

CHAPTER 2: TOWARD A PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTIC OF THE FORMER PROPHETS

Introduction

Much has already been written concerning the characteristics of Pentecostals both historical and contemporary that does not bear repeating but impacts what follows.¹ There is a growing corpus of Pentecostal scholarship working on the topic of Pentecostal hermeneutics in general and applied.² What is offered here is simply another voice added to the oeuvre of that movement from the earliest 'Bible Reading Method' to the triadic approach of contemporary Pentecostals. This movement is offered as *entre* to the methodology utilized in the interpretation of the Spirit in the

¹ V. Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI, 1971); W.J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988); H. Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995); A. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); C.M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

² An excellent edited compilation of fourteen articles previously published by the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* on the topic of Pentecost hermeneutics which includes an introduction by the editor is L.R. Martin, ed., *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). The following indicates numerous monographs which cover this topic in various fashions and to varying degrees. R. Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 1995); L.R. McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995; Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009); K.J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (JPTSUP 28; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004); R. Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation* (JPTSUP 30; Blandford Forum: Deo Pub, 2005); A. Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006); L.R. Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God: A Pentecostal Hearing of the Book of Judges* (JPTSUP 32; Blandford Forum: Deo, 2008); B.T. Noel, *Pentecostal and Postmodern Hermeneutics: Comparisons and Contemporary Impact* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2010); J. Grey, *Three's a Crowd: Pentecostalism, Hermeneutics, and the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011); C.E.W. Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper*; L.W. Oliverio, *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition A Typological Account* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); C.E.W. Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation: Vocation, Holiness, and Scripture* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2015); M.L. Archer, 'I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day'.

Former Prophets in chapters four through seven following the history of effects offered by the study of the early Pentecostal periodicals in the immediate following chapter. The method utilized for this study functions to create a phenomenological experience³ intended to call for Pentecostal expressions of a Pentecostal hermeneutic. The methodology is thus not simply presented, but serves as an invitation to enter into the experience of Pentecostals as one both interpreting and being interpreted.⁴ As such, the terms read(ing) and hear(ing) are used interchangeably throughout this proposal in order to highlight the activities of the community in each given context. They are not meant to be separable as acts as such by those seeking to be faithful interpreters. Reading, in this context, requires hearing what is written as text. Hearing happens both textually and extra-textually and implies faith-filled and faithful obedience as genuine hearing.⁵

Pentecostal Interpretations: The Sound of Many Voices

While there is no singular Pentecostal hermeneutic (nor a singular definition of ‘Pentecostal’), and some still persist in questioning whether there should be any, there are noticeable trends toward more clearly defined Pentecostal hermeneutics while still ‘in the making’.⁶ Perhaps this ‘still in the making’ is part and parcel of the Pentecostal’s *sanctified/sanctifying* interpretation.⁷ Claims to any form of Pentecostal hermeneutics

³ I owe this insightful idea to Chris Rouse who shared it at a PhD seminar in Cleveland, TN on November 17, 2015.

⁴ Making reference to an uncited comment by G. Fee, Pentecostals are noted to ‘exegete their experience’ per S.R. Graham, ‘“Thus Saith the Lord’: Biblical Hermeneutics in the Early Pentecostal Movement’, *Ex Auditu* 12 (1996), pp. 121-35 (128).

⁵ The emphasis upon the ‘hearing’ of the text in this fashion is used to great effect following the textual cues of Judges by L.R. Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*.

⁶ V.-M. Kärkäinen, ‘Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Making: On the Way from Fundamentalism to Postmodernism’, *JEPTA* 18 (1998), pp. 76-115 (96).

⁷ Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation*.

must admit no 'claim to possess a pristine and qualitatively unique methodology'.⁸ Instead, every hermeneutical approach (including those which might be called Pentecostal) is distinguished 'by the presuppositions on which they build, the questions that they privilege, the interpretive tools they prefer, and the texts to which they attend'.⁹ Such a hermeneutical approach is perhaps properly always in the making as an improvisational performance of the Word by the Spirit within the community. Several broad streams of historical development within the Pentecostal community's hermeneutics have been outlined elsewhere. V.-M. Kärkäinnen notes four broad movements: an 'Oral pre-reflexive stage', a trending toward a Fundamentalist and dispensational bent along with Evangelicalism, a 'quest for a distinctive pneumatic exegesis', and finally an 'Emerging post-modern' movement.¹⁰

The earliest stage was known for its 'populist hermeneutic'¹¹ that gave emphasis as often as possible to a literalizing of the text of Scripture and a Spirit-inspired interpretation. From the side of the early Pentecostals a positive self-claim about their hermeneutics noted they used what was termed the 'Bible Reading Method'.¹² This earliest strand of Pentecostal hermeneutics finds its many voices in the following chapter which is concerned with offering a *Wirkungsgeschichte* toward a Pentecostal reading of the Spirit in the Former Prophets. However, it should be noted that one primary contribution to the methodology proposed herein concerns the close literary reading of the texts of Scripture which was notably also a part of the 'Bible Reading Method' of this early reading of Pentecostals.¹³

⁸ S.A. Ellington, 'Locating Pentecostals at the Hermeneutical Round Table', *JPT* 22 (2013), pp. 206-25 (207).

⁹ Ellington, 'Locating Pentecostals', p. 207.

¹⁰ Kärkäinnen, 'Pentecostal Hermeneutics', p. 77.

¹¹ Graham, "'Thus Saith the Lord'", pp. 121-35.

¹² Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, pp. 99-127.

¹³ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, pp. 221-23.

In the second and third hermeneutical movements, several proposals for hermeneutical approaches by Pentecostals for Pentecostals have been made that seem to borrow more heavily from traditional Evangelical notions of authorial intent for discerning meaning. G. Fee best represents this second approach as he argues for a Pentecostal hermeneutic which seeks authorial intent (divine and human), is Spirit-centered, and admits the tradition in which one reads the text. This methodology seems to belong within the broader 'Evangelical' tradition of interpretive methodologies.¹⁴ It seems to fail to appreciate the experiential nature of Pentecostal hermeneutics and seems rooted in more consistently modernistic and positivistic ideas of Biblical interpretation.¹⁵ Others have attempted to work out similar methodologies (the third movement), but with greater 'pneumatic' emphases in the interpretive processes that suggest the possibility that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit provides special interpretive insights, yet these do not seem to have been as widely accepted as Fee's.¹⁶

Of particular note is the triadic approach which seems to have arisen with the final so-called post-modern oriented movement.¹⁷ This triadic approach is proposed as Spirit, Word,¹⁸ and community. This movement¹⁹ may be best represented by the works

¹⁴ G.D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991); B.T. Noel, 'Gordon Fee and the Challenge to Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Thirty Years Later', *PNEUMA* 26.1 (2004), pp. 60-80 (63).

¹⁵ One notable early challenger of this methodological approach is offered by Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology*.

¹⁶ H.M. Ervin, 'Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option', *PNEUMA* 3 (Fall 1981), pp. 11-25; T.B. Cargal, 'Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and Hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age', *PNEUMA* 15.2 (Fall 1993), pp. 163-187; and F.L. Arrington, 'The Use of the Bible by Pentecostals', *Pneuma* 16.1 (1994), pp. 101-107. Ervin and Arrington are both specifically critiqued for an 'elitist' approach to Pentecostal hermeneutics by H.G. Purdy, *A Distinct Twenty-First Century Pentecostal Hermeneutic* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), pp. 111-112.

¹⁷ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*; Noel, *Pentecostal and Postmodern Hermeneutics*; and Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*.

¹⁸ In place of 'Word' might be 'Scripture' following the language of Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*. However, the preference for 'Word' has been chosen due to its greater ambiguity and more open-ended interpretive value.

of John Christopher Thomas,²⁰ Kenneth Archer,²¹ and Amos Yong.²² To call this movement 'post-modern' in orientation is only to recognize it shares numerous affinities with post-modernism over and against modernism. B.T. Noel has succinctly recounted this connection with regard to 'their rejection of the "hegemony of reason", openness to narratives, the role of community, and the essential function of experience in epistemology'.²³ This connection is not a wholesale embrace of post-modernity particularly as concerns the notion of the metanarrative. While post-modernism rejects any notion of a metanarrative, Pentecostals locate themselves within the metanarrative of salvation-history as encounter by the community in the Spirit-breathed Word.

Spirit

The Spirit belongs to the Lord and is Lord. The Spirit creates this community, giving it life and sharing its life. The Spirit speaks in and through the community and enables the community to hear that Word. It is the same Spirit which hovered over the waters of the great deep in the beginning. The same Spirit who empowered the saints of old to craft for, judge, deliver, and lead the community. This is the very Spirit that clothes champions to crush the enemies of tribal Israel and comes upon kings to lead the united people of Israel. This same Spirit sings through the strings of David before Saul and in the voices of the saints singing with words they have not been taught. This is the Spirit

¹⁹ The term of 'movement' is used because of the numbers of Biblical scholars following suit in this methodology both published and forthcoming: L.R. Martin, C.E.W. Green, M.L. Archer; and unpublished: K.R. Holley, J. Holley, D. Johnson, and S.G. Schumacher.

²⁰ J.C. Thomas, 'Women, Pentecostalism, and the Bible: An Experiment in Pentecostal Hermeneutics', *JPT* 5 (1994), pp. 41-56; and J.C. Thomas and K.E. Alexander, "And the Signs Are Following': Mark 16.9-20 – A Journey Into Pentecostal Hermeneutics', *JPT* 11.2 (2003), pp. 147-170.

²¹ K.J. Archer, 'Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect', *JPT* 8 (1996), pp. 63-81; *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*; and 'Pentecostal Story: The Hermeneutical Filter for the Making of Meaning', *PNEUMA* 26.1 (Spring 2004), pp. 36-59.

²² Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*.

²³ Noel, *Pentecostal and Postmodern Hermeneutics*, p. 9; Ellington also notes this connection of Noel's, 'Locating Pentecostals', p. 208.

of the LORD who carries out the words of the prophets and is apportioned to each as needed. This is the same Spirit who richly indwells the community transforming the members for the work of redemption. This is Spirit that both breathes the Word and enfleshes the Word for and in the community.

Word

This Word which was with God and is God, belongs also to the act and being of enscripturation where this Word finds testimony in Scripture: the Word of Scriptures and the Word of God. The Word, as Scriptures, offers the possibility of yet undiscovered meaning due to its open-endedness even within the canonical boundaries. It is thus a desirable feature of the written Word that is both functionally meta-narrative to the Community, but also supersedes the existence of any single community within a given socio-historical-cultural context. The Word offers the melody of the Spirit to be sung in the harmonies of the community.

This Word is both heard in Scripture and seen in heaven as the one who came down and is now seated at the right hand of the Father who will come again to judge the living and dead. This Word is both enscripturated and enfleshed. This Word is not simply a word spoken, but the Word speaking and answering.

The use of 'Word' in what occurs throughout this chapter is intentionally multifarious in order to allow for just such open ended readings offered by such a Pentecostal hermeneutic. It is intentionally not to be conflated only with Scripture, though it could never be considered as independent of the revelation of God in Scripture. It is also not only to be heard with regard to the eternal Son, but to that Word which has been given to the community (Israel and the Church) as the Spirit has inspired and made alive within that community. This Word belongs to this pneumatic community, but more significantly this community belongs to this pneumatic Word.

Community

The call for the community to hear what the Spirit is saying is not simply a call for the extant community or bodily community, but for those who have gone before. It is a call to hear along with the confessions and creeds of the Church. It is a call to hear along with the voices of the fathers and mothers of the Church, and the prophets and scribes of Israel. It is a call to hear along with the majority world Church. It is a call to hear along with the prophets and apostles, princes and paupers, the empowered and disempowered of the Church. And it is a call to hear along with the voices of the immediate congregation to which one belongs. This intentionally shifts 'the emphasis away from the individual hermeneut and her commitment to an acceptable and correctly applied method and place[s] primary emphasis upon the community as the spiritual cultural context in which interpretation takes place'.²⁴

A need for the community's communal function in hearing what the Spirit says (Word) has been demonstrated in the early years of the Pentecostal movement. The Oneness Pentecostal's rejection of tradition (e.g. the role of the confessions, creeds, Church Fathers) – in place of a populist interpretative method of me, my Bible, and the Spirit – allowed for a failure to hear with the Church what the Spirit had been saying.²⁵ Instead, Oneness Pentecostals presupposed a rejection of community hermeneutics critically appreciated. The simplified Bible reading method of the early Pentecostals supposed one only needed the Scriptures and the Spirit experienced in testifying power to vouchsafe an interpretation. While this method can (and should) be appreciated for its emphasis upon the Spirit and the Word, it fails to address the function of the community in a fuller fashion. However, contemporary forms of Pentecostal

²⁴ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, p. 213.

²⁵ Graham, "'Thus Saith the Lord'", pp. 128-33.

hermeneutics specifically seek to hear (and share in) the voice of the communion of saints.

A Pentecostal interpretation functions as a part of the guide to the interpretive choices for this reading of the Former Prophets. It bears pointing out that such a Pentecostal interpretation is not 'an imposition of a theological system or confessional grid onto the biblical text', nor 'an imposition of a general hermeneutic or theory of interpretation onto the biblical text', that is, 'a form of merely historical, literary, or sociological criticism preoccupied with (respectively) the world "behind," "of," or "in front of" the biblical text'.²⁶ 'A viable hermeneutic must deal responsibly with the apostolic witness of Scripture in terms of an apostolic experience, and in continuity with the Church's apostolic traditions'.²⁷ It is this transformative interplay of reading the Word in the Spirit as the communion of saints that serves the Pentecostal hermeneut.²⁸ Thus, Scott Ellington proposes five accents which characterize Pentecostal interpretations. They are 'narrative rather than propositional', 'dynamic rather than static', 'experience-based', 'seek encounter more than understanding', and 'are pragmatic, emphasizing transformation and application'.²⁹ These accents speak to the Pentecostal expressions.

That Pentecostal interpretations are more narrational than propositional means that the reader is invited 'to create meaning' rather than seek for meaning via propositional statements and supposed universalizing principles.³⁰ The storied nature of the Word draws the community by the Spirit into itself wherein what was *that* is now *this* for the community. This entering into the story is not introduced by Pentecostals, but seems to belong to the very stories of Scripture themselves which invite

²⁶ K.J. Vanhoozer (ed.), *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI; London: Baker Academic; SPCK, 2008), pp. 14, 15.

²⁷ Ervin, 'Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option', p. 23.

²⁸ Vanhoozer, *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*, pp. 18-22.

²⁹ Ellington, 'Locating Pentecostals', p. 209.

³⁰ Ellington, 'Locating Pentecostals', p. 211; K.J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, pp. 202, 205.

participation and experience and presuppose it (Dtr. 5.2-3; 1 Cor. 11.23-28).³¹ Indeed, Pentecostals 'prefer to interpret Scripture by encounter more than exegesis' and story aids that end.³² Pentecostals 'understand there [to] be a continuity between written story (Scripture) and oral story (personal testimony). At the moment of fresh encounter with God, the distance between the two collapses, so that my story becomes part of my community's story, which is in turn part of the biblical story'.³³ Such experiences are the encounter with the Word whereby the Spirit transforms the community into ever sanctifying communion toward further experiences leading to consummation. Experience both precedes and follows the Pentecostal hermeneutic.³⁴

In a manner perhaps fitting the Pentecostal context, the community sways to the singing and prayers, to the cadences of the preacher in the telling of Scripture, in decadent declarative testimonies in response. The movements seem almost random, but they are not. There is a rhythm, with pauses of silence and exclamations of exultation. The Pentecostal community moves as waves upon the sea carried by the unseen wind. The community interprets Scripture in like Pentecostal fashion. There is interpretive movement, holy burning, answering calls, tongues aflame, and grace abounding to each as the Spirit determines.

Pentecostal Interpreters and a Heart Aflame

One is not free to interpret as one pleases and think by doing so that they have offered anything to the text at hand. This would only be a monologue or a drowning out of the

³¹ Ellington, 'Locating Pentecostals', p. 211; 'History, Story, and Testimony: Locating Truth in a Pentecostal Hermeneutic', *Pneuma* 23.2 (Fall 2001), pp. 245-63; Grey, *Three's a Crowd*.

³² A. Davies, 'What Does It Mean to Read the Bible as a Pentecostal?' in L.R. Martin, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics*, pp. 249-62 (254). This chapter was originally published in *JPT* 18.2 (2009), pp. 216-29.

³³ Ellington, 'Locating Pentecostals', p. 214.

³⁴ The contention that experience both precedes and follows the Pentecostal hermeneutic is proposed by Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology*, p. 57; also, Ellington, 'Locating Pentecostals', pp. 206-25 (215-7); Thomas, 'Women, Pentecostals and the Bible', pp. 41-56.

voices of the Word, Spirit, and Community. Instead, a necessary prerequisite has been suggested as the 'virtuous reader' or the 'primed reader'. The virtuous reader is one who is characterized by humility, wisdom, trust, love, and receptivity.³⁵ The primed reader is 'one who is provisionally aware of the pluri-vocal realm; attentive to formational mission; competent with the emergent language, words and backgrounds; and critically engaged with the history of fruitful and abusive reception'.³⁶ This makes for a reader who is given to reading the textures of the text and engaging them as active participant who is transformed in their reading of the text as a living word.

To these should be added the Pentecostal contribution of the *sanctified/sanctifying reader*.³⁷ Chris Green, following the trajectory of James K.A. Smith, proposes that interpretation 'is not a necessary evil forced on us by the Fall – nor is it overcome now or in the eschaton. Instead, interpretation belongs to human beingness as such, and so is perfected, not superseded, in Christ.'³⁸ Thus, the sanctified/sanctifying reader is fulfilling their vocation to be both sanctified and sanctifying. 'Viewing Scripture as an act of God's sanctification allows Christ's incarnation to be unique: the Word became flesh, not a text.'³⁹

What of Pentecostal interpreters? Preparatory to a discussion of modes of understanding Pentecostal interpretations is a need to describe the ideal Pentecostal

³⁵ R.S. Briggs, *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).

³⁶ M.R. Malcom, 'Biblical Hermeneutics and Kerygmatic Responsibility', in S.E. Porter and M.R. Malcolm (eds.), *The Future of Biblical Interpretation: Responsible Plurality in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), pp. 71-84 (76).

³⁷ Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation*. Though Green does not actually use this specific term, his overall project is built upon the very notion and seeks to follow the trajectory which he laid in this volume.

³⁸ Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation*, p. 41. In this passage he is engaging J.K.A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation* (2nd edn; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).

³⁹ D.P. Lowenberg, 'Reading the Bible with Help from the African Pentecostals: Allowing Africa to Inform our Western Hermeneutics', *Encounter: Journal for Pentecostal Ministry* 9 (Summer 2012), pp. 1-33 (15) [accessed as a PDF at http://www.agts.edu/encounter/articles/2012summer/Lowenberg1_Aug12.pdf on October 15, 2015].

interpreters. As practitioners of a type of reader-response hermeneutic, Pentecostals 'emphasize the power of the text to evoke a particular response in the reader, a response which is encoded in the rhetoric, so that the form of the text itself creates its ideal reader.'⁴⁰ Indeed, it is a constant reminder that '[r]eading is a dangerous activity. It can change our perspective, stir our emotions, and provoke us to action.'⁴¹ The act of such a reading is 'co-operative' whereby the reader is not passive, but active in the process of creating meaning by being

drawn into the adventure not only by what the text spells out but also by what it withholds ... to fill in the gaps, to infer what is not given, at least provisionally, until what is unclear at first is clarified by what follows. This creation of meaning may change the reader in the process, because literature in the Bible does not simply tell us about the spirit of the past age or its social conditions, but allows us to experience them.⁴²

More than this, the Scriptures (illuminated by the Spirit) invite and even command the readers to experience that of which it speaks. This 'ideal reader',⁴³ as the ideal Pentecostal reader, is both shaped by, and shaping the reading of the text in the pneumatic community in order to 'bring the text to life'.⁴⁴ It may be suggested that such an ideal is best found in the core confession and all-encompassing vision of early Pentecostals: Jesus saves, (sanctifies), baptizes in the Spirit, heals, and is the soon coming king.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ M. Davies, 'Literary Criticism', in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London: SCM, 1990), pp. 402-405 (404).

⁴¹ M. Davies, 'Reader-Response Criticism', in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden (eds.), *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London: SCM, 1990), pp. 578-80 (578).

⁴² Davies, 'Reader-Response Criticism', pp. 578-80 (578).

⁴³ Davies, 'Reader-Response Criticism', pp. 578-80 (578).

⁴⁴ E.W. Davies, *Biblical Criticism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 4, 14.

⁴⁵ While it may be granted that 'sanctifies' belongs specifically to the Wesleyan stream of Pentecostalism and not to the so-called 'Finished Work' stream, it seems such is fitting for the emphasis early in Pentecostal development upon sanctification which still stands as a specific hallmark of Finished Work fellowships such as the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Kärkäinen

Pentecostal interpreters are those in the grip of Jesus' transforming redemptive work. Jesus fills their vision and thus their readings of Scripture. This transforming redemptive work of Jesus extends to the manner in which Scripture is read, or better, experienced. This experience of Jesus in turn is the mode through which Pentecostals interpret the Scriptures. Salvation is experienced in the appropriation and confession of Jesus as Lord. This confession being a Spirit empowered confession aligning with the testimony of Scripture and only experienced by the wooing of the Spirit as the Spirit of the Word.

Pentecostal Interpretations as Call and Response

The Pentecostal community is known to worship, preach, sing, and testify, indeed, to *live*, as in a continuous cycle of call and response. The community responds to the call of the Spirit whereby the community calls upon the Spirit who also responds. The Spirit empowered and enlivened community speaks and answers as those formed and transformed by the Word. The Word breathes; the Spirit speaks; the community lives. This interplay of response and call belongs to the essence of this community. This same conversing is that discourse of Scripture in the minds, mouths, and lives of the Pentecostal community.⁴⁶

The texts of Scripture seem to bear a surplus of meaning which exceed any perceived original human authorial intent. Meaning is not an unbounded communal determination any more than it is simply an authorial determinative boundary. Meaning belongs to the engaging correspondences of the authors, texts, and readers. The notion of a single determinate meaning is simply not feasible given the impossibility of totally recovering the original authorial intent. A multiplicity of

has specifically noted that this four/fivefold gospel message about Jesus was central to early Pentecostal interpretations, 'Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Making', p. 79.

⁴⁶ McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit*, p. 6.

meanings or polyphony of readings of these texts is inherent to the textual nature of texts as text. They have been preserved in a fashion by which readers will necessarily differ beyond the original ideal and/or real reader. These voices belong to the call and response of the community: authors, texts, and readers.

There is significant interplay of meaning to be found in this call and response of the Pentecostal community. This dramatic interplay is not about 'a set of rules we must follow' but about learning the pneumatic 'repertoire or roles we enact.'⁴⁷ The Spirit is present in both the reader of the text and the hearers, in both the authors and the recipients (to each of these: past, present and future). The dynamic call and response hermeneutic of a Pentecostal gathering offers treasures both old and new: voices from ages past, those responding in the present, and the prophetic orientation of those being made into that future idealized pneumatic community. This orientation does not consider itself free from a close reading of the Word, but instead is highly attentive to the ebb and flow of the text. Words within the Word are given great significance and become new opportunities to respond in fresh ways to the work of the Spirit in the community. This careful reading of the text of Scripture belongs to the Pentecostal experience of the text as Word to be discerned and lived by the Spirit.

Pentecostal Interpretations as Tongue-Speech

A Pentecostal approach suggests that interpretations may not belong only to the construct of the 'plain sense' of a text since the Pentecostal community already shows a penchant for appreciating tongue-speech as holding the potential for self-benefit apart from the clear interpretive act of the community (1 Cor. 14.2-18). Meaning is therefore

⁴⁷ A.K.M. Adam, 'Poaching on Zion: Biblical Theology as Signifying Practice', in A.K.M. Adam, Stephen E. Fowl, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Francis Watson, *Reading Scripture with the Church: Toward a Hermeneutic for Theological Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), pp. 17-34 (33). See also Porter and Malcolm, *The Future of Biblical Interpretation*.

not tied to individual comprehension and yet may be experienced to great benefit by the speaker/hearer in the absence of public tongue-speech. However, in the public speaking of tongues, interpretation must be practiced as a public event to give benefit to all through clear expression of meaning. This place for tongue-speech (private and public) functions well as a type for Pentecostal interpretations: there is place and time for private expressions and experiences of the Scriptures which may benefit the individual greatly, but need more determinate meanings for communal appropriations. It could be argued that Pentecostal 'interpretation and proclamation of Scripture have little to do with intellectual comprehension and all to do with divine self-revelation.'⁴⁸ Interpretation for the community can only, thus, allow for the multiple voices of interpretive meaning that edify the whole and are not permitted only to edify the individual speaker who may well enough benefit from the meaning inherent in their experience of the text.

The Pentecostal approach to interpretation seems inherently to involve polyphony of interpretive possibilities. This does not mean, however, that the polyphony is discordant.⁴⁹ Pentecostals might say with Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Truth is symphonic'.⁵⁰ In fact, it can (and should) find its basis in the *cantus firmus* of God's self-revelation where they might function in interdependence. Similarly, D. Bonhoeffer, speaking of this issue of polyphony wrote to his friend E. Bethge to 'let the cantus firmus be heard clearly ... only then will it sound complete and full, and the counterpoint will always know that it is being carried and can't get out of tune or be cut adrift, while remaining itself and complete in itself. Only this polyphony gives your life wholeness, and you know that no disaster can befall you as long as the cantus firmus

⁴⁸ A. Davies, 'What Does It Mean to Read the Bible as a Pentecostal?', *JPT* 18.2 (2009), pp. 216-29.

⁴⁹ Porter and Malcolm, *The Future of Biblical Interpretation*, p. 10.

⁵⁰ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Truth Is Symphonic* (trans. Graham Harrison; San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987).

continues'.⁵¹ For Bonhoeffer the *cantus firmus* was pure love for God (that secondarily was love for humankind).

Bonhoeffer's trajectory is shared by the Pentecostal community's interpretation of the Word by the Spirit as centered in 'holy love'. This *cantus firmus* is functionally the Pentecostal community's sanctifying improvisational love of the Word in and through the Spirit. Wherever the tongues may lead is bounded by the community's love in pneumatic discernment of the Word. A potent (and Pentecostally-fitting) image of this creative and dialectical interplay might be found in the ways in which a Black Gospel choir offers fresh voices to an overall movement in impassioned song. The ebb and flow of their cadences and voices, the spontaneous and the planned, press the boundaries of the *cantus firmus*, but are called back again and again to this guiding voice. Tongues (and their interpretations) may be many, but divine love remains as centering melody.⁵²

Pentecostal Interpretations as *Charismata*

The exercise of the *charismata* is imperative to the life of the community endowed by the Spirit for just such a hearing and speaking of the Word. The community does not simply regard a historical critical approach as sufficient for hearing what the Spirit is saying. Indeed, this community seems likely to consider such a strictly historical

⁵¹ D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 8; English ed. J.W. De Gruchy; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010), p. 394. The musical term *cantus firmus* is not italicized in this translation of Bonhoeffer.

⁵² A. Yong proposes a renewed emphasis upon 'divine love' may in fact be the key to the renewal of Pentecostalism, 'What's Love Got to Do with It?: The Sociology of Godly Love and the Renewal of Modern Pentecostalism,' *JPT* 21 (2012), pp. 113-134. He develops this more thoroughly in *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2012). For several treatments of the early Pentecostal appreciation of divine or holy love, see also K.E. Alexander, 'Boundless Love Divine: A Re-evaluation of Early Understandings of the Experience of Spirit Baptism,' pp. 145-70 in S.J. Land, R.D. Moore, and J.C. Thomas (eds.), *Passover, Pentecost, and Parousia: Studies in Celebration of the Life and Ministry of R. Hollis Gause* (JPTSup 35; Blandford Forum, UK: Deo, 2010); and D.T. Irvin, "'Drawing All Together in One Bond of Love": The Ecumenical Vision of William J Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival,' *JPT* 6 (1995), pp. 25-53.

reading (a reading behind the text) as potentially only ‘another form of cessationism’ because it muted other voices.⁵³ The historical elements are not disregarded, but neither are they allowed to speak with full authority, because the Pentecostal community seeks to read the text of Scripture in its literary, theological, and canonical fullness.

The richness of interpretive possibilities is offered up as various gifts given by the Spirit for the community’s movement toward completion, but is not that completion itself. The invitation to ‘create meaning’⁵⁴ is engendered by such a plethora of diverse gifts as given by the Spirit in a move together toward the *telos* of the Word. This diversity of interpretations is both weakness and strength. Its weakness is the lack of objectivity and thus the necessarily tentative nature of interpretations even when affirmed. However, the strength of this is evident in humility and charity shared within and by the Spirit-ed community. It calls for the community to embrace those given different interpretations, but not to do so without also exercising discernment:⁵⁵ does this interpretation encourage, rebuke, and edify in love? Does this interpretation resonate with the voice of the Spirit heard in the Word? The community cannot simply mute such voices, but must exercise every gift of discernment and edification ... all the while seeking the best ... seeking what will endure all things.

Moving Together

As a Pentecostal in a Pentecostal community, hermeneutics is practiced together with those pneumatically present. Our mutual edification ‘depends on our reading Scripture together, in conjunction with our lives of discipleship and worship. By reading the word together, by responding to the word together, by conversing about the word

⁵³ Lowenberg, ‘Reading the Bible’, pp. 1-33 (16).

⁵⁴ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, p. 205.

⁵⁵ As an example of just such a notion of the interplay of the community, Spirit, and Word, see Thomas, ‘Women, Pentecostalism and the Bible’, pp. 81-94 in L.R. Martin (ed.), *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). This was originally published in *JPT* 5 (1994), pp. 41-56.

together, we encounter and embody at least a beginning measure of the richness that arises when different servants of the same word practice together'.⁵⁶ This hermeneutic of Spirit, Word, and community guides the following interpretation of the Spirit in the Former Prophets through the experience of holy burning, answering calls, tongues aflame, and grace abounding to each as the Spirit determines.

Setting the Tone: A Narrative Approach to the Former Prophets

Allowing the voices to be heard and to add to them seems to warrant a narrative approach to the Word wherein the Spirit within both Word and community come together in the hermeneutical task. 'A narrative method allows for the dialectic interaction of the text and reader in the negotiation of meaning'.⁵⁷ Of particular significance is the narrative nature of the Former Prophets and thus the even more fitting narrative approach of the Pentecostal community to hear and experience this text as the story which enters them and which they find themselves entering.⁵⁸

First, this narrative approach will read the texts of the Former Prophets through the lens of the earliest Pentecostal periodicals as a *Wirkungsgeschichte* in order to discern within the historic Pentecostal community in which these texts of the Former Prophets were read and experienced and thus may also be reread in contemporary Pentecostal settings. This further experience of the Spirit texts in the Former Prophets by the early Pentecostals will contribute to the narrative approach via a critical (though charitable) reading of the many voices of the formative years (up to 1920) of Pentecostalism. It is imperative that the Pentecostal community hear the many voices of our forebears who

⁵⁶ A.K.M. Adam, 'Poaching on Zion: Biblical Theology as Signifying Practice', in A.K.M. Adam, S.E. Fowl, K.J. Vanhoozer, and Francis Watson, *Reading Scripture with the Church: Toward a Hermeneutic for Theological Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), pp. 17-34 (33).

⁵⁷ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, p. 226. These several key orientations are drawn from the ideas offered by K. Archer as helpful for just such a Pentecostal hermeneutic, pp. 212-60.

⁵⁸ Ellington, 'Locating Pentecostals', p. 209.

continue to speak by the Spirit through their own experiential hearing of the Word without simply co-opting their approach to interpretation, yet critically engaging it toward a fuller Pentecostal interpretation leading to formation and transformation of the hearing community.

Regarding the narrative approach there are several key orientations to reading the Former Prophets in light of the foregoing hermeneutical movements: (1) a close literary reading, (2) a surplus of interpretive possibilities, and (3) transformative experience of the text. The chapters concerned with interpretation of the Scriptures will offer a close reading of the text listening to the genre as it presents itself and allowing it to be interpreted and to interpret the hearing community. This reading is intended to invite the reader to participate and engage the text at multiple levels and to indwell and experience the Spirit both in the interpretation and in being interpreted. Arguably these narrative texts invite such a participatory function for the community.⁵⁹

Second this narrative approach will also give careful attention to overall and specific narrative contours of the Former Prophets.⁶⁰ In the midst of many voices there are still voices which guide one to remain faithful to the Word and these are best discerned in a close reading of the text that is attuned to the narratorial markers. The Spirit is intentionally heard with the most clarion voice in the voice of the narrator which will become the primary voice to be heard and enjoined in the community functioning as a sort of melody being joined by the many gifts of Spirit-ed harmony to produce a literary and theological Pentecostal hearing of the texts of the Spirit in the

⁵⁹ P.E. Satterthwaite, '6. Narrative Criticism: The Theological Implications of Narrative Techniques', pp. 1:125-133 in W.A. VanGemeren (Gen. Ed.), *NIDOTTE* (5 vol.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), p. 132.

⁶⁰ On the function of the narrator as a reliable voice, see R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 155-177; M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999), pp. 84-99; and P.E. Satterthwaite, '6. Narrative Criticism', pp. 1:125-133 (129).

Former Prophets. Careful attention will be paid to hearing the voice of the narrator as guiding the reading of the narrative flow for such literary markers as characterizations, repetitions, contrasts, ambiguities, and persuasions. While the narrator's voice offers a primary reading for the Pentecostal community it is intended as something like a melody that permits numerous potential harmonies for the hearing community as interpretive possibilities of creative meaning.

Third, this narrative approach is enjoined as a participatory event via interplay of text and reader. As such, this reading of the Former Prophets flows from and enjoins an experience of the Spirit empowering leaders to gather and stand for the community for victory over all that might destroy that community and creating opportunity for life to flourish according to the word of the Lord (like for the judges). This reading evokes both transformation of the Spirit endowed and the challenge of abiding in that same Spirit as provocative prophetic voices offering overcoming songs to cast out troubles and exalt the anointed king (like for Saul and David). This reading calls for discernment in the prophetic community to hear aright the word of the Spirit (like for Micaiah). This reading endows with the double-portioned Spirit of son-ship that the word might advance in power within the community of God's people as testimony of the abiding presence of the faithful One (like for Elijah and Elisha). Thus, I would echo the words of Lee Roy Martin: 'My goal as a Pentecostal reader is to seek for the theological message of the text, to be confronted by it, and then to be conformed to it.'⁶¹

The Texts Enjoined

Not every text mentioning יהוה offers the same engagement for this study. The guiding element for inclusion is the textual connection to Yahweh (or God) suggesting this as the personal Spirit of Yahweh/God even if a troubling one. This means numerous texts

⁶¹ Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, p. 62.

lay outside of this study's scope for various reasons such as a proposed (1) meteorological function (2 Sam. 22.11; 1 Kgs 17.45; 19.11; and 2 Kgs 3.17); (2) anthropological function (Josh. 2.11; 5.1; Jdg. 8.3; 15.19; 1 Sam. 1.15; 15.19; 30.12; and 1 Kgs 10.5); or (3) attitudinal function (Jdg. 9.23; and 2 Kgs 19.7).⁶²

The texts which are enjoined in this study are: Judges 3.10 (Othniel); 6.34 (Gideon); 11.29 (Jephthah); 13.25; 14.6, 19; 15.14 (Samson); 1 Samuel 10.6, 10; 11.6; 16.14-16, 23; 18.10; 19.9, 20 (Saul); 16.13; 2 Samuel 23.2 (David); 1 Kings 22.21-24 (Micaiah); and 2 Kings 2.9, 15-16 (Elijah and Elisha). The Pentecostal narrative approach above informs the readings offered in chapter four (the judges), five (Saul and David), six (Micaiah), and seven (Elijah and Elisha) respectively. However, this Pentecostal reading is also informed by the voices of the early Pentecostals in chapter three in the ways in which they heard the Spirit in these same texts toward chapter eight's constructive Pentecostal theology of the Spirit in the Former Prophets.

A Constructive Journey

Chapter eight carries forward the hermeneutical approach of Spirit, Word, and community through literary and theological movements of the Spirit texts of the Former Prophets. Functions of the Spirit are drawn from the exegetical chapters (four through seven) and separated by the groupings of these chapters to provide literary-theological functions in order to orient the study toward the Pentecostal theology of the Spirit in the Former Prophets. This facilitates the Pentecostal theological engagement for hearing and responding to these texts of the Former Prophets. Melissa Archer has carried out a

⁶² Block, 'Empowered by the Spirit of God', p. 61. Block provides a helpful chart for the numerous categories and sub-categories he proposes. Judges 9.23 is questionable as to its exclusion from this study given that the spirit is attributed to God. I have chosen to exclude it (against Block's own proposal) as it is best read as an 'attitude' or 'disposition' than the more personal qualities that might be noted in the texts included in this thesis.

similar methodology in her work on a Pentecostal hearing of worship in the Apocalypse.⁶³

The narratological approach to the Former Prophets that is offered in chapters four through seven provides the basis for the theological overtures concerning the Spirit in chapter eight. Various categories are offered which are drawn from the narratological readings and following the chapter headings of four through seven: The Liberating Spirit, Strings of the Spirit, Discerning the Spirit and the Double Portion Spirit. These provide a broad framework of overtures for both allowing the various narrative contexts to frame the functions of the Spirit as well as to intersect from one narrative context to the others since many of the functions of the Spirit are shared across the narratives of the Former Prophets.

These theological overtures of the first part of chapter eight then find resonance in the Pentecostal hearing which is offered via Pentecostal theological categories of construction in relation to the Spirit: abiding, purity, baptism, power, music, anointing, and the Lord Jesus Christ. This second movement of chapter eight offers a further harmony with the narratological readings from chapters four through seven. This functions to provide movement toward how Pentecostals might both hear and respond to the Spirit in the Former Prophets in ways that are mutually constructive.

⁶³ Archer, *I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*, pp. 61-66.