Article

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Current Classical Pentecostal Bible Reading Methods: A Critical Perspective

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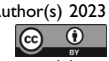

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Abstract

The prevailing trend among members of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM of SA) is to interpret the Bible in a biblicist and literalist way, which conflicts with how early Pentecostals read the Bible. Empirical research completed in 2020 supports the observation. In contrast, early Pentecostals read the Bible with the expectation of meeting God. Their precritical, canonical, and text-centered interpretation focused on the text inductively before they deductively compared it with related texts in a straightforward manner to formulate their teaching. The new generation of Pentecostals applied conservative Evangelical hermeneutics to focus on the world behind the text, using the historical-grammatical method to arrive objectively at the author's intended meaning. It was rooted in the Scottish Common-Sense school of philosophy in a synthesis with the Baconian method. Their new hermeneutic was based on a theory of inspiration that accepted that divine revelation terminated at the end of the first century, resulting in a discrepancy that conflicts with Pentecostals' expectation for extrabiblical revelations, miracles, and wonders to continue. The article aims to suggest an alternative hermeneutical approach that can constructively address the discrepancy, based on the recently developed scholarly hermeneutic that employs post-critical and postmodern approaches such as literary, reader-response, and advocacy hermeneutics. It utilizes quantitative research and a comparative literature study to realize the aim.

Keywords

Pentecostalism, hermeneutic, fundamentalist, biblicist-literalism, continuationism

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Challenges of Pentecostal Hermeneutics

Referring to classical Pentecostal hermeneutics requires further qualification since it is not possible to refer, on the one hand, to Pentecostalism as such and, on the other hand, to a Pentecostal hermeneutic. The Pentecostal movement displays such diversity that it has become proper to speak of "Pentecostalisms" rather than a single phenomenon, representing several different hermeneutical models. Only if it is possible to describe the ethos and proprium of the Pentecostal movement as such, it may be possible to define Pentecostal hermeneutics in broad terms to include the diverse movements.

The definition of classical Pentecostal hermeneutics excludes the charismatic movement that originated during the 1960s and 1970s when some groups and congregations in mainline churches adopted Pentecostalizing trends that changed the fiber of their worship services and church life, and the neo-Pentecostal independent churches that in several regards do not qualify to be called neo-"Pentecostal" since they differ in many respects from the classical Pentecostal theological stance and practice. The charismatic movement functioned to a large degree within the Protestant paradigm in which it existed. At the same time, the independent churches, including the apostolic and prophetic reformation of the early twenty-first century, are defined by their interests in apostolic revival and prosperity theology.

This article limits research to Bible reading practices of church members of one South African Pentecostal denomination, the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM of SA). The purpose is to formulate some conclusions about their hermeneutic, probably matching (some of) the practices in other classical Pentecostal churches. The AFM of SA is the oldest classical Pentecostal denomination in South Africa. It originated in 1908 when John G. Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch, after their exposure to the Pentecostal revival at Azusa Street 312 in Los Angeles, started preaching their Pentecostal message in Johannesburg among Zionists. Currently, the church has 1.4 million members in South Africa and branches in twenty-nine other countries.[1]

Bible Reading Practices in the AFM of SA

A quantitative study was completed in the second half of 2020 at the request of the AFM of SA's National Leadership Forum, the managing body of the church between its synods. Nearly three hundred participants completed the questionnaire in AFM of SA congregations in the nine different provinces (Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, North-West, Free State, KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga). The assembly pastors were invited to participate in the process and were responsible for distributing the questionnaires and sending them back to the church's headquarters. They also completed the questionnaire and acted as participant observers because of their extended and intense social interaction with participants. They also had to complete a short questionnaire to ensure the fair completion of the questionnaires.[2] They

1. https://afm-ags.org/about-us/afm-international/; accessed 21 Dec. 2022.
2. J. Swinton and H. Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2016), 130.

represented a valid sample of congregations in the city, mid-city, suburbs, informal settlements, and rural and far rural areas. The participants in terms of racial composition concurred mostly with the members of the AFM of SA and the country, with 84 percent black, 9 percent white, 6 percent mixed race-population and 1 percent Indian participants. The responses to the questionnaire clearly illustrated the differences between current Pentecostal reading practices with those of their predecessor's paramodern hermeneutics (as discussed in the following section).

Some significant findings were that no less than 96 percent of respondents had a Bible, implying that they probably were literate (the country's literacy rate is estimated at 95.02 percent).[3] Seventy-two percent of them read the Bible in printed form, while 24 percent used an electronic device. Of those with access to a Bible, 98 percent indicated that they regularly read it. When asked how regularly, 74 percent indicated that they read it daily, of which 41 percent stated that they read more than one chapter daily and 30 percent read one chapter daily. In total, as many as 88 percent of participants spend time with the Bible regularly (twice a week or more).

Another interesting statistic was that 33 percent of respondents indicated that they used a commentary to assist them in interpreting the Bible. In comparison, 23 percent indicated that they read the Bible with the aid of a devotional. In contrast, 44 percent read only the Bible. Nearly 33 percent said they had read all of the New Testament, while 35 percent said they had read all of the Old Testament. It is of interest that (slightly) more participants had read all of the Old Testament rather than the New Testament, given the respective lengths of the two Testaments and the value the New Testament has for Christian believers, informing them about Christ. However, the Pentecostal preference in reading the Bible and testifying about their encounters with God is for the narrative. The many narratives found in the Old Testament might be the reason for their preference. Thirty percent indicated that they attend a weekly Bible study group, while 30 percent said they were not part of any formal Bible study. Seventy-five percent of participants witnessed to being Spirit-filled, indicating that they experienced Spirit-baptism in some form or another, in many cases with the accompaniment of *glossolalia*. Approximately the same percentage said they prayed more than once during the day.

In a separate section, participants had to answer whether they believed it was vital that the Bible is interpreted in terms of the context and culture of its time. Only 30 percent conceded that the Bible could not be interpreted without accounting for its historical situatedness. Two-thirds of participants, or 66 percent, believed that the Bible is literally true. The same number of participants (67 percent) believed the entire Bible is the inspired Word of God. It seems from their responses that their view of inspiration subscribed to the mechanistic idea that the Spirit whispered each word into biblical authors' ears who faithfully wrote it down. It represents the notion of verbal dictation, with the Spirit dictating to the author. The conclusion is that many AFM of SA members use the Bible in a biblicist-literalist or concordist

3. https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/ZAF/south-africa/literacy-rate; accessed 21 Dec. 2022.

way. Given their theological training, their pastors probably taught them with their example of interpreting the text with the grammatical-historical exegetical methods distinctive of conservative hermeneutics.

This differs from how early Pentecostals read the Bible in several respects.[4] To comprehend this discrepancy, it is necessary to discuss the history of hermeneutical development within classical Pentecostalism.

Development of Classical Pentecostal Hermeneutics

Conservative Evangelical Hermeneutic

In its early days, Pentecostalism became known for its anti-intellectualist stance as an element of its response to the rejection it received from the hands of mainline churches. Pentecostals believed these churches had succumbed to formality and routine when they lost their emphasis on the actuality of encountering the Spirit today, resulting in the early church's "deterioration" following their de-emphasis and loss of the distinctive experience of Spirit baptism in the second and third centuries. This notion of the early church's development is found among most Pentecostals and serves as justification for their existence apart from mainline denominations. The church's theological endeavors had now become their main occupation with their religion since they lost the experiential aspect of their faith.

A primary difference between most Western Protestants and Pentecostals, at least at the beginning of the twentieth century, was that many Protestants accepted that the Spirit ceased to work tangibly at the end of the first century, perhaps with the death of the last apostle (cessationism). In contrast, Pentecostals believed that encountering God in an immediate sense formed the heart and soul of the Christian religion (continuationism). One implication was that Pentecostals emphasized that each believer should experience rebirth, Spirit-baptism as a condition for a Spirit-filled life, and the experience of daily being led by the Spirit. Pentecostals believed that the only valid God-talk was testimony, testifying to an encounter with God that had transformed their lives. Their charismatic encounters also became the preunderstanding (*Vorverständnis*) when they read the Bible, and biblical language informed and characterized their testimonies as well. They also separated themselves from "the world" and its temptations and sinfulness as part of the drive to holiness; the holiness movement was one of the precedents from which Pentecostalism grew.[5]

Early believers mostly came from a lower socioeconomic status, representing the "sinners" that were not reached by the mainline denominations, such as drunkards, prostitutes, and people living on the street. After the Second World War, when the economic situation improved, many socioeconomically upwardly mobile Pentecostals found it

4. Allan H. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2013), 223.

5. Marius Nel, "Pentecostalism and the Early Church: On Living Distinctively from the World," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 153 (2016): 141–59 (158–59).

necessary that they should become acceptable and respectable. They were not willing to be seen as members of a cult and sect anymore.[6] Where leadership and participation in the assembly had previously only required the Spirit's anointing, leaders now had to be theologically qualified to preach the gospel effectively. They exchanged their Bible schools for theological colleges (later called seminaries) where prospective candidates were exposed to the theology taught in other churches. Pentecostals realized that interpreting the Bible, an ancient document in another language and representing a foreign culture, requires specialized skills in order to be able to apply and proclaim its message.

Pentecostals had also found in conservative Evangelicals a good ally who required their continued participation in theological endeavors and utilization of the grammatical-historical exegesis of the text. At the same time and because of their cooperation with Evangelicals, Pentecostals shifted their hermeneutics to reflect most aspects of the Evangelicals who responded to some Modernist theologians who used historical-critical methods to interpret the Bible and doubted the historicity, authority, and divine inspiration of the Bible.[7] However, Evangelicals still shared the Modernist emphasis on reason as the sole means to knowledge, an epistemology that supported their hard cessationism that did not allow for contemporary miracles and revelation to continue in current times. This discrepancy with the Pentecostal proprium that viewed Spirit-baptism and continuous encounters with the divine as the most distinctive proprium and justification for their existence apart from other traditional churches has never been resolved.[8] Early Pentecostals emphasized biblical and extrabiblical divine revelation as a function of the work of the Spirit in their midst. Their movement did not sit well with Modernism's emphasis on rationality.

The newly developed hermeneutical stance of Pentecostals in conjunction with Evangelicals contained the discrepancy that they continued to expect the Spirit's revelation. Still, in using the same theory of inspiration as their partners, they disqualified themselves from such continuationist experiences and the resulting extrabiblical revelation and emphasis on miracles and wonders. However, they agree with Evangelicals' conservative protests against modern theological trends that deny, among other things, the virginal birth, atoning death and divinity of Christ, and the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures to define doctrine and ethics for contemporary Christians.[9] It is possible to characterize such biblical criticism as an affirmation of human autonomy because it

6. Robert M. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford, 1979), xi; Isak Burger and Marius Nel, *The Fire Falls in Africa: A History of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa* (Vereeniging: Christian Art, 2006), 389.

7. Robert W. Funk, "A Faith for the Future," in *The Once & Future Faith*, ed. Karen Armstrong et al. (Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2001), 1–18 (3).

8. Walter J. Hollenweger, "From Azusa Street to Toronto Phenomenon: Historical Roots of the Pentecostal Movement," *Concilium* 3.6 (1993), 3–14 (6).

9. Clark H. Pinnock, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1.2 (1993), 3–23 (241); Lloyd Geering, "The Secular Trinity," in *The Once & Future Faith*, ed. Karen Armstrong et al. (Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2001), 33–50 (39–41).

views human reason as the means to interpret the Bible without being subjected to the Bible's authority as the normative voice of God.[10]

The cooperation with Evangelicals shifted the Pentecostal hermeneutic away from the earlier common-sense Bible reading method to various historical-critical methodologies concerned with the authorship and dating of biblical books, looking for possible sources from which the texts might have been composed and discounting the historical contexts of the original author and listeners and the redactors' compilation. Now the focus was on the world behind the text with the aid of the historical-grammatical method, a variant of historical criticism.[11] The purpose was to identify any sociohistorical influences and circumstances that led the author to write the text. On the one hand, it analyzes the grammatical principle of words employing etymological, historical, cognate and comparative word studies, figurative language, and genre. On the other hand, it analyzes the historical key people, societies, geography, and topography.[12] The goal was to arrive objectively at the author's intended meaning and to apply it to the current situation, presupposing the possibility to determine the author's meaning.

Pentecostals' fundamentalist hermeneutic, taken over from the conservative Evangelicals, was rooted in the Scottish Common-Sense school of philosophy in a synthesis with the Baconian method.[13] Fundamentalism, whether found in the Christian, Jewish, or Muslim religions, represents a religious traditionalism that believes that religion contains the essential truths and answers all the evils found in the chaotic and sinful world. Traditionalists believe their role is to restore their religion to its purest form by faithfully following a literalist reading of the religious text and applying its commands faithfully as normative for current times. Since they own the sole truth and are the only ones who interpret the text correctly, they tend to be intolerant and derisive towards people with other convictions and opinions.[14] Intolerant fundamentalist hermeneutics led Christians through the ages to crusade against Muslims, Jews, and other Christians.

Fundamentalism can be defined as "an unbending literalism used to interpret biblical passages without discounting that the text is historically determined by cultural, social and other factors, coupled with a theory of inspiration close to dictation."[15] Christian fundamentalism consists of a belief that the Bible is verbally inspired, literally inerrant, and displaying its agreement with the tenets of the Reformation's Christian confessions.

10. Joel B. Green, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Wesleyan Perspective," in *Constructive Pneumatological Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Christianity*, ed. Kenneth J. Archer and L. William Oliverio (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 159–74 (160).

11. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People Who Know That Something Is Wrong* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014), 163.

12. William B. Tolar, "The Grammatical-Historical Method," in *Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve W. Lemke, and Grant I. Lovejoy, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 21–38 (21–37).

13. M. Nel, "Proposing a Shift from Classical Pentecostal Bible Reading Practices and Baconian Common Sense to a Scientific Hermeneutics," *Acta Theologica* 41(1) (2021): 67–86 (67–86).

14. S. O'Grady, *In the Name of God: History of Christian & Muslim Intolerance* (London: Atlantic, 2019), 406.

15. Matthew S. Clark, "An Investigation into the Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic" (DTh diss., University of Pretoria, South Africa, 1997), 111.

"These values are often maintained distinctively, combining a literalistic and uncritical biblicism with an unyielding commitment to the fundamental doctrines."[16]

Biblicist-literalist fundamentalism used the presupposition that all propositions are accessible to any thinking, rational person. Theological truth formed a unified order; and anyone with common sense can know and understand that truth.[17] Only what was historically and objectively scientifically verifiable could be considered "true" and thus meaningful.[18] There are different kinds of truth, like historical truth, which represents the veracity of events the text refers to, and preaching and teaching, which represent expressions of the theological perspective of the specific author of a biblical book.[19] The Christian faith was based on objective historical evidence, guaranteed by the Bible's meticulous reference to historical events that happened as it is related, and any rational person can see the common sense of the assertion that God exists, created heaven and earth, and revealed the divine self to human beings.[20]

The empirical research illustrated to what extent this hermeneutic informs Bible reading practices of members of the AFM of SA, in contrast to how early Pentecostals read and interpreted the Bible.

Early Hermeneutic

The early Pentecostal hermeneutic, in contrast, was the result of the movement's antecedents: Wesleyan Methodist Protestantism that expected a "second blessing," a crisis experience subsequent to conversion called "sanctification:" the holiness movement; Reformed revivalism; the Keswick movement; and the faith healing movement.[21] In addition, Pentecostals justified their origins as a continuity of the early church and its emphasis on the dynamic personal action of God's Spirit, changing every believer into an anointed prophet and priest. They aimed to take the Pentecostal message to the ends of the earth, the success of which would result in the return of Christ.[22]

Most early Pentecostals were previously marginalized, socially rejected, and economically disadvantaged.[23] Their religious heritage differed from evangelical-pietistic

16. Clark, "Investigation into the Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic," 55.
17. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford, 2006), 12–13.
18. Reuben A. Torrey et al., eds., *The Fundamentals: Testimony to the Truth* (Los Angeles: The Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1895), 83.
19. Terence J. Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist, 1985), 153.
20. Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 24.
21. Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 25–34.
22. Clark, "Investigation into the Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic," 40.
23. Craig S. Keener, "Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation/Spirit Hermeneutics," in *Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible*, ed. Michael J. Horman (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 270–83 (274).

Protestantism.[24] It represented a mystical and supernatural spirituality. They were already hardwired to perceive the Spirit's influence and oriented to experience.[25] They viewed themselves as participants in the Spirit's work rather than a denomination or religious society. Initially, they were not interested in organizing into a denomination.[26] Encountering the supernatural was important and everyone was, in a democratic manner, invited to participate.[27] Their decentralization, perceived disorganization, and anti-hierarchical rhetoric alienated them further from most mainline churches who dismissed charismatic Christianity as counterfeit.[28]

Additionally, African Pentecostals' spirituality accommodated the traditional African psyche that affirmed God's existence, presence, and involvement as integral to their daily lives. They knew God because they experienced God's presence and intervention in rebirth, new tongues, the healing of their sick, and deliverance of the demonically possessed and oppressed. They lived from the transcendent dimension that authenticated God's power in "signs and wonders." They interpreted salvation in holistic terms as the healing of spiritual, physical, and social disorder, evidence of which is found in the testimonies of participants relating to their dramatic transformation, healing, the restoration of relationships, and human dignity.[29]

When the Spirit equips believers with *charismata*, they become preachers and evangelists.[30] The Spirit's empowerment was the sole condition for their ministry, even though many gifted leaders did not enjoy any theological training.[31] They believed that Spirit baptism equipped them to participate in the Spirit's work of saving, delivering, and healing people.[32] All Spirit-filled believers received the Spirit's empowerment to read and understand the Bible; it was not a specialty limited to a few. They were also equipped to receive extrabiblical revelatory insights that they tested against the biblical witness for its validity. Pentecostals reacted to what they perceived as powerless Western cerebral and clerical Christianity by emphasizing the demonstration of divine power in their midst. African spirituality

24. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited*, 135.

25. John W. McKay, "When the Veil Is Taken Away: The Impact of Prophetic Experience on Biblical Interpretation," in *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 57–80 (67).

26. For instance, when the AFM of SA found it necessary to exist as a legal personality it registered as an unlimited company (Marius Nel and Isak Burger, *The Fire Falls in Africa: A History of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa* (London: Blessed Hope, 2014), 80).

27. Daniel E. Albrecht and Evan B. Howard, "Pentecostal Spirituality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, ed. Cecil M. Robeck and Amos Yong (New York: Cambridge, 2014), 235–53 (240–43).

28. Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2003), 2.

29. J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana*, Studies of Religion in Africa 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 237.

30. Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 239.

31. Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, 20.

32. J. D. King, *Salvation Healing through Third Wave*, vol. 2 of *Regeneration: A Complete History of Healing in the Christian Church* (Lee's Summit, MO: Christos, 2017), 510–23.

also affirmed the practice of worship as an authentic encounter with God that transforms participants' lives and circumstances.[33]

Their expectation of meeting God in the pages of the Bible, driven by a primitivistic impulse[34] to restore the early church's emphasis on the Spirit, drove their hermeneutic.[35] They read the Bible "from below," resulting in alternative interpretations that called some conventional readings into question.[36] Their precritical Bible reading methods and interpretive procedures, inherited from the holiness tradition, used inductive reasoning focused on the text and deductive reasoning that examined and compared all available data on the same level using a concordance. It was a precritical, canonical, and text-centered interpretation.[37] They presupposed that the Bible could be read and understood straightforwardly by the common reader or listener by interpreting inductively single words and comparing the verse deductively in terms of related texts elsewhere in the Bible to formulate their teaching as a biblical doctrine. They examined and then harmonized the biblical data about a subject or topic into a cohesive synthesis.[38]

In the discussion of current Bible reading practices in the AFM of SA, as illustrated by the empirical research, it became clear that the church utilized a grammatical-historical hermeneutic with strong Evangelical sentiments in contradistinction to what early Pentecostals employed. It was argued that the new hermeneutic is incompatible with a major tenet of Pentecostalism, the expectation that God still acts and speaks in current times in ways that transform people's lives. The exercise aims to suggest a way to address the discrepancy by employing some elements of the scholarly hermeneutics developed in the past few decades by several Pentecostal scholars.

Scholarly Pentecostal Hermeneutics

During the 1970s, Pentecostal scholarship developed, initially with several studies considering the origins and various phenomena into which Pentecostalism developed. It was Pentecostals' first attempt at academic endeavors, as a means to rediscover its roots. At a later stage, practical theological studies followed, betraying their pragmatic emphasis. Since the 1990s, Pentecostals started revisiting their hermeneutic and critically developed several hermeneutical perspectives in line with some aspects of early Pentecostals' Bible reading methods.[39] They employed post-critical and postmodern approaches. It included

33. Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostalism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 118.

34. Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit*, *Scripture*, *and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT, 2009), 136, 150.

35. Edith L. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism: To 1941*, vol. 1 (Springfield, MO: Gospel, 1989), 19.

36. Harvey Cox, *How to Read the Bible* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2016), 219.

37. Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 91–92.

38. Kenneth J. Archer, "Hermeneutics," in *Handbook of Pentecostal Christianity*, ed. Alan Stewart (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 2012), 108–16.

39. See, e.g., Christopher B. Ansberry and Christopher M. Hays, "Faithful Criticism and a Critical Faith," in *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism*, ed. Christopher M. Hays and Christopher

literary approaches that investigated what the text communicates to contemporary readers and listeners and how it communicates it, reader-response approaches that question the impact the text has upon the reader community, and advocacy hermeneutics that spends time to investigate the way the socioeconomic and ethnic make-up of interpreters leads them to "see" and "hear" things in the text that others missed.[40]

A tension exists within Pentecostal scholarship, with some favoring a historical-critical hermeneutic that emphasizes historical context while others utilize a postmodern hermeneutic that plays down the importance of the original historical horizon. Criticism against the exclusive historical emphasis includes reaching for an unobtainable and illusory goal of pure objectivity, driven by an unreachable aim to define the original author's intention. On the other hand, a pure postmodern approach may lead to the abyss of unconstrained relativism and subjectivism. The solution suggested here is to combine an investigation into ancient horizons to inform modern horizons with finding meanings in applying ancient truths in current times because both the ancient and modern horizons have a historical contingency. Both ends or horizons of interpretation exist within a specific context and cultural horizon.[41] Pentecostal scholarship should strive to balance the ancient and contemporary horizons, employing a both-and approach.[42] One can only meaningfully engage the challenge or comfort of biblical texts in the current settings when justice is done to both cultural contexts.

B. Ansberry (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 204–22 (205); Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*; W. J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988); Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995); Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*; C. M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

40. Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 132. An excellent edited compilation of fourteen articles previously published by the *Journal for Pentecostal Theology* on the topic of Pentecost hermeneutics, which includes an introduction by the editor, is Lee Roy Martin, ed., *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). The following indicates numerous monographs that cover this topic in various fashions and to varying degrees. Roger Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, 1995); Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004); Robbie Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation* (Blandford Forum: Deo Pub, 2005); Amos Yong, *Spirit–Word–Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006); Lee Roy Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God: A Pentecostal Hearing of the Book of Judges*, JPTSup 32 (Blandford Forum: Deo, 2008); Larry R. McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic* (Cleveland, TN: CPT, 2009); Bradley L. Noel, *Pentecostal and Postmodern Hermeneutics: Comparisons and Contemporary Impact* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 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: Foretasting the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT, 2012); C. E. W. Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation: Vocation, Holiness, and Scripture* (Cleveland, TN: CPT, 2015); L. W. Oliverio, *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Melissa L. Archer, *"I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day": A Pentecostal Engagement with Worship in the Apocalypse* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2015).

41. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 132.

42. Ibid., 142–51.

The newly developed interest in the text's final, canonical form relates to the early Pentecostal precritical stage of Bible reading. It also emphasizes the importance of reading the text seriously and faithfully, leaving room for the interpretive community's critical role in validating its interpretation in combination with the Holy Spirit. It underlines that the individual's interpretation should be compared to the community's to safeguard the faith community and that both interpretations remain subject to the Spirit's jurisdiction. But it also leaves room for extensions of community perspectives resulting in different ways of reading the text. The boundaries for interpretation are its pneumatological interpretation, charismatic experiences, the scopus of the fourfold or fivefold Full Gospel, and insights generated by the Spirit.[43] The Full Gospel represents most clearly the christocentric logic of early Pentecostalism and states that Jesus is Savior, Sanctifier, Spirit Baptizer, healer, and soon-coming King.[44]

Synthesis

Empirical research among members of the AFM of SA suggested that many read the Bible in a fundamentalist, biblicist-literalist way. The quantitative results illustrated a theory of inspiration close to dictation underlying their hermeneutic, based on the idea that the Spirit whispered each word into biblical authors' ears who mechanistically and faithfully wrote it down. It views the Bible as verbally inspired, literally inerrant, and in agreement with the tenets of the Reformation's Christian confessions. Pentecostals took their hermeneutic from the conservative Evangelicals, in contrast to how early Pentecostals interpreted the Bible. Now they interpreted the text literally and utilized its commands as normative for their situation without considering differences between the historical horizons of the author's day and their own.

The new hermeneutic conflicted with how early Pentecostals read the Bible. For them, a personal experience of an encounter with God was of paramount importance. And their charismatic experiences formed the preunderstanding (*Vorverständnis*) from and with which they read and interpreted the Bible. Because of their emphasis on experience, they favored biblical narratives and testimonies and applied biblical ideas and language when they testified about their own encounters. When they read the Bible, they expected to meet God. They read it precritically, respecting the Protestant canon and centering on the text inductively before deductively comparing it to related texts, formulating their teaching in a synthesis between the texts.

The discrepancy between the early and later hermeneutical approaches is in the fundamental tenet of the Pentecostal proprium that the charismatic events that characterized the early church did not end with the death of the last apostle, as many Protestants asserted but were continuing to present times. They accepted that divine revelation and the work of the Spirit did not terminate at the end of the first century but extrabiblical revelations, miracles, and wonders characterized (and justified) the existence of the

43. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 115.

44. Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987).

new movement of the Spirit in the last days. Pentecostal continuationism cannot be reconciled to conservative Evangelicals' concept of inspiration that excludes any further divine revelations.

Many classical Pentecostals and leaders should reconsider the hermeneutic they currently employ that utilizes grammatical-historical exegetical approaches to interpret the Bible. They should consider applying elements of the recently developed hermeneutic described by various Pentecostal scholars that employ several post-critical and postmodern approaches. It includes literary approaches that evaluate what and how the text communicates to contemporary readers, reader-response approaches that question the impact the text has upon the reader community, and advocacy hermeneutics that investigates how interpreters' socioeconomic and ethnic make-up influence them to "see" and "hear" things in the text that others might have missed.

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