

## A PENTECOSTAL *LEX LEGENDI* FOR FOSTERING POLYPHONIC PERSPECTIVALISM IN PENTECOSTAL TRADITION

Monte Lee Rice

### Abstract

I begin this paper by surveying qualitative distinctives of Pentecostal Bible reading, which together contribute to the missional localizing giftedness of Pentecostalism worldwide. In Part 2 I then suggest that detrimentally incongruent to these distinctives are several Fundamentalist-Evangelical mediated postures to Scripture. In Part 3 I addresses this incongruence by proposing a Pentecostal *lex legendi* ("rule of reading"), built on Telford Work's "Trinitarian-Ontology of Scripture." I argue that Work's bibliology provides a compelling theological premise for both the Pentecostal dynamic and polyvalent understanding of biblical revelation, and substantiates theological pluralism as intrinsic to Pentecostal tradition. Further building on Work's bibliology, I then propose a Pentecostal form of *lectio divina* ("sacred reading") that structures the classical/medieval fourfold Scripture sense, to a constructivist understanding of the threefold Pentecostal soteriological experiences (redemption, sanctification, and Spirit baptism). I conclude by delineating how this Pentecostal form of *lectio divina* may help Pentecostals identify and utilize theological hermeneutics that best foster the Pentecostal missiological giftedness, and hence the pluralising of Pentecostalism(s) worldwide.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, rule of reading, Trinity, sacred reading

### Introduction

Especially promising for 21st century Christian missional presence, is the Pentecostal localizing giftedness (*semper formanda loci pro ecclesia catholica*), which pluralizes Pentecostalism(s) worldwide.<sup>1</sup> I should add that significantly fostering this missiological giftedness

---

<sup>1</sup> Substantiating this suggestion is Dale T. Irvin's ("Pentecostal Historiography and Global Christianity: Rethinking the Question of Origins," *Pneuma*, 27, no. 1 [Spring 2005]: 45) argument that directly arising from the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism, is that the inherent "*logic of Pentecostal spirituality*— resulted more often than not, in the immediate localizing of Pentecostal global designs in the new situations" of ministry outreach. Hence, Irvin calls this logic of Pentecostal experience, the "localizing Pentecostal historical phenomenon."

is interdependence between 21st century globalization and globally diverse local Pentecostals worldwide, which in turn fosters of “glocalization of Pentecostalism” worldwide.<sup>2</sup> However, detrimentally incongruent to this giftedness are some philosophical premises common in Pentecostal approaches to Scripture, primarily mediated via our Fundamentalist-Evangelical influences. These include foundationalist ideas of immutable truth, ahistorical biblical primitivism, pragmatic-aimed utilitarianism, deterministic theological monism, and cognitive-propositional approaches to doctrinal speech. Given how these variables coalesce with free church like-minded”-shaped ecclesiologies, they undermine the eschata-passioned, polyphonic perspectivalism that I suggest implicitly underlies the revelational dynamism intrinsic to Pentecostal missional giftedness. Hence, an important aspect to nurturing the Pentecostal localizing giftedness within the context of globalization, is to seek out theological resources from both within Pentecostal tradition and from the Church Catholic past and present—that are most congruent to our own giftedness as a unique Christian spirituality.

Building on Telford Work’s “Trinitarian-Ontology of Scripture,” I shall therefore address this incongruence by proposing a Pentecostal *lex legendi* (“rule of reading”), thus comprising a Pentecostal form of *lectio divina* (“sacred reading”).<sup>3</sup> I argue that Work’s bibliology provides a compelling theological premise for both the Pentecostal dynamic and polyvalent understanding of biblical revelation, and substantiates theological pluralism as intrinsic to Pentecostal tradition. In classical theology, this “rule of reading” is generally identified with the ancient practice of Bible reading known as *lectio divina*, meaning a “sacred reading” of Scripture. *Lectio divina* generally presumes a fourfold sense to Scripture: 1. *Lectio*; 2. *Meditatio*; 3. *Oratio*; and 4. *Contemplatio*. I shall therefore propose structuring the fourfold Scripture sense presumed in classical/medieval practices of spiritual theology, to a constructivist-narrative understanding of the threefold Pentecostal soteriological experience(s) of redemption, sanctification, and Spirit baptism.

To achieve this aim, I have divided this paper into three parts. Part One will survey qualitative features of Pentecostal Bible reading, whereas Part Two will address detriments to Pentecostal Bible reading. Part Three comprises the major thrust of this paper. In it I delineate contours of this Pentecostal form of *lectio divina*, and then conclude by delineating how this Pentecostal form of *lectio divina* may help Pentecostals identify and utilize theological

---

<sup>2</sup> Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostalism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 25.

<sup>3</sup> Telford Work, *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).

hermeneutics that best foster the Pentecostal missiological giftedness, and hence the pluralising of Pentecostalism(s) worldwide.

### **Part One: Qualitative Distinctives of Pentecostal Bible Reading**

I will begin by briefly surveying four qualitative distinctives of Pentecostal Bible reading that I find intrinsic to a robust Pentecostal spirituality. First to note is that over the past century, a hallmark of Pentecostalism that has funded its global vitality and role in the renewing of the Church Catholic has been an intuitive grasp of the “plenary relevance” of the Bible. Hence, Pentecostals worldwide normally read the Bible as God’s living Word, believing that through the immediate illumination of the Holy Spirit, we may find answers applicable to daily life and needs. At least at the grass-roots level, this grasp into the Bible’s immediate applicability has been historically nurtured through a “concordinistic” perception of Biblical truths and themes, and hence a “proof-texting,” pragmatic-oriented hermeneutic.<sup>4</sup> Pentecostals largely inherited these approaches from their historical links with the older Protestant Scholastic models of Bible doctrine and theology. A second qualitative distinctive of Pentecostal Bible reading, which sometimes functions in tension with its pragmatic reading of Scripture, is a presumed polyvalence of meaning that Pentecostals grant to biblical texts, which is moreover discerned through spiritual illumination.<sup>5</sup>

A third important distinctive to Pentecostal Bible reading has been what Assemblies of God theologian Frank Macchia defines as “a certain ‘present-tenseness’” which Pentecostals grant “to the events and words of the Bible, so that what happened then, happens now.”<sup>6</sup> Finally, a fourth qualitative distinctive of Pentecostal Bible reading has been the oral-aural epistemology and congregational ethos that is typical of Pentecostal congregational gatherings.<sup>7</sup> Relevant here is Kevin M. Bradt’s defining of oral-aural” (or “spoke-heard”) events, whereby in their coming

---

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Davies, “What Does it Mean to Read the Bible as a Pentecostal?” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18/2 (2009): 223; Allan H. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 225-227.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 226-228.

<sup>6</sup> Frank D. Macchia, “Theology, Pentecostal,” in Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Mass, eds. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002), 1120-1141, 1122.

<sup>7</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 2, 19-39, 112, 161, 177, 195-196, 269-278, 291-295, 322, 397-398.

together, tellers and listeners create a space that generates imaginative power towards construction of new “story-worlds,” in which both parties thereby enter into. These “story-worlds” thus provide participants a unique space wherein both teller and listener thereby enter into a new future.<sup>8</sup>

A robust Pentecostal oral-aural ethos therefore creates a heightened awareness of God’s presence. This in turn creates a dialogical space wherein participants anticipate miraculous and invasive, ministerial manifestations of the Holy Spirit and heightened intuitiveness towards hearing and responding to the “word of the Lord.”<sup>9</sup> Such events are thus intrinsic to the “world-creating” power of spoken, prophetic words within the ethos of Pentecostal spirituality.<sup>10</sup> In his book, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*, Pentecostal philosopher James Smith well conceptualises this link between Pentecostal oral-aural epistemology and congregational ethos by suggesting that crucial to the Pentecostal “worldview” is an “affective, narrative epistemology.” Smith describes this epistemology as a theological method experientially informed by “affective narrative epistemic practice”(s), such as story telling and testimony.<sup>11</sup> Smith thus stresses how in Pentecostal congregational ethos, such practices function as affective” modes of knowing that inform our understanding of Scripture and hence, “pentecostal spirituality.”<sup>12</sup>

Within the cultural-linguistic setting of Pentecostal ethos, what binds these four qualitative distinctives of Pentecostal Bible reading together are Pentecostal experiences of Spirit baptism, which grants Pentecostals existential intermediacy into the Biblical story-world, whereby they encounter God and other spiritual realities within the biblical text, thus enabling them to see themselves as participants within the biblical narrative. William McKay thus defines this as a “disclosure experience” which grants believers a profound sense of identity with and calling into the apostolic church mission.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism grants Pentecostals an existential baptism into the biblical story-world.<sup>14</sup> I moreover suggest that these experiences of

<sup>8</sup> Kevin M. Bradt, *Story as a Way of Knowing* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1997), 3-11, 14, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel E. Albrecht, “Pentecostal Spirituality: Looking Through the Lens of Ritual,” *Pneuma* 14, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 110-111, 114, 118-119.

<sup>10</sup> Jerry Camery-Hoggatt, “The Word of God from Living Voices: Orality and Literacy in the Pentecostal Tradition,” *Pneuma* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 225-226, 231, 238-239.

<sup>11</sup> James Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*, Pentecostal Manifestos (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010), 12, 33, 39-46.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 43, 59.

<sup>13</sup> John McKay, “When the Veil is Taken Away: The Impact of Prophetic Experience on Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5 (1994): 21, 35-37.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 37. Irvin (“Drawing All Together in One Bond of Love: The Ecumenical Vision of William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival,” *Journal of*

Spirit baptism grant believers a more “storying” orientation that helps them grasp the oracular and storying nature of the Bible—thus also accounting for why Pentecostals are naturally drawn to a narrative-centred hermeneutic and “story” oriented approach to preaching, ministry and congregational liturgy.

Because Pentecostal experiences of Spirit baptism foster a storying orientation and hence existential inhabitation within the biblical stories, it moreover fosters in believers an eschatological horizon—that arises from how Spirit baptism grants intermediacy into God’s Trinitarian pathos and mission.<sup>15</sup> This eschatological horizon creates in us a sense of history, and conviction that our life counts towards the shaping of history in tandem with the soon coming of God’s kingdom.<sup>16</sup> Hence, within the cultural-linguistic setting of Pentecostal spirituality, pentecostal experiences of Spirit baptism therefore help readers experience the “world-making” function of the biblical story-world.” From a Pentecostal perspective, such world-making signifies the giving of Pentecostal imagination. This occurs as the Holy Spirit endows readers, regardless of their social-economic status, with imaginative resources from the Biblical story-world to dream, prophesy and labour with God in the renewing of all creation in conformity to the soon coming of His kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, to reiterate, I would affirm these four qualitative distinctives of Pentecostal Bible reading as intrinsic to a robust Pentecostal spirituality: relevance to daily life needs through spiritual illumination, presumed polyvalence of meaning to biblical texts, existential identity within the biblical story-world, and an oral-aural epistemology that anticipates transforming encounters with the presence of God. Together, we can synthesise these distinctives as pointing towards, which many others have commonly suggested with reference to Pentecostalism, an existentially dynamic assumption of Scriptural revelation, Bible reading and interpretation.

---

*Pentecostal Theology* 6 [1995]: 52-53) similarly observes that, “Through the baptism of Holy Spirit, one enters a new world order.”

<sup>15</sup> Peter Hocken, *The Glory and the Shame: Reflections on the 20th Century Outpouring of the Holy Spirit* (Surrey, UK: Eagle, 1994), 7, 49, 60-61.

<sup>16</sup> Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 1 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993; Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 58.

<sup>17</sup> Amos Yong (*Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002], 123, 133-134, 145-147) conceptualizes this phenomenon as the giving of “pneumatological imagination,” mediated through human encounters with the Holy Spirit. In his hermeneutical model, Yong defines “imagination” as a “cognitive blend of the affective and spiritual aspects of the human being.” In such divine-human encounters, the Holy Spirit thus graces the human imagination and hence, the human capacity to perceive and participate in task of “worldmaking.”

**Part Two:  
Detriments to Pentecostal Bible Reading**

**Modernity's Foundationalist Quest for Scientific Certitude**

There are several challenges that often stand in tension to the qualitative distinctives of Pentecostal Bible reading which I have briefly surveyed. We can incidentally just as well observe these challenges within the Evangelical tradition worldwide. Given their historical roots and ongoing identity that many Pentecostals share with Protestant Evangelicalism, an assessment on Pentecostal Bible reading should in fact keep in mind similar assessments made concerning Evangelicalism. I will therefore briefly survey some critical concerns in Pentecostal Bible reading, which in fact mirror or reflect a greater critique that others have made towards Protestant Evangelicalism. Whatever problems I raise about Pentecostal Bible reading are thus philosophically rooted, and they largely mirror the broader hermeneutical problematic of Protestant Evangelicalism, through its historical engagement with modernity.

A helpful resource towards appreciating the dissonance between Bible reading characteristics that are intrinsic to Pentecostal spirituality and philosophical pitfalls reflecting both modern and postmodern philosophical trajectories is Pentecostal theologian Wolfgang Vondey's text, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda*. In a manner similar to my preceding discussion, Vondey describes global Pentecostalism, particularly classical Pentecostalism, "as a manifestation" of the "late modern or postmodern theological crisis."<sup>18</sup> Yet Vondey also suggests that intrinsic within Pentecostalism are "indispensable resources" (namely "Pentecostal thought and praxis") for overcoming "manifestations of the contemporary crises in global Christianity, which Vondey foremost identifies as a "crisis of imagination."<sup>19</sup> This "crisis of imagination" comprises several other elements which Vondey tackles through his text. These are namely the "crises of imagination, revelation, creed, liturgy, Christendom, and play," which altogether affects how we theologise today. Vondey identifies the practical manifestations of this current "crisis" according to "its mechanistic, utilitarian, productive, performative, and competitive

---

<sup>18</sup> Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda*, Pentecostal Manifestos 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2010), 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

nature” which altogether “defines the contemporary theological enterprise.”<sup>20</sup>

Following through with Vondey’s analysis, I would moreover specify three seminal modern and postmodern influences that currently challenge the transformative power arising from the interplay of the four qualitative distinctives of Pentecostal Bible reading that I earlier delineated. I identify these influences as: 1. modernity’s foundationalist quest for scientific certitude (mediated to Evangelicalism via late 19th century Princetonian Scholasticism, and secondly via early 20th century Protestant Fundamentalism), 2. ahistorical biblical primitivism, and 3. postmodern pragmatic-aimed utilitarianism. What I will now do is briefly delineate how these dynamics engage the Pentecostal reading of Scripture in manners less than congruent to Pentecostal spirituality.

With reference to the broader Protestant context, much has been written on how the modern quest for scientific certitude (correlating with René Descartes’ subject-object scheme) shaped the Protestant historical-grammatical approach to biblical interpretation, and conversely (in both earlier liberal and conservative circles), the primary importance of authorial intent for determining the meaning of a biblical text. Hence, the locus of meaning was foundationally placed on the “message behind the text.”<sup>21</sup> The modern historical-grammatical stress on authorial intent as the most determinative meaning, has always posed a recalcitrant tension with the dynamically open view of revelation that has been intrinsic to Pentecostal spirituality. Their dynamic view of revelation has naturally led Pentecostals towards allegorical readings of Scripture, especially in the ministries of preaching and Bible teaching.<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding a valid role to historical-grammatical exegesis, Assemblies of God theologian Simon Chan similarly notes this dissonance in Pentecostal Scripture reading, especially concerning the presumption that authorial intent is the only determinative meaning of a Bible text. He further suggests that there a measured congruency between Pentecostal openness to meanings beyond authorial intent, and the mediaeval understanding into the “*sensus plenum* of Scripture.”<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 69-70.

<sup>22</sup> Kenneth J. Archer (*A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community* [Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2005, 2009], 201) critiques the “Evangelical historical critical method,” first noting how much of current pentecostal biblical scholarship has “adopted the concerns of the modernistic historical paradigm as the defining arbitrator of truth,” although now the greater hermeneutical understanding are recognizing the limitations of this premise.

<sup>23</sup> Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 21 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 27-28.

Given the Pentecostal penchant for allegorising, there is certainly need for a hermeneutical control. Yet I would stress that the problem is not allegory per se, but rather allegorical readings coupled with the ahistorical biblical primitivism that distances Pentecostals from accessing ancient yet well-developed hermeneutical methods of guiding the meanings of allegorical readings of Scripture. This crucial theme will set the concluding direction of this paper. Fortunately, over the past few decades, many Pentecostal theologians have similarly noted the dissonance between concordinistic / encyclopaedic models of Pentecostal doctrine, which reflect the earlier scholastic models of theological propositions as context-free, first order Bible truths, and Pentecostal theologising through the oral genres of narrative, testimony, story-telling, singing, praying, preaching, and religious / spiritual experience.<sup>24</sup>

### Ahistorical Biblical Primitivism

As earlier mentioned, the second relevant problem I will raise concerning Pentecostal Bible reading is our historic bent towards ahistorical biblical primitivism. I should qualify this concern by suggesting that this hermeneutical disposition naturally reflects the communal giftedness of Pentecostalism, which many have characterised as a “restorationist” kind of Christian spirituality and ecclesiastical tradition. Historically, Pentecostals have often more specifically clarified this assumption via the term “apostolic.”<sup>25</sup> Yet whereas historic church traditions such as Roman Catholicism may also define themselves as apostolic in the sense of sustaining continuity with the early church via faithfulness to the receiving and passing down of tradition, Pentecostals generally interpret apostolicity as experiencing restored intermediacy with the church in the Book of Acts. Hence, Finnish Pentecostal theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen notes that “apostolicity” is thus a “defining feature of Pentecostal spirituality and ecclesiology,” which “means continuity with the apostolic church of the Book of Acts.”<sup>26</sup>

As I mentioned at the onset, I would moreover stress that in Pentecostalism, this sense of apostolicity essentially emerges from their existential intermediacy into the Biblical story-word, beginning with the Book of Acts— an intermediacy that they

---

<sup>24</sup> Macchia, “Theology, Pentecostal,” in *The New International Dictionary*, 1123; Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, 302.

<sup>25</sup> For helpful analysis into the “restorative” parlance of “apostolicity” within Pentecostalism see: Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 3, 6; Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 229.

<sup>26</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 57-58.



receive through their Pentecostal experiences of Spirit baptism. Therefore, within the historical Pentecostal understanding of the term “apostolic,” spiritual experiences granting intermediacy with the biblical text nurture in turn what Archer defines as the Pentecostal “primitivistic impulse.” This impulse thereby guides Pentecostals “to read Scripture in a restorationist manner.”<sup>27</sup> Hence, Pentecostals read Scripture in an ahistorical manner, given how their reading of Scripture from the basis of Spirit baptism grants them a restoration of apostolic faith, experience, giftedness, and identity with the first century apostolic church.

An immediate downside to the ahistorical biblical primitivism that normally characterises Pentecostal Bible reading is, as also often indicative of Evangelical Bible reading, what Richard Lints calls, “ahistorical devotional piety.” Lint notes that restorationist spiritualities such as Pentecostalism tend to appreciate ahistorical piety as a necessary quality of spiritual vitality.<sup>28</sup> Yet it is important to note that contributing alongside the restorationist idea of apostolicity to the problem of ahistorical piety is as Methodist theologian Thomas Oden notes, a “modern chauvinism,” which presumes whatever is pre-modern is likely to be relatively worthless” for present day believers.<sup>29</sup> This presumption thereby results in a disembodiment of spiritual wisdom and knowledge from the narrative flow of the Spirit’s revelational work throughout the life of the historic Church. The result, as Evangelical-Episcopalian theologian Robert Webber points out, is a deep “memory loss” of spiritual truth deposited through the narrative history of the Christian church.<sup>30</sup> Ahistorical devotional piety thus emphasises the meaning of the text for individual readers, apart from broader dialogue with Christian tradition.<sup>31</sup> Hence, this problem of ahistorical biblical primitivism coupled with ahistorical devotional piety robs Bible readers from enjoying the hermeneutical wisdom of Christian sources down through the ages— which thereby provides a seasoned repository of hermeneutical guidance in negotiating the polyvalent meanings of Scripture.<sup>32</sup> Fortunately, times are changing as Evangelicals are now increasingly discovering the value of ancient sources in spiritual formation.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 150-156.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 92; quoted in Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 109.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, Systematic Theology, vol. 3 (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco; HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 2.

<sup>30</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books; Baker Publishing House, 1999), 74-76, 221.

<sup>31</sup> Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 109.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

Even as biblical primitivism coupled with ahistorical devotional piety distances Bible readers from historical methods of negotiating the indeterminate character of biblical texts, these trajectories also tend to undermine the more basic Pentecostal intuition that Scriptural texts are usually quite indeterminate in possible meanings. Kenneth Archer thus discusses how over the past half century or more, Pentecostals pursued a process of modernising their biblical hermeneutic primarily by adapting mainstream Evangelical historical-grammatical methods. Also important to note is how this agenda has generally presumed a singularity of textual meaning which conservative Evangelicals have usually considered synonymous with authorial intent. Hence, the goal of much past Pentecostal exegesis has been, even as it has been with the broader modern Protestant hermeneutical agendas when dictated by modern historical-critical exegetical methods (particularly as used by conservative Evangelicals)—the modern exegetical quest for a text’s singular meaning. This is normally determined by discerning authorial intent (the meaning “behind the text”).<sup>34</sup>

Archer concludes this survey with a strong critique on ongoing adaptation of the past Evangelical historical critical exegetical methods. His critique exhorts us on one hand to how along with the postmodern critique against modern scientific objectivism. Archer thus argues that “historical critical methods lead” believers “in the wrong direction” through its insistence that a text’s meaning is primarily a singularly “determinate meaning,” which is to be discerned via tools of historical reconstruction.<sup>35</sup> As I have earlier noted as a problematic weakness of modernity’s foundationalist quest for scientific certitude, Archer consistently points out that what ultimately results from this hermeneutical paradigm— is the ongoing conflict between “competing interpretations” of Scripture and again therefore, the ecclesiological divisive problem of orthopathic dogmatism in Pentecostal tradition.<sup>36</sup>

### **Postmodern Pragmatic-aimed Utilitarianism**

The final problematic influence on Pentecostal Bible reading I will address is what I shall call postmodern pragmatic-aimed utilitarianism. A helpful springboard for appreciating this dilemma is a contrast Lutheran theologian Oswald Bayer makes between the classic Christian theological doctrine of God as the

---

<sup>34</sup> Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 177-178.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 177, 180.

“God who communicates,” and the “human who appropriates.”<sup>37</sup> This needs some unpacking which I will provide here, beginning with Bayer’s description of God as the “God who communicates,” and hence Himself as the primary “*hermeneut*.” Bayer describes God as our *Hermeneut* to stress His giving of Himself to us, which is itself a “work of translation, from his heavenly language into our earthly human language.”<sup>38</sup> Bayer takes as his theological anchor, the Nicene Creed confession: “I believe in God the Father, *creator* . . . “ Appreciating God’s making of creation through His creative speech-acts (eg., Gen. 1:1-3f; Ps 33:9; John 1:1-14), Bayer then clarifies the meaning of “creator” as “poet” (Greek *poietes*: one who makes things). God thus address us through Word and Spirit as our Maker. From this premise, we should thus read Scripture as the holy “space” where God our Maker addresses us.<sup>39</sup> Scripture is thus primarily the definitive “holy space” where God forms us after His likeness.

Bayer argues that currently working very much in contrast to God’s coming to us in His Word as our Maker is the modern emphasis on the “human who appropriates,” in the sense that “modernity emphasises the task of interpreting and understanding what is given.” The real downside of this is that therefore, “*Appropriation has become more important than dedication and communication,*” which Bayer describes as symptomatic of the “modern Narcissus.”<sup>40</sup> Bayer thereby infers that the aim of Scripture reading in the modern sense shifts from the proper posture of “How does the given biblical text give itself to me to understand it— so that I am understood?” (e.g., God addressing us as our Maker) to rather, “How do I understand the given biblical text?”<sup>41</sup> Bayer uses the term “Narcissus” to stress that what results in Scripture reading is a reading to find “our own projections,” as an endeavour towards self-actualisation.<sup>42</sup> Bayer charges that this contrast between the modern reading of Scripture from the basis of “appropriation” rather than from the proper basis of “dedication” parallels philosopher Carl Raschke’s contrast between a “propositional and “vocative” reading of Scripture. Whereas propositional reading tends to focus on questions of what a biblical text is “about,” the vocative reading is an “I-Thou” relational reading of Scripture (to use Martin Buber’s model of communication).<sup>43</sup> Raschke thus reminds us that carefully avoid

---

<sup>37</sup> Oswald Bayer, “Hermeneutical Theology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 no. 2 (2003): 131.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 131, 138-139, 142-143, 145-146.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-133.

<sup>43</sup> Carl Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 137-138.

reading the Bible as if to presume it is a text “‘about’ God,” but rather as “God’s Word spoken ‘to us.’”<sup>44</sup> We thus read Scripture even more important from Bayer’s perspective, as a holy space where God addresses us through Word and Spirit.

**Part Three:**  
**Premises for a Pentecostal Form of *Lectio Divina* Via  
 a Trinitarian-Ontology of Scripture**

**Dynamic Revelation through Trinitarian Interplays of Spirit,  
 Word and Community**

The task that this analysis now points us towards is to suggest a theological paradigm that nurtures the intrinsically transformative qualities of Pentecostal Bible reading, which can also effectively negotiate the modern and postmodern challenges within grass-roots Pentecostalism— namely, modernity’s foundationalist quest for scientific certitude, ahistorical biblical primitivism, and postmodern pragmatic-aimed utilitarianism. The paradigm I will subsequently delineate essentially emerges from a stronger ontological understanding of the Bible than what either Evangelicals or Pentecostals has normally articulated in their respective theologies or doctrines of Scripture— although I would argue that this ontology has probably implicitly existed within Pentecostal dynamic understandings of biblical revelation. The specific theology of Scriptural ontology I am drawing on directly comes from Telford Work’s seminal bibliology titled, *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation* *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation*, which he describes as a “Trinitarian ontology of Scripture.”<sup>45</sup>

This paradigm, which Work has developed in manners that closely substantiate the aims of this paper, suggest a distinctive Pentecostal *lex legendi* (“rule of reading”), comprising a Pentecostal appropriation of the Classic Christian practice of *lectio divina* (“sacred reading”). This paradigm moreover calls for a greater mystical understanding and practice of Bible reading in Pentecostal spirituality, which takes its cue from the theological articulations of *lectio divina* that historically emerged from medieval Christian spiritualities. The relevant congruency of *lectio divina* to Pentecostal Bible reading lies in its two-fold purpose of guiding Bible readers into edified readings of the multiple meanings intrinsic to biblical

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>45</sup> Work, *Living and Active*, 8, 10, 226.

texts, and thereby facilitate a process of becoming formed by the Word of God through the Holy Spirit.

I believe such an ontological appreciation of Scripture, leading to a renewing practice of *lectio divina* in Pentecostal tradition will moreover accentuate several variables I have already described as crucial for Pentecostal Bible reading. These include the four qualitative distinctives I have identified as intrinsic to Pentecostal Bible reading: relevance to daily life needs through spiritual illumination, presumed polyvalence of meaning to biblical texts, existential identity within the biblical story-world, and an oral-aural epistemology that anticipates transforming encounters with God's presence. These features altogether imply an existentially dynamic assumption of Scriptural revelation, Bible reading and interpretation. Hence, Telford's trinitarian-shaped ontology of Scripture accentuates Pentecostal theologian Dale Coulter's suggestion that at the centre of Pentecostal spirituality is a dynamic view of revelation.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, a stronger ontology of Scripture would affirm the triadic, trinitarian-shaped hermeneutical models that have emerged over the past two decades in Pentecostal scholarship, all of which again suggest dynamic understandings of textual meaning and revelation via interplays of the Holy Spirit, Scripture, and Christian community.<sup>47</sup> I will now begin to transition to characteristics of a Pentecostal practice of *lectio divina* by first briefly delineating how this trajectory infers and arises from the ontological nature of Scripture as articulated via Work's trinitarian ontology of Scripture.

### Telford Work's Trinitarian-Ontology of Scripture

In recognising the need within Pentecostal tradition for a stronger ontology of the Bible, a major theological resource at hand is Chan's consistent stress on the ontology of the Church, as

---

<sup>46</sup> Dale M. Coulter, "What Meaneth This? Pentecostals and Theological Inquiry," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10, no. 1 (2001): 38-64.

<sup>47</sup> For instance, focusing on biblical exegesis, Randolph W. Tate (*Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, rev. ed. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997]) proposes a "three-world" hermeneutical interplay of author (world behind the text), text (world within the text) and reader (world before the text). Meanwhile, in his book, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community*, Archer delineates a model for fostering a theological reading of Scripture arising from the Pentecostal believer's location within the "Pentecostal story" and hence also, the Pentecostal "interpretive community"; see also Archer, "The Spirit and Theological Interpretation: A Pentecostal Strategy," in *The Gospel Revisited*, 124-127. Conversely, the title of Yong's book, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*, projects from a Pentecostal perspective, a theological hermeneutic for engaging a wide range of theological, philosophical, epistemological, and hermeneutical disciplines. Vonhey (*Beyond Pentecostalism*, 73) provides an affirming analysis of Archer and Yong's respective triadic hermeneutical models insofar as they recognize the interplay between text, community and spiritual experience in the making of meaning.

prescriptive to the too common “sociological” or “functional” understanding of the Church that characterises much of Protestant Evangelical and Pentecostal ecclesiological thinking and practice. The fall-out Chan identifies within both of these traditions is a very utilitarian and consumerist orientation of the Church.<sup>48</sup> Ultimately what results is that the purpose of the Church shifts from its true purpose as the Spirit’s creation of a “*koinonia*” that images God’s trinitarian-shaped and redemptive mission in creation—to unfortunately a community held together simply by a “kindred human spirit” for the common purpose of spiritual endeavours such as evangelism, world missions, or the Great Commission.<sup>49</sup> In contrast to current sociological, functional and hence utilitarian ideas of the Church, Chan stresses the ontological being-ness of the Church, which accentuates its reality as existing prior to creation (Eph 1:4), and thus its organic and relational existence as the body of Christ, who is the organic head of the Church.<sup>50</sup>

The logic of Chan’s thesis comes into focus through two contrasting questions: “Is the church to be seen as an instrument to accomplish God’s purpose in creation, or is the church the expression of God’s ultimate purpose itself?”<sup>51</sup> Obviously, the first question defines the Church primarily according to its function. The second question however, does so more in terms of ontology, meaning who and what God calls the Church to be.<sup>52</sup> Chan’s stress on ontology stands in stark contrast with the pragmatic modern tendency to define the Church strictly in utilitarian terms of quantifiable achievement— where relevance then becomes of greater value than ontological fidelity as a witness to the Kingdom of God.<sup>53</sup> An important implication of Chan’s stress on the ontology of the Church for this paper, is an open and dynamic understanding of revelation from both the Bible and existing within and throughout the life of the Church in history, and nurtured through the interplay of “Spirit, Word, and Church.”<sup>54</sup>

While Chan has not extended his ontology of the Church to a parallel understanding of the Bible, Work’s “Trinitarian ontology of Scripture” naturally provides the necessary transition. In doing so, he moreover provides us just the kind of theological paradigm which the issues presented in this paper necessitate for nurturing a Pentecostal reading of Scripture that is wholly

---

<sup>48</sup> Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 97-139; Chan, “The Church and the Development of Doctrine,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13, no. 1 (2004): 62-64.

<sup>49</sup> Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 98.

<sup>50</sup> Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 97; Chan, “The Church and the Development of Doctrine,” 63.

<sup>51</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 21.

<sup>52</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 22.

<sup>53</sup> Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 97-98, 05.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

congruent with a robust Pentecostal spirituality— which I argue should be more closely funded by theological themes characteristic of the ancient practice of *lectio divina*. I will therefore briefly survey key themes from Work's project that are especially relevant to the concerns of this paper, and follow this by briefly suggesting characteristics of a Pentecostal practice of *lectio divina*.

There are several crucial descriptions Work uses to characterise his "bibliology" that are important to note, which he introduces as a "Trinitarian doctrine of Scripture that articulates the Bible's role in the divine economy of salvation," thus suggesting an understanding of Scripture via analogy to the Trinity. Work thus argues from the premise that Scripture plays a determinative role in the "divine economy of salvation" and mirrors to us the Trinity of God, that "the Bible's character as the Word of God suggests a Trinitarian ontology of Scripture."<sup>55</sup> From this basis, Work stresses that his "bibliology" does not directly address issues such as inerrancy, infallibility, or inspiration, but rather focuses on the "more comprehensive" topic of the relation of the Bible to God and its role in the "Trinitarian economy of salvation." A major result, which Work delineates throughout the third part of his book, is that the Bible's "Trinitarian ontology" provides a divine judgement against theological polarisations, as well as grounds for theological diversity and responsibility towards ecumenical dialogue and sharing amongst diverse, yet through the Spirit's giving, communally gifted church traditions.<sup>56</sup> Given his purpose towards articulating an ecumenically purposed and trinitarian-shaped bibliology, which he deeply informs with both ancient and historically recent sources, Work builds his doctrine of Scripture on the theological trajectories of Athanasius of Alexandria, Augustine of Hippo, Karl Barth, and Hans Urs von Balthasar, each of whom envisioned unique Trinitarian informed understandings of the Bible and biblical interpretation.<sup>57</sup>

In concluding his project, Work's centres his broad themes on two specific issues, which I will briefly focus on as relevant to the concerns of this paper. First is how this trinitarian-shaped ontology of Scriptures points to a hermeneutic that respects the indeterminacy of biblical texts and negotiates possible allegorical meanings. Work's analysis of his four selected theologians both ancient and modern leads him to suggest that we grant interpretive space for both allegorical and authorial-centred meanings of biblical texts, arguing that diversity of textual meanings is intrinsic to a "Trinitarian ecclesiology of Scripture," which arises from the "Trinitarian ontology" and "Trinitarian soteriology" of Scripture.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Work, *Living and Active*, 8, 10.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 9.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 35f, 110.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

### Theological Contours of a Pentecostal *Lectio Divina*

I will now more closely describe how Work's thesis leads him to suggest greater contemporary appreciation towards allegorical readings of Scripture, while supplementing this with a similar conclusion Coulter makes from reflecting on the dynamically open-ended nature of revelation which Pentecostals generally presume in their posture towards Scripture. Moving towards this paper's conclusion, I will then demonstrate argue that Work's bibliology provides a compelling theological premise for both the Pentecostal dynamic and polyvalent understanding of biblical revelation, and substantiates theological pluralism as intrinsic to Pentecostal tradition.

As a needful background, I will begin by briefly describing commonly identified characteristics of the historical practice of *lectio divina*, which is most commonly associative with patristic and medieval exegesis and hence as a pre-critical method of Bible reading— and enjoying wider acceptance within Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy than historical Protestantism. This is currently changing however, as the postmodern turn towards narrative and imaginative evoking symbolism is facilitating growing appreciation within contemporary Protestantism and Evangelicalism towards this ancient approach to Bible reading.<sup>59</sup> The basic meaning of *lectio divina* is “‘sacred’ or ‘holy’ reading,” which essentially comprises four parts, usually identified as: 1. Read the text (*Lectio*); 2. Meditate the text (*Meditatio*); 3. Pray the text (*Oratio*); and 4. Live the text (*Contemplatio*). It is important to note however that these four elements are not always sequential, as any of the elements may come to the fore at any one time; however, as a norm, this is the usual pattern.

Important historical developments of the *lectio divina* practice come from the 12th century Victorine and Benedictine traditions, which stressed that the primary purpose of the discipline is not spiritual illumination for its own sake per say, but rather to foster the Bible reader's spiritual formation.<sup>60</sup> Steven Chase posits that in the Victorine tradition, the purpose of *lectio divina* as a contemplative practice is the forming of compassion within the reader, which thereby issues in “charity” towards the world.<sup>61</sup> Leading to “spiritual understanding,” *lectio divina* is thus sanctifying

---

<sup>59</sup> Webber, *The Divine Embrace*, 128-129, 209.

<sup>60</sup> Mark S. Burrows, “‘To Taste with the Heart’: Allegory, Poetics, and the Deep Reading of Scripture,” *Interpretation* (April 2002): 173.

<sup>61</sup> Steven Chase, *Contemplation and Compassion: The Victorine Tradition*, Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series (London, UK: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2003), 13-14, 63-64f, 126, 148, 154.



in purpose: “Spiritual understanding saves the believer” (*Intellectus spiritualis credentem salvum facit*). Roman Catholic theologian Henri de Lubac thus notes that in seeking out the “spiritual meaning of a text, *lectio divina* nurtures a life-long process of “conversion.”<sup>62</sup> Webber recalls this aim this basic sanctifying and missiological aim in the following Benedictine couplet: “We read (*Lectio*); Under the eye of God (*Meditatio*); Until the heart is touched (*Oratio*); And leaps into flame (*Contemplatio*).”<sup>63</sup> Finally, *lectio divina* as a spiritual discipline can be described, as particularly stressed by the Benedictine tradition, as a “deep reading” comprising a slowly meditative and dialogical posture, attentive to the multiple meanings posited in the read text. Hence, the “infinite unclosedness of the text” both presumes and empowers the practice of *lectio divina*.<sup>64</sup> The “deep reading” that describes *lectio divina*, is therefore a gestalt form of reading, directed not primarily towards the intellect but to the reader’s imagination through its focus on the imageries intrinsic within the polyvalent meanings of biblical texts.

The practice of *lectio divina* is therefore also a “visionary way of reading the Bible,” centred and empowered through the symbolic or metaphoric power of imageries that consistently permeate biblical texts.<sup>65</sup> Hence, medieval exegesis, especially coming from the Victorine tradition, postulates that observing the multiple senses of Scripture, which I shall subsequently describe, involves “visual exegesis”— a reading of Scripture through the “eyes of faith.”<sup>66</sup> New Testament scholar Marcus Borg helps clarify this power through his suggestion that metaphorical language grants us a “way of seeing;” more specifically, metaphors thereby function as “bridges to the sacred.”<sup>67</sup> Borg links premise to four historical ideas of “faith:” *assensus* (belief), *fiducia* (trust), *fidelitas* (fidelity/faithfulness) and *visio* (vision). The relevant form of “faith” here is “*visio*,” understanding Christian faith as a “way of seeing.” Borg points out that it is “faith” as “vision” which more readily points us to the role of religious metaphor in the nurturing of our soul. In Pentecostal parlance, I would suggest that biblical imagery thereby provides us a space for the ministry of God’s spirit

---

<sup>62</sup> Henri De Lubac, S.J., “Spiritual Understanding,” trans. by Luke O’Neill, in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 13. Hence, in Roman Catholic tradition, the practice of *lectio divina* grants reception of grace along the way of salvation; see also Michael Casey, *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina* (Liguori, MO: Triumph Books; 1996), 6.

<sup>63</sup> Webber, *The Divine Embrace*, 209-210.

<sup>64</sup> Burrows, “To Taste with the Heart,” 170.

<sup>65</sup> Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 128.

<sup>66</sup> Chase, *Contemplation and Compassion*, 68-73.

<sup>67</sup> Marcus Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (New York, NY: HarperOne; HarperCollins Publishers, 2003).

to illuminate the text, thus awakening our imagination with biblical themes intrinsic to a text's meanings. Borg's reflection on faith as *visio* thus provides us further grounds for appreciating the appropriateness of *lectio divina* for Pentecostal sensibilities towards biblical revelation and reading.

As a form of reading that cultivates Christian faith as *visio* (a way of seeing into the sacred), a Pentecostal practice of *lectio divina* helps restore, as I earlier discussed, the "crisis of imagination" which Vondey has diagnosed within contemporary Pentecostalism and the broader global Christian Church as well. As earlier mentioned, Vondey perceived this crisis in current readings of Scripture that have become overly mechanistic and utilitarian in purpose.<sup>68</sup> Relevant to note here is that a vital element to Yong's hermeneutical model, which has crucially driven much of his theological work over the past years, is his concept of "pneumatological imagination," wherein he defines "imagination" as a "cognitive blend of the affective and spiritual aspects of the human being." As such, the imagination is a key aspect to the human capacity to both perceive and participate in the "worldmaking."<sup>69</sup> The pneumatological element accentuates the Holy Spirit's role in gracing the human imagination in its task towards "worldmaking."<sup>70</sup>

Building on the work of Paul Ricoeur, Walter Brueggemann in his book *The Prophetic Imagination*, helps clarify this concept of worldmaking, via Ricoeur's observation on the "the word of the Lord"—the *dābār* of God. Ricoeur argued that by His Spirit, God speaks a word through the medium of human imagination. Brueggemann argues that Ricoeur's work shows us how "texts—in particular biblical texts, are acts of imagination that offer and envision 'alternative worlds.'"<sup>71</sup> In his *The Prophetic Imagination* text, Brueggemann thus suggests that God endows humans with "the generative . . . power of imagination."<sup>72</sup> When God grants us a glimpse into His own heart, we see more clearly His own dream towards creation. We thus receive what Brueggemann calls, an "alternative consciousness," that is quite often antithetical to the prevailing consciousness of our present age.<sup>73</sup> I suggest that Pentecostal practice of *lectio divina* would further reinforce Yong's idea of "pneumatological imagination" and conversely Brueggemann conception of the prophetic imagination as intrinsic elements to a robust Pentecostal spirituality.

---

<sup>68</sup> Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism*, 2, 5, 202.

<sup>69</sup> Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 123, 134.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 133, 145-147.

<sup>71</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), x.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Earlier I referred to Yong's suggestion, from the perspective of speech-act theory, that via the mediation of the Spirit, the perlocutionary function ("what has been achieved through spoken words") of Scripture is to transform us. In his article, "The Spirit and the Word: The Word-Creating Function of the Text," Grenz however provides another perspective on this perlocutionary function that more closely clarifies the generative power of Scripture towards the Bible reader's imagination and ultimately one's spiritual formation. Grenz begins by drawing from sociologists Peter Berger's and Thomas Luckmann's "sociology of knowledge" thesis that the world we inhabit is "is a socially constituted reality."<sup>74</sup> For this reason, Grenz also suggests, "the Spirit creates 'world'" by moreover addressing humans as "world builders."<sup>75</sup>

The primary concern of Grenz' essay is the perlocutionary act of the Spirit in the process of addressing us through the Bible; hence, the effect on us— having been addressed by the Spirit through the Bible. Grenz thus postulates that through the medium of Scripture, "*the Spirit creates 'world.'*"<sup>76</sup> Grenz also utilised Paul Ricoeur's thesis that "the meaning of a text always points beyond itself— it is not behind the text, but in front of it," to moreover suggest that through our reading of Scripture, the Spirit seeks to point us towards another "possible world."<sup>77</sup> This "possible world" which the Spirit seeks to create then is— "the eschatological world God intends for creation as disclosed in the text."<sup>78</sup> Hence, the Spirit uses the Scriptures to project before us before us, a new kind of "world"— meaning the "eschatological world" which God is still creating as envisioned through the biblical story of God's creative purposes towards creation.<sup>79</sup> This projection of God's coming new world thus also provides us as Christians, our "interpretive framework" for the shaping of our communal life and identity according to the moral and eschatological shape of God's new creation.<sup>80</sup> To conclude then, Grenz argues that in projecting God's new world before us, the Spirit seeks to transport us "into the text" itself, that is, its story-world.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, "The Spirit and the Word: The World-Creating Function of the Text," *Theology Today* 57, no. 3 (October 2000): 363; citing Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge," *Sociology and Social Research* 47 (1963): 421.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 363; quoting Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Forth Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p. 87.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 357, 361-365.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 362, 367-369; Grenz also calls this, the core "paradigmatic events" of Scripture. See *ibid.*, 365-366.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

I find Grenz' analysis towards the "world-creating" function of Scripture highly helpful towards understanding faith as *visio*— a way of seeing both God's coming new world, and its presence even now as a place where the Spirit transforms us into God's likeness revealed in the pattern of Jesus. Hence, when the Holy Spirit grants us such *visio*, He prompts us to come before the Father, asking Him to pour out His Spirit— that He may endow us to speak a better dream of the new world He is bringing to pass, even as the Spirit baptises afresh into the story-world of Jesus. Hence, Spirit and Word again unveil to us new realities, as see radical disjunctions between prevailing orders and the order that is breaking into the present— which is the kingdom of God. Therefore, by the power of the Spirit given through Pentecostal experiences of Spirit-baptism, we thus speak forth liberation to all humanity, and even to the whole creation.

I will now briefly describe how *lectio divina* presumes and works through the patristic and medieval "four-fold sense" of Scripture for the Bible reader's spiritual formation. The four-fold sense is commonly defined as the literal (historical sense), allegorical (christological sense), tropological (moral / behavioural sense) and anagogical (eschatological / mystical sense) senses. The following well-known medieval couplet provides a common understanding of the four senses: "The letter teaches what happened; the allegorical sense what to believe; the moral sense what to do, the anagogical sense where to direct our course" (*Lettera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria; moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia*).<sup>82</sup>

Recognising the literal sense at the base, medieval spirituality correlated the other three senses to formation of the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love. The allegorical sense thus corresponds to the virtue of faith; the tropological sense to the virtue of love; and the anagogical sense to the virtue of hope.<sup>83</sup> The four-step *lectio divina* is often moreover correlated with the four-fold Scripture sense, resulting in a spiralling and formative journey towards "union with God— although again, any of the reading steps or "senses" can function at the forefront of a sequence.<sup>84</sup> The following chart thus conceptualises a helpful model.

---

<sup>82</sup> Both patristic and medieval exegesis however, demonstrates variation on prioritisation and sequence of the four senses; Chase, *Contemplation and Compassion*, 65, n. 3.

<sup>83</sup> David C. Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 29.

<sup>84</sup> Casey, *Sacred Reading*, p. 93.

<i>Lectio Divina</i>		Four-fold sense	Theological aims (Spiritual theology)	Ultimate Aim
			<b>Formation of Christian identity</b>	<b>Union with God</b> <i>Theosis</i> , divinisation
1.	<i>Lectio</i>	Literal	<i>Understanding</i> texts in the Christian meta-story	
			<b>Forming of Theological Virtues</b>	
2.	<i>Meditatio</i>	Allegorical	Faith	
3.	<i>Oratio</i>	Tropological	Love	
4.	<i>Contemplatio</i>	Anagogical	Hope	

Coming to the heart of my proposal for a Pentecostal *lex legendi* (“rule of reading”) and hence *lectio divina*, I shall now more specifically delineate how we can appropriate the fourfold Scripture sense presumed in classical/medieval practices of spiritual theology, to a constructivist-narrative understanding of the threefold Pentecostal soteriological experience(s) of redemption, sanctification, and Spirit baptism. Hence, I will more thereby suggest that this fourfold Scripture sense can structure the Bible reader’s lifelong journey through the threefold Pentecostal soteriological experience(s) of redemption, sanctification, and Spirit baptism.

To do this I shall return now to Coulter’s suggestion that at the theological core of Pentecostalism is a dynamic view of revelation, because this leads him to conclude that both early Pentecostals and medieval interpreters together share a common understanding that “different levels of meaning” exists within the biblical texts, which necessitates, “an experience of the Spirit.”<sup>85</sup> Crucial to Coulter’s argument is an earlier essay by Latin American theological José Bonino who noted close similarities between medieval Bible interpretation according to the fourfold sense and early Pentecostal Bible readings, which also evidence a “multilevel hermeneutic” (e.g., early issues of *The Apostolic Faith*, *The Evening Light*, and the *Church of God Evangel*). Bonino thus proposed that Pentecostals again, from reflection on the medieval fourfold sense, develop a “multilevel hermeneutic” that would better complement Pentecostal sensibilities about revelation than what is found in mainstream Evangelical hermeneutics.<sup>86</sup> There is moreover

<sup>85</sup> Coulter, “What Meaneth This?” 61.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 56-58; citing José Bonino, “Changing Paradigms: A Response,” in Murray A. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen, *Globalisation of Pentecostalism: A*

another important feature to Coulter's discussion, specifically pertaining to how early issues of *The Apostolic Faith* evidence a "multilevel hermeneutic" in their expositions of Bible texts. Some articles observe the early Pentecostal three-fold salvific scheme (justification, sanctification, Spirit-baptism) in consecutive meanings of Scripture, such as in studies of the three courts of the Old Testament Tabernacle (outer court, holy place, holy of holies).<sup>87</sup> Such early schemes thus again closely parallel the medieval characterisation of Christian life as a journey comprising stages of growth, corresponding to levels of Scriptural meaning. Coulter therefore argues that the ancient fourfold sense of Scripture and *lectio divina* practice, "provides a way of examining how Scripture functions for Pentecostals and one possible avenue for developing a Scripture principle" that deeply reflects and is informed by Pentecostal sensibilities about the relation between biblical revelation and spiritual experience.<sup>88</sup>

I am also drawing on Church of God theologian Steven Land's ground-breaking study on the Pentecostal three-fold blessing (redemption, sanctification, Spirit-baptism), albeit in a constructivist manner. To be more specific, while Land stresses these three Pentecostal crisis experiences as a "*via salutis*" rather than an "*ordo salutis*," he essentially presumes a maturational/linear perception of the Pentecostal threefold experience.<sup>89</sup> Hence, reflecting his Wesleyan-holiness perspective, Land did not wholly break from a strict ordering of these three salvific stages, which he moreover sought to schematise according to the "trinitarian dispensationalism" exemplified by Joachim of Fiore.<sup>90</sup>

What I am doing therefore is recalibrating Land's exposition of the Pentecostal *via salutis* according to a more constructivist understanding of the threefold Pentecostal experience. I have comprehensively explicated this thesis in my article, "The *Pentecostal Triple Way*: An Ecumenical Model of the Pentecostal *Via Salutis* and Soteriological Experience."<sup>91</sup> Here I will just briefly note that that constructivism is an ancient though contemporary meta-theoretical perspective that emphasises construction of life and/or meaning through ordering and patterning processes.

---

*Religion Made to Travel* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Publishing Co., 1999), 117-119.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 58f; citing: Anonymous, "The Baptism with the Holy Ghost Foreshadowed," *The Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 4 (1906), 2; Anonymous, "Salvation According to the True Tabernacle," *The Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 10 (1907), 3.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>89</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 67f, 112, 114, 173, 200.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-198; *idem*, "The Triune Center: Wesleyans and Pentecostals Together in Mission," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34, no. 1 (1999): pp. 83-100 (pp. 85, 89); published simultaneously in *Pneuma* 21, no. 2 (1999): pp. 199-214.

<sup>91</sup> Monte Lee Rice, "The *Pentecostal Triple Way*: An Ecumenical Model of the Pentecostal *Via Salutis* and Soteriological Experience," in *A Future for Holiness: Pentecostal Explorations*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2013), 145-170.

Constructivist psychology thus stresses that people construct meaning to their lives through discovering patterns that provide coherence to their life experiences.<sup>92</sup> While some ancient Christian understandings of spiritual formation followed maturational/linear schemes, others approached spiritual formation in rather a more constructivist manner, thus appreciating the dynamics of purgation, illumination, and union as three concurrent, repeatable and spiralling processes leading towards spiritual and life maturity.<sup>93</sup>

Having now established a constructivist understanding of the Pentecostal threefold salvific experience, I can now more specifically appropriate to this discussion, Land's thesis that Pentecostal three-fold blessing consistently issues in he calls the "apocalyptic affections." These comprise the following triad of affections: gratitude as praise-thanksgiving" (issuing from redemptive experiences); the blessing of "compassion as love-longing" (issuing from sanctifying experiences); and "courage as confidence-hope" (issuing from Spirit-baptism experiences). Land characterises these affections as "apocalyptic affections," given that "they are constituted by the distinctive eschatological reality and vision" of Pentecostal spirituality.<sup>94</sup>

Land also suggests that the three Pentecostal apocalyptic affections issue into what he identifies as the "three forms" of "Pentecostal prayer." Hence, prayer "with words understood" issues from the affection of "gratitude," which in turn corresponds with the blessing of regeneration. Second is prayer "without words" which issues from the affection of "compassion," which includes "sighs, groans, and laughter) and corresponds with the blessing of sanctification. The third form of prayer is with "words not understood," which Land associates foremost with "speaking in tongues." Being an "eschatological speech," tongues speech thus signifies "that the power of the end is breaking in now." Tongues speech thus issues from the affection of courage, which corresponds with the blessing of Spirit-baptism. In signifying the hope of Jesus' soon coming, we may thus clarify this affection as the courage of prophetic witness to the coming of the kingdom, given through experiences of Spirit baptism."<sup>95</sup>

Therefore, Land's model of the Pentecostal via salutis may lead us to a Pentecostal understanding of *lectio divina* according to the following scheme, which also reflects Archer's arguments concerning the identity-forming of a tradition's (in this case,

---

<sup>92</sup> Michael J. Mahoney and Donald K. Granvold, "Constructivism and Psychotherapy," *World Psychiatry* 4 no. 2 (June 2005): 74-75.

<sup>93</sup> Robert Davis Hughes III, "The Holy Spirit in Christian Spirituality," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2005), 213, 220. For an Eastern Orthodox constructivist approach see Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 106-107.

<sup>94</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 47, 134-135, 163, 183.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 139f, 154, 155, 170-171.

Pentecostal tradition) “Central Narrative Convictions” for guiding a community’s reading of Scripture in manners that promote, as Chan stresses, a traditioning process.

<i>Lectio Divina</i>	Four-fold sense	Theological aims	Pentecostal <i>via salutis</i>	Apocalyptic affections	Pentecostal prayer
<i>Lectio</i>	Literal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity-formation via the Christian story.</li> <li>• Identity-formation via the Pentecostal tradition.</li> </ul>			
<i>Meditatio</i>	Allegorical	Faith	Redemption	Gratitude”	Words understood
<i>Oratio</i>	Tropological	Love	Sanctification	Compassion	Without words
<i>Contemplatio</i>	Anagogical	Hope	Spirit-baptism	Courage	Tongues speech

### The Threefold Cord that ties together a Pentecostal *Lectio Divina*

I shall now delineate how these contours of a Pentecostal form of *lectio divina* may help Pentecostals identify and utilise theological hermeneutics that would best foster the Pentecostal missiological giftedness and hence the pluralising of Pentecostalism(s) worldwide. I will do so by articulating what I shall call the Triune *cord* of Pentecostal *lectio divina*. Here I shall frame this proposal for a Pentecostal *lectio divina* as a theological hermeneutic, which I shall describe using the metaphor of a “threefold cord.” Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12 reads, “Two are better than one;” but— “a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12). In good Pentecostal fashion of finding multiple meanings in the text, may I suggest here, an allusion to God’s triune nature, and hence— the trinitarian shape of all good theology and hermeneutics. As earlier mentioned, recent Pentecostal hermeneutical models articulating theological methods congruent to Pentecostal spirituality and affirm theological pluralism— consistently seek a trinitarian shape. Hence, these models consistently strive towards a triad of hermeneutical domains. Following are three theological-hermeneutical domains inferred through this Pentecostal *lectio divina* model of Pentecostal-theological hermeneutics.

#### 1. *Embrace the Many Tongues of Pentecost*

First, this proposal towards a Pentecostal form of *lectio divina* seeks to nurture in Bible readers appreciation towards and epistemological capacity for embracing the many tongues of Pentecost. More specifically, it thus inculcates readers with the capacity to negotiate the reality of hermeneutical diversity evident not only in the Church Catholic, but within global Pentecostalism.



This involves a reading of the Pentecost event as the giving of ever-expanding tongues and gifts to humankind for the renewing of creation. In this sense, the many tongues of Pentecost signifies the ongoing pluralization of locally gifted, interpretive communities. Over the past decade or so, such a reading has been popularized by Pentecostal theologians who are affirming hermeneutical diversity as integral to the blessing of Pentecost and hence, Pentecostalism.<sup>96</sup> For example, Smith has proposed a “creational-pneumatic hermeneutic,” which he anchors to the “original goodness of creation: a creation where many flowers bloom and many voices are heard, where God is praised by a multitude . . . singing songs in a diversity of tongues, even worshiping through a diversity of theologies.”<sup>97</sup>

Most helpful towards recognising this polyphonic perspectivalism that characterises the Pentecostal missional giftedness, is Louise William Oliverio Jr’s 2012 published work, *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition, A Typological Account*. One weakness to Oliverio’s taxonomy is that he admittedly works largely from North American Classical Pentecostal historiography. However, the interdependence between globalisation and globally diverse local Pentecostalism worldwide (“glocalization of Pentecostalism”), suggests that his taxonomy comprises sufficient broadness for assessing emerging and local Pentecostal hermeneutical models worldwide.<sup>98</sup> Oliverio identifies five types of historical Pentecostal hermeneutics: 1. the “original classical pentecostal hermeneutic”; 2. the “early evangelical-pentecostal hermeneutic”; 3. the “contemporary evangelical-pentecostal hermeneutic”; 4. the “contextual-pentecostal hermeneutic”; and 5. the “ecumenical-pentecostal hermeneutic.”<sup>99</sup> Two of Oliverio’s conclusions are especially relevant here. First is that the taxonomy demonstrates a going maturing of “Classical Pentecostal theology” from analysis of these historical hermeneutical paradigms.<sup>100</sup> Second is that original interpretive and theological diversity that marked nascent early Classical Pentecostalism, and global Pentecostalism today leads Oliverio to propose a “hermeneutical realism’ for Pentecostal theological hermeneutics.”<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 226-231; Smith, Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic*, 2nd. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000, 2012), 31-32, 196-197; Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 47, 103.

<sup>97</sup> Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 32.

<sup>98</sup> Vondey, *Pentecostalism*, 25.

<sup>99</sup> Louis William Oliverio Jr., *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 15-17.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Oliverio reviews how the latter part of the 1990's up to our present day, marks emergence of the "contextual-pentecostal hermeneutic," via scholars such as Yong, Smith, and Archer. This hermeneutical paradigm stresses and affirms the reader's contextual situation (especially the cultural-linguistic context) towards readings of Scripture, and the formative role this context plays towards theologising. This leads also towards an appreciation for hermeneutical diversity, which also characterises the works of Yong, Smith, and Archer.<sup>102</sup> Oliverio also identifies this phase as demarking the beginning of a truly authentic Pentecostal manner of theologizing.<sup>103</sup> Oliverio argues that besides its stress on "pneumatic interpretation,"<sup>104</sup> he also notes that this hermeneutic appreciates a crucial aspect hermeneutical motif that we find integrative to global Pentecostalism and its roots worldwide, is theological diversity.<sup>105</sup> Oliverio frames this reality within the broader contours of the Church Catholic as well as the polyvalent perspectives that comprise human situation-ness, and the theological diversity we find in Scripture. In doing so, he concludes his taxonomy by proposing a Pentecostal "hermeneutical realism," which affirms theological diversity as integral to Pentecostal tradition.<sup>106</sup>

## 2. *Make Spiritual Formation the Interpretive Aim*

The second cord presumed in this Pentecostal form of *lectio divina* is that it makes spiritual formation the primary interpretive aim of Bible reading. I earlier discussed how the qualitative distinctives of Pentecostal Bible reading include relevance to daily life needs through spiritual revelation, presumed polyvalence of meaning to biblical texts, and existential identity within the biblical story-world. Yet the greater stress in classical Christian reading, and what this renewed Pentecostal appreciation towards theological diversity entails— are theological reading of Scripture nuanced even more towards moral and spiritual formation (*renovatio*). In the classical understanding of "spiritual theology," this meant seeking out methods of Scripture reading that foster maturity along the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. This conviction reinforces Land's thesis that Pentecostal spirituality eschatologically fuelled by our "passion for the yet coming fullness of God's kingdom further translates the theological virtues into the

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 16, 316.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 7, 10-11.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 341; see also Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 19-20, 159-161.

three “Pentecostal affections.”<sup>107</sup> Only through this hermeneutical aim can we negotiate the interpretive diversity that signifies the many tongues of Pentecost.

### 3. *Tie in the Hermeneutic of Love*

Finally, this form of Pentecostal *lectio divina* suggests that we should always tie in to our theological readings of Scripture, the hermeneutical cord of love— hence, a “hermeneutic of charity.” To effectively delineate this third cord, I shall frame it within several of my previous themes, namely, the missional giftedness of global Pentecostalism, the Pentecostal dynamic view of Scripture, traditional Pentecostal assumptions about “multiple levels” of Bible text meanings and thus indeterminate meanings of Scripture, and the “trinitarian-ontology of Scripture.” Another crucial theme I had not yet brought into this discussion, is the seminal Pentecostal understanding of Spirit baptism as a baptism into God’s love. I shall argue that these themes altogether deeply necessitate that we retrieve and incorporate as a hermeneutical guide within this Pentecostal form of *lectio divina*, Augustine’s hermeneutic of charity.

This suggestion thus reflects Work’s own conclusion that Augustine’s hermeneutic of love provides us a perennial guiding hermeneutic over the indeterminate meanings of Scripture. Augustine’s hermeneutic of love moreover reflects on one hand his own ontological understanding of Scripture and on the other, his salvific ordering of literal to spiritual meanings of Scripture as an *ordo salutis*, typifying the believer’s journey towards union with God. Hence, Work concludes the final section of his final chapter as, “The Voyage Home: Scripture’s Role in Personal Salvation.” Following Augustine, Work thus argues that it is possible to salvifically understand and order multiple meanings of Scripture, and that the key to this is a hermeneutic of charity, in which our building up in love becomes the aim of all Scripture reading.<sup>108</sup>

Crucial to Work’s reflections on Augustine’s hermeneutic of love is a statement from his book, *On Christian Doctrine*, which reads: “Whoever finds a lesson [in Scripture] useful to the building of charity, even though he has not said what the author may be shown to have intended in that place, has not been deceived.”<sup>109</sup> Augustine clarifies the meaning of “charity” as comprising both

---

<sup>107</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 47, 134-135, 163, 183.

<sup>108</sup> Work, *Living and Active*, 304.

<sup>109</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 36:40, in John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne, eds., *Late Have I Loved Thee: Selected Writings of Saint Augustine on Love* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc.; Vintage Spiritual Classics, 2006), 85; Work, *Living and Active*, p. 58.

“love of God” and one’s “neighbour.” Hence, he argued that if reading a text according to its literal intent fails to achieve a building up in this “twofold love,” then the Bible reader “does not yet understand” the text “as he ought.”<sup>110</sup> He therefore concludes that a true reading of Scripture requires us to know that the aim of all Bible reading is that the Holy Spirit may form us into the love of God.<sup>111</sup> Work therefore points out how for Augustine, “authorial intent” is certainly “determinative” (e.g., “anyone who understands in the Scriptures something other than that intended by theme is deceived; Yet Augustine nonetheless affirmed multiple meanings that insofar as that lead to “right faith;” hence, “the building of charity.”<sup>112</sup> Work finally concludes that ultimately, justification for Augustine’s hermeneutic of love lies in the true aim of Church, which is “charity.”<sup>113</sup>

Work also suggests in the conclusion of his book, that a “Trinitarian ontology of Scripture” inevitably accounts for the diversity of church traditions and spiritualities that comprise the Church, and—the diversity of biblical textual traditions and Bible translations arises from these diverse church traditions and spiritualities. Moreover, both of these diversities are ultimately rooted in the plurality evoked through the *perichoretic* example of God as Trinity. Work defines this thesis as a “phenomenology of churchly biblical interpretation.”<sup>114</sup> Work moreover grounds this phenomenology in the diverse theological traditions, which comprise the New Testament, which thereby already mirrors God’s *perichoretic* example as Trinity.

Work then suggests that it is this diversity in turn which ultimately leads to a diversity of Bible translations, traditions of interpretation, liturgies, and finally, hence, “differing Scriptures”—and fortunately, this is happening through the ongoing blossoming of ecumenical dialogue.<sup>115</sup> Hence, Work infers that we should appreciate our diverse approaches to Bible translations and their resultant textual differences as “together . . . constitutive of Scripture’s status as the Church’s Scripture.”<sup>116</sup> Following through with Work’s ramifications of the Bible’s “Trinitarian ontology,” I am therefore seeking through this construal of a Pentecostal form of *lectio divina*, to encourage Pentecostals towards an ecumenical posture that seeks out resources amongst the spiritual diversities that comprise the Church Catholic, which can enrich Pentecostal tradition and spirituality. As we find theological resources congruent to Pentecostal spirituality, such as the ancient practice

---

<sup>110</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 36:40; in *Late Have I Loved Thee*, 85.

<sup>111</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 40:44; in *Late Have I Loved Thee*, 85.

<sup>112</sup> Work, *Living and Active*, 58.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>115</sup> Work, *Living and Active*, 262, 295.

<sup>116</sup> Work, *Living and Active*, 297.

of *lectio divina*, this endeavour in turn deepens our identity as a distinctive spiritual tradition, that we in turn may better minister back to the Church Catholic our own unique gifts of the Spirit.

Recent Pentecostal theological studies models that affirm hermeneutical diversity as intrinsic to God's intent for human community, consistently also affirm Augustine's "love hermeneutic" as suggesting the best way forward for theologically appreciating interpretive diversity.<sup>117</sup> I shall briefly survey three relevant theological works, in order to reiterate that the Spirit's aim towards perfecting us in the love of God should also hermeneutically guide a Pentecostal reading of the Bible. First to note was Land's 1993 ground-breaking work, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, in which he argued that "the unfinished theological task of Pentecostalism" was to integrate the "language of holiness and the language of power," on the premise that it is both "a theological and pastoral mistake to dichotomize . . . love and power."<sup>118</sup> To be sure, Land's thesis reflected his Wesleyan-Pentecostal perspective; yet several years ago Macchia, representing the more Keswickian oriented wing of Pentecostalism (Assemblies of God) provided a substantial theological work (*Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*) on Spirit baptism, in which he pursued Land's call for theological integration between the imageries of love and power. Macchia thus delineated a Pentecostal theology of Spirit-baptism arguing that if we presume love as the essence of God, then Spirit baptism is indeed "a baptism into divine love," which comprises a "prophetic call" towards God's love, empathy and mission towards the world.<sup>119</sup> Hence, the "power" of God's Spirit poured out on us through experiences of Spirit baptism, is nothing less that "the power of divine love."<sup>120</sup>

The third major work to note is Yong's (also representing an AG background) recently published work, *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace*. In this work, Yong primarily argues that intrinsic to Pentecostal spirituality, theology, and experience are "untapped resources" for constructing a theology of love (e.g., "godly love") with particular reference to "its redemptive and transformative power."<sup>121</sup> Yet while God has deeply embedded Pentecostal tradition and spirituality with these resources from the early 20th century beginnings of the tradition, Yong analyzes how

---

<sup>117</sup> Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 138f; Oliverio, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 361; Work, *Living and Active*, 304.

<sup>118</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 11.

<sup>119</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 63, 258, 271.

<sup>120</sup> Macchia, "The Church of the Latter Rain: The Church and Eschatology in Pentecostal Perspective," in *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel*, ed. John Christopher Thomas. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 252; idem, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 18.

<sup>121</sup> Yong, *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), x.

and why Pentecostals have too often, to their own detriment, subsumed them under the imagery of “power.”<sup>122</sup> Even more relevant to this discussion is that Yong begins his work by surveying the work of three theologians who have developed expansive “pneumatologies of love; namely, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Paul Tillich.<sup>123</sup> Yong thus helps us appreciate how Augustine’s hermeneutic of love reflects his broader and well known pneumatology of love— thereby also granting us further grounds for appreciating the relevancy of Augustine’s hermeneutic within a distinctively Pentecostal understanding and approach to Scripture, biblical interpretation, and revelation. Therefore, a hermeneutic of love which recognises our building up into the love of God as an ultimate aim of Bible reading, moreover serves to substantiate growing awareness in Pentecostal theology that pentecostal experiences of Spirit baptism should be appreciated as outpourings of God’s love for missional empowerment

### Conclusion

To conclude, this proposal for a Pentecostal “rule of reading” (*lex Legendi*) comprising a distinctive Pentecostal form of *lectio divina*, presumes that the revelational dynamism intrinsic to Pentecostal missional giftedness is an eschata-passioned, polyphonic perspectivalism that is fuelled by the many flaming, “interpretive tongues” emerging from Pentecostal experiences of Spirit baptism. Hence, this construal of Pentecostal Bible reading and salvific formation also suggests a salvific roles which global hermeneutical pluralism serves within God’s economy of cosmic salvation, and conversely a strong soteriological doctrine of Scripture informed by Pentecostal nuances. Following the lead of Miroslav Volf, I would moreover suggest then, that an important pedagogical aim of Pentecostal theological hermeneutic is to foster formation of “catholic” churches and people, open to gifts from the Spirit through the pluralities of human culture. Hence, we foster “catholic” people in the truest sense of the word: those whom the Spirit of Pentecost is forming in the likeness of the Triune God.<sup>124</sup>

As catholic people growing in the likeness of the Triune fellowship, we thus grow away from binary to triadic expressions of godly truth and wisdom, even as we live in a world deeply and

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., chapter 1.

<sup>124</sup> Volf (*Exclusion and Embrace*, 50-32, 129-131; idem, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998], 211-212, 276-278, 281) defines “catholic personalities” and “catholic communities” as proleptic “microcosms” of God’s renewed creation.

always easily fractured through binary and hence polarizing construals of issues, truth, and perceptions of reality. Hence, we learn that the sacred analogy of Trinity reveals that "two" is incomplete for divine community. There has to be a third, to make possible the sharing and receiving of love. There moreover has to be a "third" for generating new life, new creations, new beginnings, new life, new destinies, new dreams and new visions. Hence, we appreciate the Holy Spirit as the One who stands in the middle and calls us forward into new life and beginnings, and new meanings—which is why the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. The Spirit is therefore the Love of God who leads us away from the deadening syndrome of bifurcation, the dividing into oppositions that blind us from seeing alternatives that can forge better paths forward. These themes also point out to us how and why the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of fellowship, for He is the one who reveals to polarised people divided along polarised meanings of the text— "third" and better ways of moving forward into the future of God's new creation.

I believe that through a Pentecostal practice of *lectio divina* as I have articulated, serves to posture people before the Spirit who orders people and communities into the generative wisdom of God (*sacra sapientia*) along the way of salvation. With reference to our historical setting, through such spiritual formation the Spirit thus endows us towards generative-emergent theological reflection, that we may bridge 21st century challenges to human and planetary flourishing. Formation of such people thus signifies restoration into our primal human vocation towards generating, prophesying and the making of new worlds congruent to God's eschatological renewing of creation. In so doing, we labor with God for the soon coming of His kingdom— where God's all creatures receive gifted space and His blessing to "speak, sing, and dance in a multivalent chorus of tongues."<sup>125</sup> May we therefore promote Pentecostal spirituality throughout the world, thus fostering ongoing pluralities of local gifted tongues— meaning the planting of local Pentecostal "hermeneutical communities" wherever new horizons emerge as we partner with God in His mission towards the renewing of creation.

---

<sup>125</sup> Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 196-197.

**About the Author**

Monte Lee Rice is a Singapore based Pentecostal minister who has served on the pastoral staff of both mega and small churches in both the Assemblies of God and Anglican tradition. He has also ministered widely throughout West and East Africa. He graduated from Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (Baguio, Philippines) in 2002 with a M.Div. (summa cum laude, theology). He also has a M.A. in New Testament Studies from the Mennonite Brethren Bible Seminary (2002; Fresno, California, USA).



## Bibliography

- Albrecht, Daniel E. "Pentecostal Spirituality: Looking Through the Lens of Ritual." *Pneuma* 14, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 107–125.
- Anderson, Allan. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Anonymous. "Salvation According to the True Tabernacle." *The Apostolic Faith*, 1907.
- . "The Baptism with the Holy Ghost Foreshadowed." *The Apostolic Faith*, 1906.
- Archer, Kenneth J. *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture, and Community*. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009.
- Bayer, Oswald. "Hermeneutical Theology." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56, no. 2 (2003): 131–147.  
doi:10.1017/S0036930603001017.
- Borg, Marcus J. *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003.
- Bradt, Kevin M. *Story as a Way of Knowing*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1997.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001.
- Burgess, Stanley M, and Eduard M. van der Maas, eds. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Burrows, Mark S. "'To Taste with the Heart': Allegory, Poetics, and the Deep Reading of Scripture." *Interpretation* 56, no. 2 (2002): 168–80.
- Camery-Hoggatt, Jerry. "The Word of God from Living Voices: Orality and Literacy in the Pentecostal Tradition." *Pneuma* 27, no. 2 (2005): 225–255.
- Casey, Michael. *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*. Liguori, MO: Triumph Books, 1996.
- Chan, Simon. *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006.
- . *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Chase, Steven. *Contemplation and Compassion: The Victorine Tradition*. Traditions of Christian Spirituality. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.
- Coulter, Dale M. "What Meaneth This? Pentecostals and Theological Inquiry." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10, no. 1 (2001): 38–64.
- Davies, Andrew. "What Does It Mean to Read the Bible as A

- Pentecostal?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18, no. 2 (2009).
- De Lubac, Henri. "Spiritual Understanding." In *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, edited by Stephen E. Fowl, translated by Luke O'Neill. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1997.
- Grenz, Stanley J. "The Spirit and the Word The World-Creating Function of the Text." *Theology Today* 57, no. 3 (October 2000): 357–374.
- Grenz, Stanley J. (Stanley James), and John R. Franke. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. 1st ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Hocken, Peter. *The Glory and the Shame: Reflections on the 20th-Century Outpouring of the Holy Spirit*. Surry, UK: Eagle, 1994.
- Hollenweger, Walter J. *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997.
- Hughes III, Robert Davis. "The Holy Spirit in Christian Spirituality." In *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Arthur G. Holder, 207–222. Blackwell Companions to Religion. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2005.
- Irvin, Dale T. "Pentecostal Historiography and Global Christianity: Rethinking the Question of Origins." *Pneuma* 27, no. 1 (2005): 35–50.
- Land, Steven J. *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*. Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 1. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.
- Land, Steven J. "The Triune Center: Wesleyans and Pentecostals Together in Mission." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34, no. 1 (n.d.): 83–100.
- Macchia, Frank D. *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
- Macchia, Frank D. "The Church of the Latter Rain: The Church and Eschatology in Pentecostal Perspective." In *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel*, edited by John Christopher Thomas. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010.
- Mahoney, Michael J., and Donald K. Granvold. "Constructivism and Psychotherapy." *World Psychiatry* 4, no. 2 (June 2005): 74–77.
- Mckay, John. "When the Veil Is Taken Away: The Impact of Prophetic Experience On Biblical Interpretation." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2, no. 5 (1994): 17–40.
- Oden, Thomas C. *Life in the Spirit*. Vol. 3. 1st ed. Systematic Theology. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992.
- Oliverio, L. William. *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

- Raschke, Carl A. *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Rice, Monte Lee. "The Pentecostal Triple Way: An Ecumenical Model of the Pentecostal Via Salutis and Soteriological Experience." In *A Future for Holiness: Pentecostal Explorations*, edited by Lee Roy Martin, 145–170. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2013.
- Smith, James K. A. *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Smith, James K. A. *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*. Pentecostal Manifestos. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010.
- Steinmetz, David C. "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis." In *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, edited by Stephen E Fowl. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1997.
- Tate, W. Randolph. *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*. Revised Edition. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997.
- Volf, Miroslav. *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.
- . *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Vondey, Wolfgang. *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010.
- . *Pentecostalism. A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013.
- Ware, Kallistos. *The Orthodox Way*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995.
- Webber, Robert. *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.
- . *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006.
- Work, Telford. *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation*. Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 2002.
- Yong, Amos. *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012.
- . *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002.