches, no fixed liturgy, dynamic church developments but limited by a respect for the larger Pentecostal network, etc.). However, the last 10-15 years Pentecostal churches have tended to move from a traditional expressive Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality towards a more contextualised, less emotional and less outward expression. At the same time social work<sup>4</sup> like Christmas help, helping refugees, feeding homeless and the like is growing in many churches all over the country.

This article discusses two observations made from worship services in two representative Danish Pentecostal Churches. The first observation under our theme "Jesus in power" is that church A worked with a traditional charismatic church expression, while church B had moved from a classical Pentecostal-charismatic expression towards a more contextualized Danish expression.

The second observation under our theme "Jesus in Love", is that there seemed to be a neglect of social concern in both churches surveyed. While these are only two examples, they are still real churches that probably represents many others in some ways.

## **Jesus in Power in Danish Pentecostal Churches**

The following observations were made in 2008 where I was doing a study of Pentecostal worship services.

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<sup>1</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, Christian Spirituality: Definition, Methods and Types, in Philip Sheldrake (Ed.), The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality (London: 2005), 2-3

<sup>2</sup> 1.Cor.12:6-8

<sup>3</sup> A short intro to Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality is given in Philip Sheldrake (Ed.), The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality (London: 2005), 185.

<sup>4</sup> The term social work, social concern or social justice is often called "diakoni" in Denmark.

The characteristics of classical Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality was evident both in church A and church B but with two different expressions. In both churches I could hear some speaking privately in tongues and while the congregation were singing worship leaders in both churches encouraged believers to sing their own spontaneous song to God. In one service in Church A, two healing testimonies were given with references to “the power of God” and “touched by God”<sup>5</sup> and people were invited to come forward for personal prayer at the end of the service. Also in Church B, “prophetic words” were given by a guest preacher. Church A announced healing meetings with the Danish evangelist Hans Berntsen, while Church B did not have healing meetings in the surveyed year (2009). However, both before and after my study (ended in 2012) the same healing evangelist was used in both churches.

But a visitor would also observe a difference. In Church B there were fewer of the charismatic expressions in the church services compared to Church A. This was later confirmed in interviews with the pastors. Church A explained that they usually offered personal prayer for people at the end of each service and said:

*“It is a part of our Pentecostal culture, and it is amazing what a few minutes of prayer can do, and how significant it can be in people’s lives.”*

Conversely, the pastor in Church B were more discipleship-process oriented and cautious about the public expression of the charismatic:

*“We don’t have the classical Pentecostal elements of free prayer and free testimonies and being interrupted by speaking in tongues, but there is relatively often someone with a prophetic word or a picture at the end of the service.”*

In his doctoral research, Angelo Cettolin studied the use of charismatic gifts in the Australian Assemblies of God (AOG).<sup>6</sup> The study explains how pastors and churches have not changed their charismatic theology, but the use of public tongue speaking and prophecy have changed mainly due to cultural changes and institutional growth:

*“Low frequencies of classical Pentecostal practices indicate there is a lessening in spontaneous, oral, narrative and participatory ‘liturgies’ in church services. While this may be expected with an increasingly literary society, there also appears to be a change of emphasis from more ‘individualistic’ classical spiritual expressions such as messages in tongues and prophecy in church services, towards more corporate spiritual expressions, such as combined singing in the Spirit and community praise and worship.”<sup>7</sup>*

Over one hundred and ten AOG pastors indicated that “AOG pastors are moving away from a number of key Pentecostal practices that form a major part of early classical AOG spirituality”. In his survey, the classical Pentecostal practices consisted of personal prophetic words to another person, falling under the power of the Holy Spirit, miraculous healing, supernatural visions and dreams, demonic deliverance, giving a message in tongues and other expressions of charismata.<sup>8</sup> Angelo Cettolin observes that this development has helped the Australian AOG to form their own culturally contextualized spirituality giving preservation, growth and health to local Churches.<sup>9</sup>

The Australian tendency to contextualize the classical Pentecostal expressions of spiritual gifts seems to correspond with church B, while church A represents the classical Pentecostal expression. Yet, both churches are examples of Pentecostal-charismatic churches that attempts to express Jesus in power, but in two different ways. The expression is local, while the understanding of the transformative work of the Spirit is the same.

## What is Pentecostal Power really about?

The Pentecostal scholar, Douglas Petersen, holds that charismatic spirituality is only a part of Pentecostalism. In his article, *‘Pentecostals: Who are they?’* he argues that while the main focus of Pentecostalism has been on baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and the belief in divine healing, other characteristics like personal conversion, discipleship, church life, and holiness balances the “spectacular display” of tongues and miracles that may

<sup>5</sup> All the empirical data is gathered by interviews and observation which has been written down.

<sup>6</sup> Downloaded the 31 May 2010 from <http://www.bcv.vic.edu.au/content/documents/post%20grad%20files/Pentecostal-Spirituality-D-Min-Research-Project-by%20Angelo-Cettolin-2007.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.98

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.98

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.176

encourage an unhealthy attention.<sup>10</sup> The two most prominent features of Pentecostalism are speaking in tongues and healing, but Petersen argues that it is neither ecstatic, nor mystical, and it is not an escape from the social needs of this world: *“Pentecostal congregations, quite unlike a group with a mind only on heavenly things, are highly involved in alleviating pain and suffering in the physical realm”*.<sup>11</sup> This approach involves reaching out to marginalised women and children, establishing literacy programmes for adults and schools for children, rehabilitation programmes for alcoholics and drug addicts, the author states.<sup>12</sup> If the global traits of Pentecostalism is involvement in social concern it leads to the question, to what extent do Danish Pentecostal Churches balance their classical or contextualised belief in “spectacular” power, with social concern?

An awareness of social concern has been normal for DPC in traditional mission work in the third world, but not much in the local Danish community. Even though both churches surveyed had sent missionaries to several countries where it was natural to have a holistic approach of ministry, there were only a marginal awareness and effort to engage in social work in the local community. There can be several reasons to this distinction, like the Danish social welfare system, and probably also a spiritualistic-supernatural conviction about what is important. Still both of these particular churches also witnessed a beginning desire and awareness of the social needs in the local society.

As stated before, this picture is changing in many churches today, where Christmas help offered for needy families, work among the many refugees, and other ministries to people in need is more accepted. But there is still a lot of work left, if we are to practise Jesus in power and love. Perhaps our problem is that we lack a biblical theology of reaching to the poor? This leads me to a few thoughts on developing a holistic spirituality.

## Jesus in Love and Power: Developing a Holistic Spirituality

In a book on Pentecostal missiology Andrew Lord suggests a holistic spirituality and theology of mission based on an understanding of God’s motivation for mission.<sup>13</sup> He states that Pentecostals have a need for developing a holistic spirituality that embraces both the blessings of the Kingdom of God, but also the weakness, sin and brokenness in our own lives as well as in humankind. Actually many Pentecostal scholars have suggested a better holistic understanding of spirituality and mission in their writings about the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God, and Luke’s pneumatology of church mission.<sup>14</sup>

The scholar Andrew Lord develops his spirituality from the future hope of “a new heaven” and “a new earth”.<sup>15</sup> In this future place there is worship, it ends hunger and thirst, sorrow and pain, and there is healing, moral purity because Christ is in the centre as the Lamb of God. Other NT passages, like Ephesians 1:10 and Colossians 1:20 state that Christ is at the centre of uniting and reconciling the whole of creation. So, if mission is about bringing heavenly blessings into earth, a holistic mission must include both evangelism and healing, social mission, reconciling and ecological mission, and building Christian character into relationships.<sup>16</sup>

The integration of the earthly and heavenly comes from the life of Christ, especially pictured in the Gospel of Luke. The quotation from Isaiah 61 and 58 in the beginning of Jesus’ ministry is purposefully narrated by Luke and shows Jesus’ holistic focus.<sup>17</sup> In other words “Jesus is love and power” towards the needy is not a dualism between the natural and supernatural. The quote is used metaphorically on exorcisms, healings and proclamation,<sup>18</sup> and overcoming spiritual evil.<sup>19</sup> But the ministry of Jesus also contains a significant social dimension in Luke. Jesus is concerned about the rich and poor, Samaritans, Gentiles, women and tax

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<sup>10</sup> Sugden, 1999, pp. 76-100

<sup>11</sup> Sugden, 1999, p. 98

<sup>12</sup> Sugden, 1999, p. 98

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<sup>13</sup> Lord, 2005, p. 52

<sup>14</sup> Lord, 2005, pp. 39-42

<sup>15</sup> Revelation 21-22

<sup>16</sup> Lord, 2005, pp. 61-63

<sup>17</sup> Luke 4:16-21

<sup>18</sup> Luke 4:31-43

<sup>19</sup> Luke 8:26-39, 9:37-50, and 11:14-36

collectors.<sup>20</sup> A reading of the Gospel of Luke and Act challenges missionaries in the steps of Christ to focus both on social responsibility and spiritual transformation.<sup>21</sup>

The Kingdom of God is already filled with liberation, mercy, care, justice, reconciliation, healing, music, arts and worship, and helps us see God in everything, even in people outside the Christian faith. At the same time there is also this human longing the Church should be aware of. All humans encounter sin, sickness, death, hopelessness, and sorrow. What are Christian's response to this? A holistic theology of mission embraces the "already, but not yet" aspect of God's Kingdom, the heavenly blessings and the yearnings of the Spirit.<sup>22</sup> The Kingdom blessings are a foretaste of all the heavenly: a relationship with Christ, healing in its fullness, the social shalom of justice and peace, reconciliation and unity, a renewed creation and fresh creativity in arts, music, and finally transformed lives. But in the midst of God's blessings, the Spirit also expresses a yearning that comes from suffering of all kinds; in the midst of sin there might be a longing for forgiveness; the Spirit yearns for God's intervention in all Creation, so that Gods Kingdom may become visible in the midst of pain.<sup>23</sup>

In my view, Danish Pentecostal spirituality should attempt to contextualise the "old" Pentecostal-charismatic approach (whatever that means?) with a Danish expression of charismatic gifts (whatever that means!). However, a biblical and holistic Jesus inspired spirituality must also include good news to the poor, healing, social responsibility, reconciliation and even ecological action. Jesus in love and power means moving all creation towards the coming Kingdom in any aspect of life.

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<sup>20</sup> Luke 6:20, 21:1-4, 14:12-14, 16:19-26

<sup>21</sup> Lord, 2005, pp. 62-66

<sup>22</sup> Romans 8:18-30

<sup>23</sup> Lord, 2005, pp. 135-141