

# *Spirits of Globalisation:*

*Cross-cultural and Theological Perspectives on  
(Neo-)Pentecostalism and Experiential Spiritualities*

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE  
at the  
Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo,  
June 9 – 12, 2004

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**Speakers** at the conference:

Harvey Cox (USA); Paulo Barrera Rivera; Mary Rute Gomes Esperandio (Brazil); Donna Lynne Seamone; Harold Wells (Canada); Young-gi Hong; Sung-Gun Kim (South Korea); Wai Man Yuen (Hong Kong); Jonathan Draper; Gary Leonard (South Africa); Aril Edvardsen (Sarons Dal, Norway); Sigurd Bergmann (Trondheim, Norway); Torkel Brekke; Berge Furre; Oddbjørn Leirvik; Jone Salomonsen; Sturla Stålsett; Signe Howell (Oslo, Norway).

## **PROGRAM**

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The rapid growth of Pentecostal churches throughout the world has caught the interest of theologians, historians of religion and social scientists for several years now. Their growth has been immediate and strong. Meanwhile, Pentecostal churches resist easy categorisation, in both theological and socio-political terms. As new trends and patterns have emerged, many choose to speak of neo- or even post- Pentecostal churches. A common trait though is religious experience; they all emphasise the centrality of '*experiential spiritualities*' (Harvey Cox).

This overwhelming and, for many, unexpected growth of Pentecostalism coincides in time with what has been called the age of globalisation. Many see **an affinity between the globalising forces and the spiritual worldview and practice of (neo-) Pentecostal religiosity**. Are these phenomena inter-connected? Do the processes of neo-liberal, Western globalisation and the growth of Pentecostalism mutually reinforce each other? If so, why should this be the case? Is there something inherent in this version of global structuring of social, economic and political affairs that calls for a particular kind of 'experiential religiosity' like Pentecostalism? What kind of political effect do (neo-) Pentecostal movements have, and what is it based in? What drives their internationalising missionary effort, and what effect does it have on the processes of globalisation happening around and within it?

It will be particularly important to analyse the interface between globalisation and experiential spiritualities such as (neo-) Pentecostalism in a **gender perspective**. In spite of the significant participation of women at the grass-roots, these movements are clearly male dominated at the level of leadership and power. There appears a tension between the resources for **religious and social empowerment** that experiential religiosity offers to many women, and the institutional structure and socio-political impact of these religious movements and groups.

Pentecostalism has appealed to such deeply rooted instincts in so many diverse cultures, that Harvey Cox suggests that it must include elements of **'primal religiosity'**. At the same time, the fundamental differences at work in the specific cases are so sharp that a thorough empirical, nuanced cross-cultural analysis is warranted. Although bearing similar traits, expressions and meanings, this phenomenon takes on distinct features in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Is it really the 'same thing' going on 'everywhere'?

In the framework of the global processes of transformation that influence and are influenced by religious practices worldwide, there is a growing need to assess this rise of experiential spiritualities not just in a **cross-cultural**, but also in an **inter-religious perspective**. Do we find similar trends – a growth of experiential, post-conventional and community-focused groups and movements – in other religious contexts (the world religions, revitalised primal religion, new religious movements)? If so, how do they interact?

Furthermore, the rise of experiential spirituality or primal religion in different contexts poses a challenge to **Christian theology** to revive and reformulate its own reflection on God the Spirit, her transcending presence and transformative power. If there is this particular spirituality attached to the present-day global transformations, such a **reconstruction of pneumatology and Christian spirituality** will have huge trans-cultural and inter-religious potential. In order to release this potential it must not only be applied cross-culturally and inter-religiously, however; it must be conceived in the context of the honest and demanding everyday encounter between different faiths and cultures.

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

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### **Conference Chair:**

Dr. Sturla J. Stålsett

Co-ordinator of the research programme Religion in a Globalised Age (RIGA) at the Faculty of Theology, university of Oslo, sponsored by the Norwegian research Council.

### **Conference secretary:**

Andrew J. Thomas, RIGA-programme

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The conference costs 1500 Norwegian kroner, and includes reception, conference dinner and refreshments throughout. Participation in the conference is also possible on a daily basis, for 500 kroner per day plus 300 kroner for the reception or conference dinner (day one, Wednesday, is open for all).

To register, print and fill out the registration form below, send it to the address given, and a giro will be sent you in the post. If you have any other questions, please contact Andy Thomas at (+47) 22850307, or [a.j.thomas@teologi.uio.no](mailto:a.j.thomas@teologi.uio.no)

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