

BARTH AND PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTICS

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Ministry of

NORTHWEST UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

2016

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contends that in the search of a Pentecostal hermeneutic, Karl Barth's approach to Scripture should be considered as it shares many values with the Pentecostal views of Scripture. Additionally, it further asserts that Barth's hermeneutic has more in common with Pentecostal values than historical-grammatical and post-modern proposals. After a brief survey of different hermeneutic proposals made by Pentecostals, this thesis identifies three distinct aspects of a Pentecostal approach to Scripture: 1) reading Scripture as an encounter with God; 2) presumed access to the apostolic experience; and 3) an emphasis on transformation. This thesis employs a conceptual analysis of three hermeneutic proposals using the aforementioned aspects as a measurement of Pentecostal values. The three hermeneutic proposals considered are a historical-grammatical proposal by Roger Stonstad, a reader-response proposal by Kenneth Archer, and a proposal from Barth described in this thesis as an analogical hermeneutic. It concludes with a theoretical conversation between these three authors that highlights the contrasts and affinities of their proposals.

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Introduction

As a missionary to college students, there have been several moments when I have felt two-faced when discussing the Bible. As a disciple-maker on the college campus, it is important to equip students with methods and interpretive tools so they may be empowered to study God's word for the rest of their adult lives. To do this, I teach methods I have been taught from my academic training such as: historical-critical methods, narrative/literary approaches, and redemptive-historical approaches of interpretation. However, when I raise support in Assembly of God churches, Pentecostal pastors are not only skeptical of academic approaches to Scripture, but they take pride in personal and/or spiritual readings of the Bible which have blessed their own lives and the lives of those in their congregations. Being from the Pentecostal community, I also have found great benefit from these personal and/or spiritual readings. However, it is my experience that there is not any credible room in the academic world for these kinds of readings.

Pentecostalism and academic biblical hermeneutics have a long history of antipathy towards one another. Both hold the Bible in high regard. However, each approaches the Bible on different terms. Pentecostals generally hold a pre-critical stance, that the interpretation of Scripture should be dependent primarily upon the illumination of the Holy Spirit from a commonsense reading of the text.¹ Academic approaches emphasize that meaning should be established and validated through reason and intense, repeatable analysis. This could range from historical context to original language to literary conventions, etc. However, while both of these descriptions above are general

¹ Bradford McCall, "A contemporary reappropriation of Baconian common sense realism in renewal hermeneutics," *Pneuma* 32, no. 2 (2010): 229.

representations, several Pentecostal scholars have noted the desire to forge a marriage that makes available the tools and insights of biblical critical scholarship while faithfully allowing for the leading of Holy Spirit in the interpreting of the Bible.

I suggest that Karl Barth's approach to Scripture can contribute a positive way forward for Pentecostal hermeneutics to be faithful to the leading of the Holy Spirit while utilizing the academic critical methods of biblical studies. In this project, I have carefully considered Barth's hermeneutic and "Analogy of Faith" as I have sought to better map out the territory between academic and spiritual approaches to the Bible.

Literature Review

Many Pentecostal scholars have proposed various hermeneutical methods that are as various as academic approaches to biblical hermeneutics. In my review of literature, I have 1) highlighted various Pentecostal hermeneutical proposals that show the breadth of hermeneutical approaches and 2) discussed three common distinctives of Pentecostal hermeneutics.² Furthermore, hermeneutics is a field of study fraught with complexities and controversy. Even the very definition of *hermeneutics* is a matter for debate.³

However, definition of the term has generally begun to take shape as articulated by

Anthony Thiselton,

² There is a fourth common distinctive articulated in Pentecostal hermeneutical proposals: that Pentecostals find theological instruction from narrative passages. See Roger Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 1995), 11-18, Timothy B. Cargal, "Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and Hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age," *Pneuma* 15, no. 2. (September 1993): 182-184, or Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), 182-189. This distinctive is attested because Pentecostal experience and theology has been formed and attacked on the grounds that they appropriate the Lukan narratives of Spirit baptism as normative events for believers today. While I would not argue that this is a Pentecostal distinctive and that a Pentecostal hermeneutic would see biblical historical narrative as having didactic value, this discussion falls outside of my study as I am seeking to evaluate hermeneutical distinctives that could be applied to the whole Bible including sections which are not narrative, such as epistles, poetic literature, Old Testament prophecy, etc.

³ Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell, introduction to *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Beth M. Stovell, and Craig Blomberg (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 9-10.

Whereas *exegesis* and *interpretation* denote the *actual processes* of interpreting texts, *hermeneutics* also includes the second-order discipline of asking critically *what exactly we are doing when we read, understand, or apply* texts. Hermeneutics explores *the conditions and criteria* that operate to try to ensure responsible, valid, fruitful, or appropriate interpretation.”⁴

This is the definition that this study will use.

Pentecostal Hermeneutic Proposals

First, Gordon Fee has adopted and furthered a hermeneutic which is a negotiation between historical consideration, textual criticism, and an understanding of genre.

Furthermore, he maintains that there is not a Pentecostal hermeneutic, only hermeneutics done by Pentecostals.⁵ Fee is perhaps the most respected Pentecostal scholar in the academy. He maintains that the key to good hermeneutics is discovering the intention of the author to his original audience.⁶ He holds that the first step toward a correct reading of the Bible is to engage in historical, semantic, and contextual investigation toward finding the author’s intention. Furthermore, due to this commitment, Fee maintains that narratives, like the gospels, are primary historical documents, and are not to be used as exemplary typologies. As Bradley T. Noel observes, “For historical precedent to have normative value, it must be demonstrated that such was the specific intent of the author. If the author intended to establish precedent, then such should be regarded as normative.”⁷

⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 4, as quoted in Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell, introduction to *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Beth M. Stovell, and Craig Blomberg (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 10.

⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 81-82. The overall tenor of Fee’s chapter here is that different faith traditions like Pentecostal or Presbyterian traditions can alter and bias a reading of the Bible. Fee argues that one can and should strive to seek to set aside their own tradition to more clearly approach the Bible and not interpret its message through the lens of tradition.

⁶ Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, 43-44.

⁷ Bradley T. Noel, "Gordon Fee and the challenge to Pentecostal hermeneutics: thirty years later," *Pneuma* 26, no. 1 (September 2004): 65.

Roger Stronstad is another scholar who agrees with Fee's priority of discovering intentionality in hermeneutics. He perceives this intentionality as discernable through a proper accounting of genre and an employing of textual critical methods.⁸ However, Stronstad differs from Fee in that he believes that narrative passages, like those from Luke and Acts, do have didactic value, and these didactic goals can be discerned through careful analysis.⁹ Stronstad's departure from Fee extends even further than disagreement about the didactic role of narrative texts. He contends that, historically, Christians have insisted that someone having "saving faith" is a necessary "prerequisite" for those that wish to exegete the Bible and engage in Christian theology.¹⁰ In turn, Stronstad affirms that just as salvation is better understood by those who have experienced it, so too is the Baptism of the Spirit better understood by those to whom it has been given. In conjunction with this train of thought, Stronstad affirms that Scripture is approached by a Christian through "the pneumatic" – the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit.¹¹ Due to the presence of the Spirit, Scripture is "self-authenticating."¹² Though he sees the role of the Spirit and a person's experiential presuppositions as important parts of hermeneutics, he holds that analysis should be able to bear academic scrutiny and be able to be discovered and defended through interaction with the historical-grammatical method.¹³

On the other side of the hermeneutical spectrum, taking up the post-modern, narrative approach of hermeneutics, Timothy B. Cargal maintains that hermeneutics

⁸ Roger Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 1995), 76-77.

⁹ Ibid, 42-43.

¹⁰ Ibid, 60-61.

¹¹ Ibid, 73-74.

¹² Ibid, 74.

¹³ Ibid, 76.

primarily relies upon “pneumatic illumination”.¹⁴ With this approach towards Scripture, Cargal asserts that Pentecostal hermeneutics has more affinities with post-modern interpretive methods than it does with modernist, historical-critical methods for the following reasons: 1) placing hermeneutical epistemology upon “pneumatic illumination” rather than on reason and historical analysis,¹⁵ 2) the role the experience of the reader in influencing the meaning of texts,¹⁶ and 3) emphasis upon narrative.¹⁷ In essence, Cargal observes the legitimacy of post-modern critiques of modernism and holds that Pentecostalism, not being truly modern, should embrace postmodern methods because these methods are more accurate in recognizing their limits and because of the commonalities that already exist between the two.

Third, in a similar vein, Kenneth J. Archer rejects the modern assertion that an interpreter can discern the intended meaning of an author through investigation. Following Umberto Eco, Archer holds that meaning is created in the encounter between the text and the reader.¹⁸ Building off of this assertion, Archer holds that an interpretation is (and should be) shaped and influenced by an individual’s (and community’s) narrative or tradition. As a result, he proposes an embrace of reader-response criticism. Overall, he prescribes a hermeneutic that is an interdependent dialogue between “the community, Scripture, and the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹ Archer’s proposal has been met with some academic affirmation. One who affirms Archer’s proposal is Harlyn Graydon Purdy. While

¹⁴ Timothy B. Cargal, "Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and Hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age," *Pneuma* 15, no. 2 (September 1993): 173.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 173-178.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 178-182.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 182-186.

¹⁸ L. William Oliverio, *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 228.

¹⁹ Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), 253.

adopting Archer's approach, Purdy suggests a critique that instead of embracing reader-response criticism, as Archer does, a Pentecostal hermeneutic would be better served to adopt a canonical criticism approach.²⁰ Graydon writes, "A reader-dominated approach violates Pentecostalism's high view of Scripture among other essential Pentecostal beliefs."²¹ Instead of locating the creation of meaning in a negotiation between the reader and the text, Purdy suggested meaning should be measured by the Canon of Scripture and tradition.

Three Pentecostal Hermeneutic Distinctives

The Pentecostal community's commitment to charismatic openness to God has shaped and influenced the way it approaches Scripture. There have been multiple attempts to describe what hermeneutical commitments a Pentecostal has when they approach the Bible. Below I have outlined three attested aspects of the Pentecostal approach to Scripture.

1) Bible Reading as an Encounter with God Marked by Openness

First, an often affirmed distinctive of Pentecostal hermeneutics is that when Pentecostals approach the Bible, they see the act of reading the Bible as an encounter with God. Quoting Jacqueline Grey, Scott Ellington writes, "The Pentecostal community expects to encounter God in the text (the text representing that space for encounter), and in doing so is not bound to the historical concerns for the discovery of meaning within the text (such as the text as an artifact)."²² A Pentecostal hermeneutic is not reducible to a

²⁰ Harlyn Graydon Purdy, *A Distinct Twenty-first Century Pentecostal Hermeneutic* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2015), 99-102.

²¹ Ibid, 96.

²² Jacqueline Grey, *Three's a Crowd- Pentecostalism, Hermeneutics, and the Old Testament* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 55, as quoted in Scott A Ellington, "Locating Pentecostals at the hermeneutical round table," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22, no. 2 (2013): 215.

logical enterprise; it is a divine encounter. Pentecostals do not approach the Bible to understand it, but to meet God in it and through it.²³

Coupled with the expectation to meet God in the text is an extreme openness to hear from God. Clayton Coombs writes,

As a Pentecostal believer attempting to articulate a “hermeneutic of the Spirit,” this radical openness to God means that I must acknowledge the Spirit’s lordship over the text that he inspired and over the interpretive process. I must resist any approach to interpretation or any methodology that would have either the intentional or the unintentional effect of limiting the scope of the Spirit to apply the inspired text in whatever ways he pleases to the lives of believers, congregations, and communities.²⁴

Coombs describes a deep desire to not only preserve the meaning of the text as it is but also a desire to actively oppose any presuppositions or methods that would seek to limit what God might say to believers. For this posture before the Bible to be realized, a reader must foster and maintain a radical humility towards Scripture.²⁵

2) Access to the Apostolic Experience

Second, Pentecostalism maintains that because of the presence of the Holy Spirit, God continues to work in the world and through his church as he did in the time of the early apostolic church. This means that when Pentecostals read the New Testament they primarily see a continuity. Instead of perceiving the distance of culture, time, or contextual/historical setting, Pentecostalism observes a connection – just as God moved in those people, he is moving his church today. This is most evident in their views of how the spiritual gifts still operate today. For Pentecostals, the age that was initiated at Pentecost is the same age as today. Grey describes this as “a collapse of the interpretive

²³ Andrew Davies, "What does it mean to read the Bible as a Pentecostal?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18, no. 2 (2009): 219-220.

²⁴ Clayton Coombs, "Reading in tongues: the case for pneumatological hermeneutic in conversation with James K. Smith," *Pneuma* 32, no. 2 (2010): 263.

²⁵ Davies, "What does it mean to read the Bible as a Pentecostal?" 221.

horizon.”²⁶ Ellington, in referencing this collapse, writes that in their reading of the Bible, Pentecostals are taking the biblical story upon themselves. He writes, “Pentecostal readings assume a continuity of story. Our own stories form part of the larger biblical narrative and we engage the biblical stories as we move into and inhabit them.”²⁷

However, in appropriating and continuing this story, it is of paramount importance that Pentecostals read the Bible as historically accurate. While not reducing narrative in the Bible to purely historical accounts, they rely upon the historical reliability of the events described in the Bible – particularly the miraculous accounts. Ellington contends that if Pentecostals do not take the miraculous stories, like healings, as historically accurate, they do not have reason to believe God would answer these prayers today.²⁸

3) Emphasis on Transformation

Third, a Pentecostal hermeneutic emphasizes the transforming effect Scripture has on a believer. The emphasis of transformation stems from the belief that reading the Bible is a means of encountering God. As Ellington observes, “A genuine encounter with God cannot leave us unchanged.”²⁹ Pentecostals are highly activist and missional. Pentecostals look to the Bible to offer guidance in the struggles they face – penetrating the problems of today. They approach the Bible anticipating that God will speak through his word illuminating “new possibilities and new directions”³⁰ that take them beyond their human understanding. In this way the Bible becomes a means through which the

²⁶ Ibid, 211.

²⁷ Scott A. Ellington, "History, story, and testimony: locating truth in a Pentecostal hermeneutic," *Pneuma* 23, no. 2 (September 2001): 245-263.

²⁸ Ibid, 255.

²⁹ Ellington, “Locating Pentecostals at the Hermeneutical Roundtable,” 223.

³⁰ Ibid, 223.

Spirit guides us and Christ's mission is directed and realized. In essence, Pentecostalism is generally less inclined to be concerned about what the text was saying to its original audience and more concerned about what God is saying through it for today.³¹

Research Question

First, while much has been proposed concerning a Pentecostal hermeneutic that would seek to academically validate Pentecostalism's spiritual approach to Scripture, there is still uncertainty about whether these hold the values of the Pentecostal community. Furthermore, these approaches arguably fall short of being of pragmatic value to the Pentecostal community. While all use the methods of different movements of contemporary scholarship, all of these approaches fail to describe a demonstrable role that the Spirit plays in the hermeneutical process. Thus, this project has addressed these concerns by centering on the following question: what should a Pentecostal hermeneutic look like?

Method

This project has employed a conceptual/theological methodology to consider the question of a Pentecostal hermeneutic. A conceptual study is research that will seek to establish an ideal of thought and behavior through the analysis of philosophical, historical, biblical, and theological data. This type of study is appropriate for considering a Pentecostal hermeneutic for two reasons. First, a conceptual approach was needed to understand the historical values of the Pentecostal tradition. Second, this study was a dialogue between established scholarly hermeneutical approaches that have been adopted by the scholarly community ideologically, seeking to tease out and support an 'ideal' approach to Scripture.

³¹ Ibid. 223.

Sample

This study focused on contemporary Pentecostal views of Scripture comparing the works of Roger Stronstad and Kenneth Archer. I have also explored how Reformed theologian Karl Barth's hermeneutic of encounter, as highlighted in his work *Church Dogmatics*, contributes to a Pentecostal hermeneutic. I investigated how Karl Barth's understanding of Scripture as revelatory encounter has some resonance with the Pentecostal practice towards Scripture and may offer contributions to Pentecostal scholars' proposals. I have compared Stronstad, Archer, and Barth's application of their hermeneutic through their exegesis of Acts 2:1-21.

Instrumentation

In this study, I primarily analyzed different approaches towards Scripture to establish a hermeneutic for Pentecostals that engages them in critical study of the Bible while still honoring the values they hold in their approach to Scripture. I collected most of my data through primary sources. Roger Stronstad's hermeneutical principles came from his brief proposal for Pentecostal hermeneutics included in his book, *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective*. For Archer, I researched his manifesto work concerning a Pentecostal hermeneutic to understand his approach. His work is *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community*. Stronstad's Acts 2 exegesis came from his work, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*. Archer's exegesis came from his work, *The Gospel Revisited*. In order to understand Barth's hermeneutical approach, I looked primarily to Barth experts, secondary sources like Bruce McCormack, in reference to Barth's description of his hermeneutic in *Church Dogmatics* I.2. For Barth's exegesis of Acts 2, I analyzed a selection from his work *Church Dogmatics* I.1.

Analysis/Validity

These differing approaches were considered through analyzing how they line up with the three described aspects of Pentecostal hermeneutics described in the Literature Review above. Additionally, in my conclusion I briefly compared the three proposals and included some concluding thoughts. Through this process, I have worked toward a better understanding of how these approaches fit a Pentecostal hermeneutic and where they fall short.

As I approached this research, I have a vested interest in this study as I myself come from a Pentecostal background. Additionally, I have learned to hold historical-grammatical methods of scholarship in high esteem. However, as a Pentecostal, I have found only approaching the Bible in this manner as reductionistic.

Conclusion

As Pentecostalism continues to mature as its own faith tradition, it is imperative that it seeks to avoid two troubling possible futures: 1) that Pentecostalism develops an antipathy or elitism towards traditional scholarship and 2) that Pentecostalism does not lose its vibrant witness and openness to the Spirit in its adoption of different hermeneutical approaches. This study has sought to explore and propose a hermeneutic that will be a reflection of the Pentecostal community while seeking to uphold one of their deepest convictions: the authority of Scripture and the way Scripture encounters one's life.

Research

In the following discussion, I have discussed the different Pentecostal hermeneutic viewpoints of Roger Stronstad, Kenneth Archer, and Karl Barth. The basic structure of my presentation for each of these scholars is as follows. First, I presented a brief biography of each author. Second, I briefly explained important influences and concerns of each author. Third, I summarized the hermeneutic proposal of the author. Fourth, I demonstrated how each hermeneutic proposal is used by each author in their analysis of Acts 2:1-21. Fifth, I have included analysis of each scholar's proposal highlighting its cogency and affinity with aspects of the existing ethos of Pentecostal hermeneutics.

Roger Stronstad: The Pentecostal, Historical-Grammatical Hermeneutic³²

Biography

Roger Stronstad was born in 1944 in Alberta, Canada.³³ After completing his Master's at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, he taught at Western Pentecostal Bible College in Abbotsford, BC. Although he served at this school from 1974-2011,³⁴ he has lectured in several schools including Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Regent College, and Asia Pacific Theological Seminary.³⁵ The main focus of his work has been to assert that Luke does make theological claims though he writes in the genre of ancient historiography. Through historical-grammatical investigation, he defended the legitimacy of Pentecostal theology arising from the Lukan narratives –

³² The titles I have used for each others position is my own designation that seeks to describe and differentiate each position. However, these scholars themselves do not use these designations.

³³ Martin W. Mittelstadt, "Academic and Pentecostal: An Appreciation of Roger Stronstad," *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* 1 (2010): 32.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 57.

³⁵ *Ibid* 58.

namely Acts. His main works are: *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke; Spirit, Scripture, and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective; The Prophethood of All Believers, and Baptized and Filled with the Holy Spirit.*³⁶

Influences and Concerns:

Roger Stronstad affirms the primacy of the historical-grammatical method. However, he is also aware of the method's deficiencies in terms of adequately including the illumination of the Spirit toward Scripture. Primarily, Stronstad is concerned with biblically validating the Pentecostal experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as seen in Acts through contending that Acts is not merely a historical work but was also intended to teach theology. Additionally, Stronstad affirms the presuppositions that Christian experience and Pentecostal experience contribute to understanding, or empathizing, with the biblical text.

Stronstad identifies three key scholars as being influential in developing his hermeneutic: Gordon Fee, Howard M. Ervin and William Menzies.³⁷ Fee maintains the position that proper exegesis and hermeneutical study must do three things: 1) identify the proper genre of the piece of Scripture (epistle, historiography, poetry, etc);³⁸ 2) be read in terms of how the author intended the work to be read;³⁹ 3) be focused on the "context and content" of what is written.⁴⁰ While Stronstad mostly embraces Fee's positions concerning biblical exegesis and hermeneutics, Stronstad sharply takes issue with Fee's view that Acts, as belonging to the genre of ancient historical narrative, is not

³⁶ Ibid. 60-63.

³⁷ Roger Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 1995), 18.

³⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 89-90.

³⁹ Ibid, 42-43.

⁴⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 7-8.

didactic. Fee contends that Luke's primary intention is to give a historical account of the early church.⁴¹

Additionally, Stronstad is sympathetic to Ervin's hermeneutical proposals primarily due his emphasis upon the role of the Spirit in giving epistemological footing and understanding of Scripture. In particular, Ervin holds that the Spirit can "bridge the gap" between the apparent conflict between naturalized reason and mystical faith.⁴² Though Stronstad appreciates Ervin's approach and concern, he feels Ervin mainly proposes a new epistemology for interpreting the Bible based on the immanence of the Holy Spirit.⁴³ However, Ervin has not proposed a clear methodology that makes explicit room for the Holy Spirit to aid in the interpretive process.⁴⁴

Finally, Stronstad identifies William Menzies as a significant scholar in the development of a Pentecostal hermeneutic. Menzies articulated what he labels as a "holistic" hermeneutic. This "holistic" hermeneutic has three levels: 1) the inductive, 2) the deductive, and 3) the verification. He would label each level as important to the Christian life: the inductive level would be considered exegesis; the deductive, biblical theology; and verification level would "demonstrate" theological and exegetical truth through life application.⁴⁵ While Stronstad finds Menzies proposal compelling, he does not believe that it adequately sets a "theological basis" for the way Pentecostalism approaches the book of Acts, which is Stronstad's key concern.⁴⁶

Pentecostal Hermeneutic Proposal

⁴¹ Roger Stronstad, "Pentecostal hermeneutics" *Pneuma* 15, no. 2 (September 1993): 220-222.

⁴² Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology*, 25.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 26-27.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 26-27.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 28-29.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 25.

Stronstad's brief hermeneutic proposal comes from his work *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology*. In his proposal, he outlines that a Pentecostal hermeneutic should have five key components: 1) charismatic experiential presuppositions; 2) "the pneumatic;" 3) consideration to genre; 4) historical-critical exegesis; 5) experiential verification.⁴⁷

1) Charismatic Experiential Presuppositions

Stronstad holds that a responsible exegesis begins by recognizing an exegete's presuppositions. He observes that several non-charismatic scholars have accused Pentecostals of reading their experience into the text, using the text to validate their own experiences.⁴⁸ However, Stronstad demonstrates that these critics are themselves letting their presuppositions determine their reading of the text. These scholars deny the phenomena of miracles although operating in the spiritual gifts were the normative experience described in the New Testament.⁴⁹ Instead, Stronstad insists they reject the gifts as normative because they have not experienced the gifts as normative in their lives.⁵⁰

Stronstad makes three main assertions to clarify and justify the charismatic presuppositions. First, Stronstad points to tradition. Christians have affirmed the belief that certain experiential presuppositions do enable individuals to have better understandings of the Bible. To demonstrate this, he gives the examples that someone

⁴⁷ Ibid, 77.

⁴⁸ It is worth noting that non-charismatics are not the only ones that make the accusation that by reading their experiences into Scripture, Pentecostals distort the biblical message. Fee himself takes this position. He asserts that Pentecostals build their theology from Acts to justify their experience without a proper accounting for the genre of Acts as a historical accounting, not a theological treatise. Stronstad is aware of Fee's position which he describes in *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology* pages 19-24. He addresses Fee's argument in the fifth chapter of the same book, pages 99-141.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 67.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 70. In pages, 65-71 of this work, Stronstad details several of the arguments given by those who reject the availability of the gifts for today. These arguments range from percentage of the New Testament given to the discussion of spiritual gifts, to scarcity of the gifts being used in the church today, to the loss of the gifts due to commitments in dispensational theology.

having visited the geography represented in the biblical text or having a similar socio-economic background as the main character in a text would enable them to understand the text in a way someone who hadn't experience those things would. He especially highlights the priority given to the experience of having received and experienced the "saving faith" of Christ.⁵¹ He writes:

... it is proper to affirm that only the redeemed, only those whose faith is the same as the apostles can do Biblical exegesis and theology. In other words, saving faith is the necessary experiential prerequisite or experiential presupposition for understanding the Biblical message, exegetically and theologically.⁵²

Stronstad observes that Christians, because of their experience with Christ are the only ones who can properly exegete Scripture and engage with theology. He extends his argument contending that people have different life experiences that will give them privileged insight into the text (i.e. a construction worker's experience and understanding certain construction metaphors).⁵³ In turn, Stronstad extends this argument that in a similar way, charismatic experiences are legitimate experiences that enable Pentecostals to understand the charismatic-like events described in the Bible better than Christians who have not had those experiences.⁵⁴

Second, Stronstad qualifies the extent to which these experiential presuppositions can privilege someone in understanding Scripture. While he maintains, "... the Christian who has been healed will understand the record of Jesus' healing ministry or that of the apostles better than the one who has never experienced it,"⁵⁵ he also observes that "charismatic experiential presuppositions do not... guarantee a better understanding" of

⁵¹ Ibid, 60-61.

⁵² Ibid, 60.

⁵³ Ibid, 60.-61

⁵⁴ Ibid, 63.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 62.

Scripture.⁵⁶ While Pentecostals have a unique connection and insight into certain parts of Scripture, they cannot maintain they have an ability to understand the whole of Scripture that is superior to other Christian's experiential presuppositions.

Finally, Stronstad's legitimacy of charismatic presuppositions rests on his understanding of the miraculous and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many critics of Pentecostalism contend that charismatic experiences are primarily emotional responses. However, Stronstad argues that "charismatic experience is a spiritual reality and not an emotion."⁵⁷ Though charismatic experiences may be filled with emotion, charismatic experiences are gifts given by the Holy Spirit, not the results of human decision. He writes, "[Spirit Baptism] is something that God does to the Christian not something that Christians do."⁵⁸ Because charismatic experiences are rooted in the work of God, not the subjective thoughts or action of individuals, it is correct for someone to read Scripture with their charismatic experiential presuppositions.

2) "*The Pneumatic*"

Stronstad, in response to modernistic rationalism, contends that the presence of the Holy Spirit illuminates the text for believers and bridges the gap of time from when the text was written to the current day, giving access to the original meaning of the text and enabling the Scripture to speak to Christians today.⁵⁹ While Stronstad's desire to challenge the rationalism of modernism is admirable, he is ambiguous in the description of his proposed "pneumatic." Primarily, the "pneumatic" functions as an admission that the Spirit enables Christians to understand the Bible. However, he does not clearly

⁵⁶ Ibid, 63.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 72-73.

⁵⁸ Stronstad, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics*, 217.

⁵⁹ Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology*, 73-74.

articulate a process of how the “pneumatic” should be employed in the interpretive-reading process. Furthermore, he writes:

...just as Scripture, in terms of its inspiration, is self-authenticating, that is, it commends itself as the Word of God, so Biblical interpretation, in spite of the finitude of the interpreter should also be self-authenticating, that is, it should commend itself as sound, not simply because interpreters may share similar methodology, but because it is spiritually appraised.⁶⁰

He contends that Scriptural interpretations should be evaluated not on the methodology by which they are reached but through spiritual discernment.

3) *Literary Genre*

Stronstad follows the proposals of Fee in contending that a consideration of the genre of a text determines the possible intention of the author. For instance, this would mean that a reader would approach 1 Corinthians, an epistle, differently than she would approach Acts, a Jewish-Hellenistic and Greco-Roman historiography.⁶¹ Additionally, Stronstad identifies four functions narrative texts may be used to theological instruct its readers: “exemplary, typological, programmatic, and paradigmatic.”⁶² While mostly accepting Fee’s proposal, Stronstad is careful to disagree with Fee in seeing the didactic value of Acts.⁶³ Stronstad sees Acts as of key importance to the foundation of Pentecostal theology and is eager to vindicate it as a source for theology, not merely as a historical account.

4) *Historical-Grammatical Exegesis*

⁶⁰ Ibid, 74. It is unclear what kind of methodology should be adopted for “spiritually apprais[ing]” an interpretation. This assertion seems to undermine his consideration of genre and the historical-grammatical method.

⁶¹ Ibid, 75.

⁶² Ibid, 75.

⁶³ Ibid, 75.

Stronstad sets historical-grammatical exegesis as the most authoritative component of his hermeneutic. He does so on two grounds. First, he contends that the nature of humanity is such that humans are rational creatures and the key interaction between human and God through Scripture is best understood as "...the human mind encounters the divine mind."⁶⁴ The hermeneutical process is a meeting of minds. Second, he contends that the other four components are complementary to proper exegesis. The other four components prevent hermeneutics from being merely rationalistic by admitting that God interacts with humans through his Word at a supernatural, emotional, physical, and experiential level. However, historical-grammatical exegesis serves to protect Christians from subjective "religious enthusiasm."⁶⁵ In commenting on the importance of rational exegesis, Stronstad writes:

Charismatic experience, the illumination of the Spirit, a sensitivity to literary genre, each have their essential and proper place in hermeneutics; but individually and collectively, that place can never be more than complementary to the place of grammatico-historico exegesis and the hermeneutical principles upon which it is built.⁶⁶

5) *Experiential Verification*

Stronstad, in following the cues of William Menzies, asserts the final component of the Pentecostal hermeneutics is experiential verification. Both Stronstad and Menzies hold the position that proper exegesis and theology will be able to be integrated into the life of an individual and a Christian community. In other words, sound exegesis and theology should be able to be lived out. Stronstad and Menzies both describe this as "an experience-certified theology".⁶⁷ This does not mean an experience based theology.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 76.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 77.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 76.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 77.

Instead, the spiritual fruit observed from Spirit empowered living of theological principles and exegetical findings *validates* those theological and exegetical positions.

Stronstad and Acts 2:1-21 –

The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke, (from which I have obtained Stronstad's sample of Acts 2:1-21) is a defense of Pentecostal theology arising from the Luke-Acts narrative. He is chiefly concerned with demonstrating that 1) Luke's narratives have didactic value, 2) Luke's theology of the Spirit is not cessationist and is anticipated by the Spirit's work in the Old Testament, and 3) it is exegetically defensible to deduce a normative pattern of Spirit baptism from Luke's narratives. For the purpose of this discussion, I will be focusing on how Stronstad's approach of Acts 2:1-21 reflects his proposed hermeneutic.

1) Experiential Presuppositions

Stronstad does not begin by overtly stating any charismatic experiential presuppositions, but it is clear that his sympathies lie with Pentecostal theology. As previously stated, he does not claim special authoritative insight toward the Bible as a Pentecostal. In line with his proposal, he allows his charismatic experiences to fuel his imagination and sees the possible charismatic readings not only within the Luke-Acts narrative but also throughout the other gospel narratives, the epistles, and the Old Testament.

2) Pneumatic

In terms of a "pneumatic," Stronstad does not include a description of any observable leading by the Holy Spirit or set a direction for how his exegesis can be "spiritually" assessed. His "pneumatic" primarily takes shape in Stronstad's implicit trust

towards Scripture. He believes that when he devotedly studies it, he will be able to trust what he finds. Furthermore, he will be able to live his life in light of what he discovers in Scripture. In this light, he asserts, “anti-Charismatics *must* recognize that Luke does primarily teach a charismatic theology, and this is a valid experience for the contemporary church.”⁶⁸ His faith in Scripture and his faith in the Spirit’s ability to help him see Scripture emboldens him to make this claim. However, Stronstad relies more on his exegetical skills than appeal to any type of spiritual discernment for the basis of his research and analysis on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

3) *Genre*

Stronstad builds his analysis of Acts 2:1-21 on the identification of the genre of Luke-Acts as a theological historiography.⁶⁹ In this genre, a reader can expect both historical and didactic information. He cites the Apostle Paul, who affirmed that the Old Testament is included as the “God-breathed” Scripture, which is beneficial “for our instruction (διδασκαλία)” (Romans 15:4).⁷⁰

Furthermore, Stronstad states that the content of Luke’s narratives can be categorized in four different ways: “episodic, typological, programmatic, and/or paradigmatic.”⁷¹ He contends that Luke’s narratives fall into one or more than one of these categories, and he asserts that Acts 2:1-21 falls into all four of these categories.⁷² First, the event of Pentecost depicted in Acts 2:1-21 is episodic in that it happened; it was an

⁶⁸ Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 83.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-12. Stronstad spends the first chapter of his book establishing that Luke-Acts is not merely a historiography but also conveys Luke’s theological agenda.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8. The analysis provided about how the Pentecost narrative fits in these categories come from Stronstad’s analysis on page 8-9.

historical event.⁷³ Second, Pentecost was typological in the way that it demonstrates how the Holy Spirit empowers people for ministry.⁷⁴ Third, it is programmatic in how it enables Jesus' disciples to begin to spread his gospel locally and to the whole world. Fourth, Stronstad asserts that Peter's inclusion of the Joel prophecy demonstrates that Peter saw the Pentecost experience as the first that would characterize God's people in the "last days."⁷⁵ Furthermore, Pentecost is paradigmatic in the way it served to give credibility to later baptisms of the Holy Spirit. The event is used paradigmatically to evaluate the conversion of Cornelius' household (Acts 15:8).⁷⁶

4) *Historical-Grammatical Method*

Exegesis is clearly Stronstad's primary component for his hermeneutic. He is very detailed in his exposition and approach to the text.⁷⁷ Stronstad starts by considering the context of the passage within the Lukan accounts. He writes that this passage is part of a four stage process of the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit: promise (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:5 and 8); description of fulfillment (Acts 2:1-13); interpretation (Acts 2:14-36); application (Acts 2:37-39).⁷⁸ With word studies and typologies, Stronstad demonstrates that the *promise* of the Baptism of the Spirit, given by Jesus in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:5 and 8, is a promise for the empowerment to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ.⁷⁹ The

⁷³ Ibid, 8.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 8 and 52. Stronstad uses many different examples to demonstrate this relationship. On page 8, he references the story of Numbers 11:16-30 where the Holy Spirit descends on the newly appointed leaders of Israel to empower them for service. On page 52, Stronstad demonstrates the typological relationship between the Holy Spirit and empowerment through citing the stories of Balaam, several judges, Mary, John the Baptist, and most importantly Jesus at his Baptism (Luke 4:14).

⁷⁵ Ibid, 8-9

⁷⁶ Ibid, 67.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 49-62. Stronstad's exegesis of Acts 2:1-21 is his fourth chapter of his book. The chapter is titled "The Holy Spirit at Pentecost: The Charismatic Community".

⁷⁸ Ibid, 50.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 50-52.

word studies and phrases he focuses on are “clothed with power”⁸⁰ from Luke 24:49, “baptized with the Spirit”⁸¹ from Acts 1:5. He also looks at typological accounts in Scripture when the Spirit empowered people for different tasks. The effect of this analysis is that Stronstad has clearly demonstrated that the baptism anticipated at Pentecost is one of continuing Jesus’ mission. This sidesteps claims that the Pentecost event was soteriological for the followers Jesus sent to Jerusalem in Acts 1:4. Jesus sent them with the purpose of carrying on his mission. He did not send them to receive salvation but to be empowered to offer salvation to others.

In considering the *description stage* in Acts 2:1-13, Stronstad focuses his analysis on Acts 2:1-4 – mainly on the phrase “filled with the Spirit” (Acts 2:4). By showing every instance of this phrase in the Lukan narratives, he describes four observations of being “filled with the Spirit”: 1) Pentecost is not an isolated event; 2) it is something that happens to individuals and communities of people; 3) being filled is not something that only happens once to a person; 4) being “filled with the Spirit” results in prophecy.⁸² He contends that in Acts 2:1-4 the gift displayed is a form of prophecy because the hearers heard the Galilean proclaiming the “the mighty works of God” in their own languages.⁸³

In the analysis of the *interpretation stage* of the gift of tongues (Acts 2:14-36), Stronstad focuses on verses 14-21. He demonstrates through word analysis that Peter identifies the miraculous phenomenon as the prophecy of Joel. Through analyzing, Peter’s use of this quote, Stronstad notes three observations.⁸⁴ First, the manifestation of the Spirit is eschatological. He contends that outpouring of God’s Spirit at Pentecost does

⁸⁰ Ibid, 50.

⁸¹ Ibid, 51.

⁸² Ibid, 53-55.

⁸³ Ibid, 56.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 55-57.

not initiate the eschatological age, as the Spirit first filled Mary. Furthermore, Pentecost is not the last outpouring in the eschatological age. However, it is characteristic of the eschatological age. Second, through citing the Joel prophecy, in Acts 2:17, Peter identifies this display of tongues as prophecy. Third, this gift of the Spirit is universal. It is available to every nation, gender, age, and socio-economic status. Stronstad will note in his *application stage* that Peter says the gift is even available throughout the generations (Acts 2:39).

Stronstad finishes his analysis of Acts 2:1-42 with the *application stage* of the Pentecost event. Here Peter calls those listening to “repentant and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.” Through this call, Stronstad notes that according to Luke, Jesus does not form a new Israel but splits Israel into two groups: those faithful to Christ and those who reject Christ.⁸⁵

5) *Experiential Verification*

Finally, in this work Stronstad is relatively silent about how Christians can experientially verify the implications of Pentecost in their lives. He does conclude his book with a sobering call for charismatic believers to remember their responsibility in extending the gifts of the Spirit beyond the church to witness to those outside of Christ.⁸⁶ In general, Stronstad has an implicit hope that his exegesis will be verified as readers integrate his interpretation of the Pentecost event into their lives.

Evaluation

Roger Stronstad has presented a compelling proposal for a Pentecostal hermeneutic. While Stronstad’s proposal mostly falls inline with many aspects of

⁸⁵ Ibid, 62.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 83.

Pentecostal hermeneutics, like a high respect of Scripture and the submission to the revelation of God, he falls short in articulating his pneumatic. Additionally, although his proposal maintains a knowable and accurate apostolic history, many scholars have challenged the modern reader's ability to discern the original intention of the biblical authors.

1) Bible Reading as an Encounter - Radical Openness to God

One ideal that the historical-grammatical method has in common with an aspect of Pentecostal hermeneutics is humility. While Pentecostalism expresses this humility as a personal openness to the direction and revelation of God, the historical-grammatical method ideal is to strive towards objectivity. While there has been much written on the impossibility of "objectivity," many still contend that striving for an objective view of Scripture's original message is instrumental in discerning God's revelation, instead of reading one's own prejudice into the text.⁸⁷

Stronstad's proposal is particularly articulate in his attempt to both acknowledge and make room for subjective experience in the interpretive process while maintaining that the Scripture gives shape and informs an interpreter's subjective experience. On one hand Stronstad asserts that the reader can empathize and relate to the Apostle's experience in Acts 2 because of his own personal experience. However, he also asserts

⁸⁷ John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 160-161. Barton is an example of a scholar who maintains that the ideal of objectivity should be sought, although recognizing that true objectivity will never be achieved. In the cited selection, Barton discusses the accusations of advocacy, biblical critics that assert that privileged scholars in power have conducted most biblical interpretation. While these scholars have asserted their interpretations have a high degree of objectivity, they, in fact, have been used to marginalize people who are not in power, i.e. women (historically), the poor, the racially discriminated, etc. Barton concedes that many interpretations claiming objectivity have had a marginalizing effect. However, he contends that the failure is not to be placed in the privilege of the interpreter. Instead, these interpreters have failed in produced reading that is truly objective. Instead of seeing advocacy readings as the way forward for biblical interpretation, he contends that objectivity, however, unachievable, should be the ideal goal of interpretation.

that the reader must be able to ground his experience in Scripture in a way that is observable and gives instruction to those who have not experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, while Stronstad legitimizes personal experience as a way of approaching the text, he also gives primacy to reason that leads a reader toward an “objective” understanding of Scripture. In this way, Stronstad’s proposal is one that honors the otherness of God and the humility that seeks to bow to the revelation of God.

However, while Stronstad’s proposal may share the ideal posture of humility with Pentecostal hermeneutics, their shared humility leads to different ends. For Stronstad interpretation and Bible study is a task of the mind.⁸⁸ The goal is cognitive understanding that will be verified through lived experience.⁸⁹ In short, a change in understanding will lead to a change of lifestyle.

This is subtly different than the hermeneutical goal of encounter for Pentecostals. Pentecostal scholar, Andrew Davies observes that Pentecostalism is not as concerned with intellectual comprehension as with the reception of God’s *incomprehensible* revelation.⁹⁰ For Pentecostals, reading Scripture is not merely the meeting of minds. Humility for Pentecostals means that one does need to understand to submit or act for God. Instead, they hold that one must be responsive to God’s leading. For instance, God may call someone to give a prophetic message, Bible verse, or vision to the church community though he cannot himself discern its instructive value. A Pentecostal, through reading a passage of Scripture, may feel that the Holy Spirit is calling him to a specific response without understanding its value or purpose. Responsiveness and submission to

⁸⁸ Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology*, 76.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 77.

⁹⁰ Andrew Davies, "What does it mean to read the Bible as a Pentecostal?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18, no. 2 (2009): 220.

the Spirit are the main expressions of humility towards the Bible, which cannot be reduced to a humility of the mind or understanding.

In this vein, Stronstad falls short in offering a strategy that explicitly gives room and priority to the Holy Spirit in the hermeneutical process. Though Stronstad describes the Spirit as the source, authenticator, and instructor of Scripture,⁹¹ he does not demonstrate how he believes the Spirit should be involved in the interpretation of Scripture. His proposal of “a pneumatic” results in recognition that the Spirit is present when God’s people approach the Bible and that he allows for people to understand the text. As quoted above, he writes,

... just as Scripture, in terms of its inspiration, is self-authenticating, that is, it commends itself as the Word of God, so Biblical interpretation, in spite of the finitude of the interpreter should also be self-authenticating, that is, it should commend itself as sound, not simply because interpreters may share similar methodology, but because it is spiritually appraised.⁹²

While Stronstad seeks to establish a legitimate place for the Spirit in hermeneutics, his proposal is vague and gives rise to contradictions within his proposal. In the quote above, Stronstad gives primacy to spiritual discernment instead of reason-based exegesis. He writes that interpretations must be “spiritually appraised.” He does not define what he means by this and comes into conflict with his later proposal that experience and spiritual illumination must be “a complement to the place of historical-grammatico exegesis.”⁹³ Furthermore, his pneumatic is not observable in his interpretative process in his sample of Acts 2. Stronstad primarily adopts the historical-grammatical method. While giving Pentecostal experience a role in the process, he relegates the Spirit to an implicit role in interpretation.

⁹¹ Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology*, 73-74.

⁹² *Ibid*, 74.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 76.

2) Emphasis on Transformation

Stronstad clearly affirms the Pentecostal hermeneutical value that a proper reading of the Bible results in a change in the way one lives their life. Stronstad proposes two places where lived experience should play a role in the interpreting of Scripture. First, experiences of God in one's life will affect the way she reads the Bible – helping her more fully relate to texts, which relate to her experience. Second, an accurate reading of the Bible should be able to be lived. This does not merely mean the Bible should be applied to one's life. Instead, when someone begins the reading process, she is anticipating to be moved to action of some kind. Stronstad labels this last aspect as a step of validating the reading – demonstrating that the interpretation is robust. Coombs describes this as an openness to the work of God. He writes "...Pentecostal interpretation must pay attention not just to what God *has done*, but also to what God is *now doing* and what God *will do* in the believer, the church, and the world."⁹⁴ Stronstad's proposal echoes this concern, and using Menzies description asserts that a biblical reading must be "experienced certified"⁹⁵ – meaning it has the vitality to be lived out.

3) Access to the Apostolic Experience

Stronstad holds that understanding the original, apostolic meaning of the Bible is accessible through both faithful historical-grammatical exegesis and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Primarily, he asserts that through careful grammatical examination and consideration of genre a reader can access the intended meaning of the author. Through a contextual understanding of an author's intention, a reader can properly enter into the world of the apostolic community. Additionally, through careful exegesis, Stronstad

⁹⁴ Clayton Coombs, "Reading in tongues: the case for pneumatological hermeneutic in conversation with James K. Smith," *Pneuma* 32, no. 2 (2010): 263.

⁹⁵ Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology*, 77.

continually affirms that what was true for the Apostles and the early church is also possible for the modern-day Christians.⁹⁶ Additionally, Stronstad's hermeneutic upholds the historicity of the events described in the biblical texts. He never seeks to describe it as symbolic or allegorical. He falls squarely in line with Pentecostals in maintaining the historicity of the events of the Bible and their impact on Christians today.

However, Stronstad relies on a methodological approach to interpretation that relies on being able to discern genre and the intention of the author. However, many scholars have brought into question to what extent intention is discernable, particularly within narrative texts. W.K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe Beardsley coined the phrase, "The Intentional Fallacy," in demonstration that a critic's assessment of authorial intention in evaluating poetry assumes that a critic can more readily judge the intention of a poem better than author can.⁹⁷ Frances Young alludes to this literary term as having bearing on the studies of biblical interpretation.⁹⁸ In her analysis, she writes concerning the pursuit of authorial intention through philological analysis, "[Interpretive understanding] is not simply a question of learning Greek or Hebrew in some mechanical way – it is trying to get into a cultural whole which the author and his original addressees shared and which we do not."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 57-58. As aforementioned, Stronstad concludes from Peter's application of the Pentecost event that the Baptism of the Spirit is available to all people of subsequent generations. Hence, the idea of cessation of the gifts contradicts the universality described by Peter in the passage.

⁹⁷ William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, ed. William K. Wimsatt, Jr. (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 4-5. Wimsatt and Beardsley contend that if an author makes a poem public then she has decided that her poem is capable of fulfilling its intention. For critiques or interpreters to assert that they can know the intention and judge the success of its execution is an overreaching hubris.

⁹⁸ Frances M. Young, *Virtuoso Theology: The Bible and Interpretation* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1993), 10.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 13.

Stronstad's analysis of Acts 2:1-21 is a thorough evaluation of how Luke used certain terms throughout both Luke and Acts and proposes a pneumatological theology that Luke was expressing/teaching through his narrative account. While I am sympathetic to Stronstad's enterprise and theology, one cannot establish with forensic certainty Luke's theological intention in his record of the day of Pentecost. Stronstad's proposal is a product of the modernist presuppositions and is susceptible to postmodern critiques.

Overall, Stronstad's proposal has many affinities with Pentecostal hermeneutical distinctives. It is commendable in its desire to be humble before God's word, uphold the historicity of the events recorded in the Bible, and value the place of Pentecostal experience and response. However, Stronstad's proposal has discontinuity with Pentecostal values at a core level – a modernist epistemology. Quoting Margaret Poloma, Kenneth Archer attributes part of the growth of the Pentecostal movement to its supernatural “*protest* against modernity.”¹⁰⁰ In this vein, Archer suggests that Pentecostalism would best be served to adopt a hermeneutical approach that had post-modern affinities. It is to a discussion of his proposal to which I now turn.

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 19, as quoted in Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), 44. This phrase is part of a quote from Margaret Poloma that demonstrates how Pentecostalism formed as a paramodern movement – both adopting and protesting certain elements of pre-modern movements and modernity.

Kenneth Archer – The Reader-Response Pentecostal Hermeneutic

Biography

At the age of 19, Kenneth Archer gave his life to Christ in Wellington Assembly of God Church in Wellington, Ohio in 1982.¹⁰¹ Although he was raised as a Roman Catholic, he came to know Christ through the love of this Pentecostal congregation.¹⁰² Shortly afterwards, Archer attended Central Bible College, an Assembly of God school, with the goal of pursuing a calling in ministry.¹⁰³ After completing his degree in Bible with a minor in Greek, he returned to Wellington, Ohio to take a pastorate position.¹⁰⁴ While serving in this church, he enrolled in Ashland Theological Seminary.¹⁰⁵ After three years of studying and serving as a pastor, Archer went to complete his PhD at St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews.¹⁰⁶ In 2001, he became an Associate Professor of Theology at Church of God Theological Seminary, and in 2011, he joined the faculty at Southeastern University.¹⁰⁷

Influences and Concerns

Kenneth Archer offers an ambitious hermeneutic proposal that seeks to keep in tension several different priorities. First, Archer acknowledges the life-giving salvation and empowerment he has received through his involvement within Pentecostal communities. However, through academic study outside of the Pentecostal tradition, he has adopted the opinion that Pentecostal hermeneutics are under-developed. Second, he

¹⁰¹ Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), 7.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 9-10.

¹⁰⁷ "Dr. Kenneth Archer," Southeastern University Faculty, accessed June 2, 2016, <https://www.seu.edu/academics/faculty-2/kjarcher/>.

has observed the seeming antipathy between the Evangelical historical-critical method and the Pentecostal appeals to the role of Holy Spirit and experience in interpreting the Bible.¹⁰⁸ As a Pentecostal, he has sought to outline a hermeneutical strategy that would incorporate concerns arising from the Pentecostal community's narrative while being mindful of current scholarship's hermeneutical and exegetical developments.¹⁰⁹

Before describing his proposed hermeneutic strategy, it is necessary to discuss some of Archer's key concepts that play a central role in his proposal, namely Pentecostalism as a *paramodern* movement, *The Bible Reading Method*, and *Central Narrative Convictions*.

Archer demonstrates that Pentecostalism is a *paramodern* movement. By *paramodern*, he means that Pentecostalism has adopted tenets of modernism and existed as a rebuttal and critique to modernism.¹¹⁰ Through its embracing of the supernatural, Pentecostalism stood in opposition to modernism. However, at the same time, Pentecostalism has adopted "the epistemological premise of modernity" that truth is found in "objective historical evidence."¹¹¹ While Archer maintains that in terms of hermeneutics much of Pentecostalism in the Western world has adopted the modern methods of the historical-critical method, a true Pentecostal hermeneutic would be a post-critical hermeneutic that would embrace certain elements of post-modern thoughts while opposing others.¹¹²

Second, Pentecostalism was born from the Wesleyan and Keswickian traditions and adopted their method of studying Scripture by employing the Bible Reading

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 195-196.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 212.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 44-45.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 44-45.

¹¹² Ibid, 208.

Method.¹¹³ This method involves locating, with the help of a concordance, every instance of a word or phrase appearing in the Bible. After inductively and deductively analyzing these passages, the reader would form some doctrinal position about this topic through a “synthesizing” or “harmonizing” of these verses.¹¹⁴ The aim of this study would be to “arrive at a livable, demonstrable, and commonsensical understanding of that particular topic.”¹¹⁵ This Bible Reading Method clearly demonstrates the Pentecostal emphasis on searching the Bible for proper Christian “praxis” in the life of a believer.

However, Archer notes the way the Bible Reading Method was approached differently by Pentecostals than by the Wesleyans/Keswickians because of specific Central Narrative Convictions (CNCs) of the Pentecostal community.¹¹⁶ Archer defines CNCs as essential parts of self-understanding that exist within any community.¹¹⁷ For someone to claim a part in these communities, they must affirm these different understandings because they form the core of the community’s self-understanding. Archer identifies the CNCs of the Pentecostal community as: 1) Centered on the ministry and soteriological work of Jesus with the emphasis on the miraculous; 2) The Four/Five Fold – “Full Gospel” – (Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, Baptizer in the Spirit, and coming king); 3) the “Latter Rain” motif as validation of the Pentecostal community’s existence;¹¹⁸ 4) the testimonies of individuals and communities of the immanent displays of power from the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Ibid, 102.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 101.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 105.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 128.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 156-157.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 159. The “Latter Rain” motif is a motif based upon the agricultural weather patterns of Israel as well as the promise to Israel that there will be a plentiful harvest if they are obedient. The motif serves as a way to understand how the current Pentecostal movement fits into God’s larger plan of salvation. Just as Israel experiences a lesser Spring rain, in Acts 2 at Pentecost, the early disciples experienced a powerful

Pentecostal Hermeneutic Proposal

Archer includes two main components to his Pentecostal hermeneutic. First, Archer proposes that meaning will be *produced* (not discovered) by a “tridactic negotiation” between Scripture (text), Community (reader/s entrenched within the ethos of the Pentecostal community), and the Spirit. Second, Archer contends that an essential part of the hermeneutical circle is the validation of an interpretation. He outlines four different principles that can validate a reading.

Tridactic Negotiation

Archer proposes that all interpretations of Scripture are a tridactic negotiation between three components: Scripture, Community, and the Spirit. What makes a Pentecostal hermeneutic uniquely Pentecostal is a reader’s identification with the Pentecostal community and its narrative. Archer also proposes specific designations and levels of interdependence between Scripture, Community, and Spirit.

Scripture

Following in the linguistic theory of Umberto Eco, Archer contends that the text of Scripture necessarily limits the meaning within Scripture. By using certain words the authors have narrowed the range of possible interpretations that can arise from the text.¹²⁰ However, Archer sees the project of discern the authorial intended meaning of the text as beyond the reach of contemporary readers.¹²¹ Instead, there are multiple valid interpretations *produced* through a dialogue between the text and the reader. This

outpouring of the Holy Spirit. However, the outpouring ceased with “the great apostasy” when Constantine institutionalized the church. This corresponds with a summer draught in Israel. But with a fresh outpouring of the Spirit, the latter rains of the Israelite fall, there will be a great harvest. Through this understanding, Pentecostals see themselves as being on the cusp of the return of Christ, playing an essential role in the preparing of the world for his second coming.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 160.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 216-217.

¹²¹ Ibid, 218.

position forwarded by Eco is called “semiotics”.¹²² Additionally, Archer maintains, in contrast to Stronstad, that an author’s intended meaning is not accessible. However, through an analysis of the text’s context, genre, and other literary cues, one can “conjecture” a reasonable interpretation about the intention of the *text*.¹²³

Furthermore, Archer sees value in the Bible Reading Method that has been used since the infancy of Pentecostalism. However, he proposes that while keeping the desire for Scripture to interpret itself, Pentecostals must move beyond the proof-texting of the Bible Reading Method. Instead, they should use this attention to repetition in analyzing the inner texture of specific texts and Scripture as a whole.¹²⁴

Community

Archer’s primacy hermeneutical emphasis is on the community (or reader/s) component. Although he identifies Scripture and Spirit on equal footing, his post-modern affirmations necessarily locates the responsibility on fixing meaning on the community (or reader/s). He develops his understanding of the community component with four main proposals.

First, Archer embraces the notion that a Pentecostal hermeneutic will begin with the preconceptions that a charismatic person brings to the text. He affirms that to create a faithful interpretation, a Pentecostal will act from an identification with the Central Narrative Convictions of Pentecostals.¹²⁵ Additionally, a person’s experiences with the Holy Spirit within the community, regarding healings and other miraculous events, should affect the way a Pentecostal interprets Scripture.

¹²² Ibid, 215.

¹²³ Ibid, 219

¹²⁴ Ibid, 22.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 224.

Second, he affirms this position by describing the necessity of embracing the stance of reader-response criticism. Due to Eco's work on "semiotics," the meaning of a text is only produced when it is read, which means, meaning is dependent upon a dialogue between the reader and the text. Archer writes, "The meaning(s) of the text is not simply found in the text, nor is it simply found in the reader but comes into existence in the *dialectic interaction* of the reader *with* the text."¹²⁶ Archer affirms the assertion of reader-response critics that "meaning is an experience that occurs during the reading process."¹²⁷ Archer recognizes the possible accusations that with the adoption of this position, meaning would depend solely on the authority of the reader to assign *meaning* without any parameters.¹²⁸ So, while Archer maintains "the necessary participation of the reader's imagination," he also sees that the text "constrains" its possible meanings.¹²⁹ The text, with the words and conventions it uses, excludes certain meanings and makes some interpretations more plausible than others. This prevents the community from *inventing* the meaning of the text. Instead, the text's meaning is *negotiated* between the text and the reader.¹³⁰

Third, due to this adoption of Reader-Response criticism, Archer proposes that narrative criticism should be the method of a Pentecostal hermeneutic. He gives four reasons for this proposal. First, the Bible's primary literary genre is narrative. Archer contends that one of the great harms of the historical-critical method has been that it has been so focused on accessing "the world behind the text" that it has neglected to observe

¹²⁶ Ibid, 231. Italics are Archer's.

¹²⁷ George Aichele, et al., *The Postmodern Bible*, ed. by Elizabeth A. Castelli et al (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 42, as quoted in Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), 234.

¹²⁸ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics*, 237.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 244.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 239-240.

“the biblical text as a piece of coherent literature with specific genres.”¹³¹ Second, narrative criticism focuses on the text as a whole, seeking to understand the biblical text “on its own terms.”¹³² Instead of trying to reference the biblical text within history, narrative criticism seeks to understand the text from the presuppositions of the “story” itself.¹³³ Third, narrative criticism helps Christians understand their place within the biblical meta-narrative.¹³⁴

Fourth, narrative is for an implied reader, not the intended reader. Narrative criticism recognizes the need for an implied reader, which helps bypass the contention between privileging the intended reader or the contemporary reader.¹³⁵ Archer notes that every text has an implied reader that it anticipates.¹³⁶ The implied reader is created through a negotiation between the imagination of the actual reader and the grammatical and contextual clues found in the text.¹³⁷ This can aid the reader in anticipating how the text should be read and applied. In reader-response criticism, the implied reader aids an interpreter in anticipating the intent of the text.¹³⁸

However, instead of embracing the concept of an implied reader, Archer proposes that a Pentecostal reader should substitute the implied reader with the Pentecostal community. Archer argues that this is the most faithful approach to Scripture for two reasons. First, when Paul wrote the letters, they were not written to individuals, but to

¹³¹ Ibid, 226.

¹³² Ibid, 228.

¹³³ Ibid, 228.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 229.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 230.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 230.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 244. While Archer does state that the implied reader is constructed in the imagination of the actual reader, he states that an implied reader should be imagined from an analysis of the literary conventions of the text, a reader can formulate an understanding for whom the text was written. This is how the text shapes the identity of this implied reader. See Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics*, 240.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 230.

communities.¹³⁹ Because of the communal aspects of the recipients, inherent within the very writing of the different Scriptures was the “potential multiple understandings” of the text.¹⁴⁰ Second, Archer, following Richard B. Hayes, states that the recipient of Scripture is the “[present] eschatological community of God’s people.”¹⁴¹

Archer summates his *Community* section by stating that a Pentecostal hermeneutic gives equally priority to both the past and present Christian community.¹⁴² He writes,

Hence, it is the reading of the Scripture from a new praxis and in community that opens up valid yet multiple meanings of biblical texts. Therefore, a Pentecostal reading would not only pay attention to the poetic features and structure of the text, but would also fully affirm the importance of the contemporary Christian community’s participation in the making of meaning. The Pentecostal strategy would desire to keep the making of meaning in creative interdependent dialectic tension between the text and the community, which is always moving into new and different contexts.... The Pentecostal community’s theological conviction that the word of God speaks to the present eschatological community collapses the distance between the past and present allowing for creative freedom in the community’s acts of interpretation.¹⁴³

For Archer the Pentecostal community, faithfully operates with the convictions of that community (the CNCs) is invited to negotiate the meaning of Scripture with the text to navigate its current challenges and opportunities.

Spirit

Archer proposes an implicit role for the Holy Spirit in the hermeneutical process. He maintains that the Holy Spirit is “active participant” in establishing meaning but is “dependent” upon the Pentecostal community and Scripture in his ability to communicate to the church community.¹⁴⁴ The presence and power of the Spirit make both Christian

¹³⁹ Ibid, 245.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 245.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 246. Brackets are Archer’s.

¹⁴² Ibid, 246.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 246.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 247.

community¹⁴⁵ and a Pentecostal hermeneutic possible.¹⁴⁶ He sees the Spirit as having the power to validate interpretation and give direction to people for how to live out biblical truth.¹⁴⁷

Additionally, Archer maintains that the Spirit can move the community “beyond Scripture” in cases where biblical texts might raise ambiguity on an issue.¹⁴⁸ To illustrate his meaning for this point, he relates the work of John Christopher Thomas who contends that at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, Spirit-led experiences and Spirit-led discussion brought about the conclusion on the issue of whether to instruct Gentile converts to follow Jewish Law.¹⁴⁹ In this way, Archer maintains that the Spirit can guide the community using Scripture into new doctrines and considerations. Though Archer maintains that the Spirit speaking in time has the freedom to lead the community in new theological directions, the discernment of the community and the Bible are used to discern against mishearing the Spirit. While Acts 15 provides an example of the Holy Spirit changing interpretation with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this does little to contribute to how the Spirit should play a consistent role in the interpretation of Scripture. The result is that in practice of daily readings, the role of the Holy Spirit is *implicit* in the work of interpretation, not *explicit*

Validation

Archer concludes his strategy with four principles of validation, which should be applied to any interpretation. First, he stresses the importance of evaluating the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 247.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 251-252.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 251.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 251-252.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 251. See John Christopher Thomas, "Reading the Bible From Within Our Traditions: A Pentecostal Hermeneutic as Test Case" in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 108-122.

methodology in which an interpretation was formed. He states that the methodology should be clear and repeatable.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, the community and Holy Spirit must assess the “spiritual rightness” of the interpretation.¹⁵¹ The methodology and content must also be in line with the CNCs of the Pentecostal communities.¹⁵²

Second, similar to Stronstad, Archer maintains that an interpretation should be validated in the life of a believer – a praxis of faith.¹⁵³ He cautions here that just because an interpretation is livable and demonstrable in life does not make it correct. However, correct interpretations should be able to be applied to one’s life.

Third, Archer contends that an interpretation should be validated through being cross-culturally applicable. Archer’s concern here is that an interpretation should not privilege Western churches and be formed from a place of cultural or class bias.

Fourth, Archer proposes that part of the validating process for an interpretation is that it is open to academic scrutiny from Christians and non-Christians.¹⁵⁴ His main goal in this validation aspect of his strategy is to invite feedback to a proposed interpretation or reading of Scripture.

Overall, Archer does not see this validation stage as being part of the interpretative process for the initial reader/s proposing a reading. Instead, he outlines validation principles to exemplify an openness toward critique that reader/s should have when they propose a reading from the Bible reading community. Furthermore, Archer holds these principles of validation are four measures that must be satisfied to merit a reading reliable.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 254.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 255.

¹⁵² Ibid, 256.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 258.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 259.

Archer and Acts 2:1-21

Archer's exegesis of Acts 2:1-21 comes from his work *The Gospel Revisited*, where he analyzes Acts 2:1-47. His concern in this book is to display how Acts 2 has served as the definitive passage for defining Pentecostal theological values. Although at some level offering an apologetic, Archer is attempting an exegetical enterprise. I have divided my analysis into three subsections of Archer's Tridactic: Tridactic-Scripture, Tridactic-Community, and Validation. The other aspect of Archer's proposal, Tridactic-Spirit will not be included in the analysis because Archer's proposal for the Spirit is implicit and is not demonstrable in his analysis of Acts 2.

Tridactic: Scripture (Narrative Criticism Approach)

In Archer's exegesis of Acts 2:1-47, he employs a narrative criticism approach. He begins by observing that Acts 2 has a function within the greater biblical meta-narrative, which he describes as having three distinct "salvific acts": creation, redemption, and glorification.¹⁵⁵ Before describing how Acts 2 plays a role within that meta-narrative, Archer seeks to understand the literary context and content of the passage.

Archer identifies Acts 2:1-47 as playing a pivotal role within the Lukan narratives of the Gospel of Luke and Acts. He observes that Acts 2 is the fulfillment of three promises described within the Lukan narratives.¹⁵⁶ First, Jesus instructs his disciples to wait in Jerusalem where the disciples will be clothed with power (Acts 1:4-5). Second, John the Baptist insists that the Messiah will baptize with fire (Luke 3:16). Third, Archer comments that the baptism of the Spirit is the baptism Jesus is anxious to complete in

¹⁵⁵ Kenneth J. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited: Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 49.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

Luke 12:50. Furthermore, he illuminates the context by noting that in Acts 2:33 in order for the Spirit to be given to the disciples at Pentecost, Jesus needed to be given this gift from the Father, so he could bestow it on the disciples.¹⁵⁷

As he begins to discuss Acts 2:1, Archer observes that this amazing work of God occurs on the Jewish festival of Pentecost. By tracing Pentecost's significance through the Torah, he notes how God is sending a typological message by giving the outpouring of the Spirit on this day. He notes that Pentecost is linked to when God gave the law to Moses and the Israelite community.¹⁵⁸ In particular, Archer describes the original Pentecost as being characterized by God's self-revelation and the Israelite's call to obedient living.¹⁵⁹

At this point, Archer divides his analysis of Acts 2 in three different sections. First, he discusses Pentecost as God entering into the human story in a new way that extends his work of salvation into the world. He writes, "Pentecost is an intimate yet 'tangible' revealing of the Holy Spirit who becomes a permanent sojourner with the pilgrim people of God in the absence of the resurrected Christ."¹⁶⁰ Pentecost was an initiating event that began to bring God's eschatological future to Earth. Since this future hope is bound up with God's presence, Archer describes that God's self-disclosure "draws creation into the life of God while plunging the people of God into the relational fellowship of the 'Social Trinity.'"¹⁶¹ With this observation, Archer finds that Pentecost displays God's "relational openness"¹⁶² to his people and creation.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 50.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 53.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 53.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 53.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 55.

¹⁶² Ibid, 55.

Second, Archer challenges Reformed theology and states that a Pentecostal theology derived from Acts 2 would be one of “synergistic Soteriology.”¹⁶³ His main inspirations for this theological assertion come from the way God’s salvation comes through the initiation/revelation of God and the obedient response of his followers. He notes that the disciples followed Jesus’s instructions and waited in Jerusalem for forty days.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, he cites the Baptism of the Spirit is the free response of speaking in strange tongues “as the Spirit gives utterance.”¹⁶⁵ Both of these actions demonstrate that the movement of the Spirit is dependent on the obedience of human beings.

Archer does not hold that someone must have undergone the Baptism of the Spirit to receive salvation,¹⁶⁶ but it is part of God’s redemptive work through evangelistic mission to the world¹⁶⁷ and in the life of the believer.¹⁶⁸ The former is redemptive in the way Spirit Baptism equips, directs, and empowers God’s people. However, Archer also finds the Baptism of the Spirit as redemptive in the life of the individual Christian. He cites Blaine Charette, “The eschatological Spirit operates in the lives of believers effecting a transformation that fashions’ them into the image of God ‘because they are being conformed to the image of Christ.’”¹⁶⁹ For Archer, Baptism of the Spirit is part of the sanctification process conforming someone to the image of Christ. It is an event initiated by God yet voluntarily responded to by Christ’s followers through their

¹⁶³ Ibid, 57.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 56.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 57.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 58.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 58-59.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid 57-58.

¹⁶⁹ Blaine Charette, "Reflective Speech: Glossolalia and the Image of God," *Pneuma* 28, no. 2 (2006): 189-201, as quoted in Kenneth J. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited: Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 58.

willingness to be open to the gifts and ministry of the Spirit. In this way, Spirit Baptism contributes to the sanctification of believers.

Third, Archer identifies the formation of the church at Pentecost as the beginning of God establishing his eschatological reign in the world.¹⁷⁰ This formation has occurred as the result of the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit, which produced the speaking in tongues at Pentecost, the generosity that characterized the early church, and the believers' confession of Christ. This future reality will be characterized as a community founded upon Christ and dedicated to his kingdom. The Church is counter-cultural in that it lives according to the meta-narrative of Scripture as opposed to the meta-narrative and values of the fallen world order.¹⁷¹ This diverse community embodies Christ extending his mission to the world through miraculous empowerment of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷² As Archer writes, the Church "exists as a contrast society *in* the world and *for* the world without being *of* the world."¹⁷³

Tridactic: Community (Central Narrative Convictions)

Archer's analysis of Acts 2 is approached from a lens of what he describes as the Central Narrative Convictions of a Pentecostal Theology. In keeping with his approach, his analysis is shaped clearly by the Fivefold Gospel and the "Latter Rain" motif.

In fact, Archer's thesis of his Acts 2 analysis, in this work, is to "demonstrate the significance of Spirit Baptism as the initial signifier and lynch-pin of a Pentecostal theology of the Fivefold Gospel."¹⁷⁴ Archer approaches the Pentecost narrative as being instrumental in bringing about the various aspects of the Fivefold Gospel. Through this

¹⁷⁰ Archer, *The Gospel Revisited*, 60-63.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 62.

¹⁷² Ibid, 61.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 60. Italics are Archer's.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 44.

passage, he seeks to demonstrate that the aspect of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit furthers the other four aspects of the Fivefold Gospel. In terms of Jesus as Savior, Archer describes the coming of the Spirit as a means of Jesus extending his salvific relationality to restore the world.¹⁷⁵ In other words, through the Pentecost event the Spirit has initiated a new level of invitation to the world. Pentecost is soteriological in how it functions in extending salvation to the world through empowering the Christian community.

Concerning sanctification, Archer comments that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is part of the sanctification process that brings the believer to be more conformed to the image of Jesus.¹⁷⁶ Additionally, he identifies Pentecost as the forming of Christ's eschatological community through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. In this way, a foretaste of Christ's future reign is manifested in the Spirit-baptized church.¹⁷⁷ Lastly, while his comments on Jesus as healer are less forthcoming in this section, he does identify the miraculous empowerment as initiated by the Pentecost experience¹⁷⁸ and that "healings are proleptic and testify to a material salvation – a salvation which finds its fullness in the coming reign of God."¹⁷⁹

Second, while Archer does not significantly comment on the "Latter Rain" motif, it does play a minor role in his analysis in two ways. First, he uses the "Latter Rain" motif as a way of locating the event of Pentecost in the Pentecostal narrative. He writes that the event at Pentecost was the initial fulfillment of the "latter rain outpouring"¹⁸⁰ which would form the current Pentecostal community. Second, in describing the context

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 54-55.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 57-58.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 60.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 61-62.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 63.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 44.

for the Pentecost event in Acts 2, he notes how Pentecost served both as an agricultural holiday and signifier of Israel's historical deliverance from Egypt into the Canaan.¹⁸¹

This interweaving of agricultural cycles and redemptive narrative symbolism is in the same vein as the "Latter Rain" motif. Through this connection, though not commenting on it explicitly, Archer is able to demonstrate an implicit credibility for the "Latter Rain" motif as a typology that already exists in the Biblical narrative.

Validation

Archer's step of validation is meant to be a stage that happens after the proposal of his interpretation. There are four demonstrable ways that his validation process that have shaped his analysis. First, Archer explicitly identifies his methodology as a narrative critical approach, which is set within the great framework of the biblical narrative: creation, redemption, and glorification.¹⁸² In being transparent in his approach, he is inviting others to access not only his content but also the approach that led him to his findings. Second, Archer's proposal invites a physical response on the part of the reader. He hopes his readers will be open to the Spirit and choose to exist as Christ's "eschatological, Trinitarian missionary fellowship."¹⁸³ Third, Archer's interpretation is one that seeks to be inclusive of all Christians regardless of race or social standing. In his analysis, he seeks to draw parallels with aspects of Liberation theology.¹⁸⁴ However, while making inroads with the global poor, he is unapologetic about his theology as a Pentecostal, and he maintains that while Pentecostals should work ecumenically with

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 51-52.

¹⁸² Ibid, 49.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 61.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 54.

other Christian traditions, they should not be ashamed of their Pentecostal convictions.¹⁸⁵

Fourth, Archer's analysis is clearly academic. Though hoping for physical response in the life of believers, he cites numerous scholars, makes proposals in scholarly-theological vocabulary, and clearly anticipates being evaluated by the academy.

Evaluation

Archer's proposal is one which comes from someone deeply embedded within the Pentecostal community and tradition. Archer's desire is to propose a hermeneutic that reflects the Pentecostal experience, frees Pentecostals to interpret Scripture with several meanings (not just the historical meaning), and intelligibly contribute to the academic, biblical scholarship. However, in his embrace of post-modern literary conventions Archer has traded out modernism's "objectivity" for post-modern "subjectivity" and in the process abandoned key Pentecostal values.

1) Bible Reading as an Encounter – Radical Openness to God

Archer's hope is to propose a hermeneutic that is able to be radically open to the Holy Spirit yet is also academically sophisticated. A vision of his openness of the Spirit can be seen in his affirmation of Thomas' assessment that the disciples gave priority to experiential revelation of the Spirit over Scripture in Acts 15.¹⁸⁶ Archer's belief is that

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 55.

¹⁸⁶ John B.F. Miller argues that the Acts 15 narrative lacks any explicit intervention or appeal to the Holy Spirit in the Jerusalem council's decision. Miller observes that the narrative is characterized as a decision "the characters reason out" (*Convinced that God has Called Us*, 225). He further notes that the mention of the Holy Spirit in 15:28 that is included in the council's letter "seems almost an afterthought" (*Convinced that God has Called Us*, 225). He also demonstrates the similarity between James' speech and the reference to the Holy Spirit in 15:28. The effect is that Miller proposes that the decision made by the Jerusalem council is that the decision was reached by human reason after observing the acts of the Holy Spirit (15:7-8, 12, and 14). Elsewhere in Miller's work he also contends that there should be a distinction between times when the Spirit directly intervenes and when God's people make decisions based on their perception of God's will. Miller raises the question that the latter may not be the leading of God. He contrasts Paul's vision of the Macedonian man (16:6-10) and the commissioning of Paul (13:1-3). In the latter account, the Spirit explicitly speaks to call Paul and Barnabas on their mission to the gentiles. Following this vision, Paul and Barnabas set out on a mission characterized by many converts. However, in the 16:6-10 passage, Paul's

Pentecostals are free to interpret the Bible in the same way – letting the Holy Spirit, in community, give guidance when Scripture offers unclear direction.¹⁸⁷ Through adoption of this position, Archer affirms the leading of the Holy Spirit and opens up Scripture to meaning more than what it historically meant when it was written.

However, Archer does not differentiate what is the work of the Holy Spirit as opposed to Scripture and community. As Archer writes, “the Holy Spirit, although being a present and active participant of the interpretive process, is nonetheless *dependent* upon the community and Scripture.”¹⁸⁸ He asserts that the voice of the Spirit is limited to operating “horizontally” through the mediums of the Christian community and Scripture.¹⁸⁹ Two problems arise from the role Archer gives the Spirit in the interpretive process.

First, Archer has theologically marginalized the role of the Holy Spirit to the understanding of human beings by describing the Spirit as dependent upon human speech and understanding. A “negotiation” of meaning between the Spirit, Scripture, and community is not radical openness. Archer’s tridactic negotiation trades out the ideal of

vision does not explicitly include a divine agent. The resulting missionary trip does not see the same success. Instead of establishing communities of faith, Miller notes that in this trip Paul only sees the conversion of individuals (*Convinced that God has Called Us*, 104). Furthermore, he observes that Paul’s setting out on this mission resulted from his own decision (*Convinced that God has Called Us*, 107 citing Acts 15:36). Miller raises the question as to whether Paul’s second missionary journey was a result of divine calling or the misinterpretation of Paul. He writes, “In a text like Luke-Acts that focuses so often on God’s action, it is important to be sensitive to those passages that do not” (*Convinced that God has Called Us*, 107).

Miller’s analysis forces readers to distinguish between what decisions are God directed and which come from human reason. While I think there are problematic elements with Miller’s proposal, such as using numerical growth in the Christian community to measure divine direction, I find his analysis as having implications on the discussion pertaining to Archer. Miller’s proposal, in contrast to Archer’s via Thomas, distinguishes between the decision of the Jerusalem council and the direction of the Spirit. Miller’s implication is that the church community must respond to the explicit direction of the Spirit as opposed to trust that the decision of the Christian community is implicitly directed by the Spirit. See John B.F. Miller, *“Convinced That God Had Called Us”: Dreams, Visions, and the Perception of God’s Will in Luke-Acts* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 99-108 and 223-225.

¹⁸⁷ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 251.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 247. Italics are mine.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 247.

openness and surrender towards God's revelation for the ideal of God's word being negotiated by human experience. For certain, the bias and experience of a reader/s should be taken into account. But Archer's proposal elevates the perspective, experiences, and theological commitments of the reader/s as an ideal place to interpret the biblical text. He argues for a completely different posture that a reader should have before Scripture. Instead of Scripture being the unchangeable revelation that calls a community to submit, Archer argues that it is the place of the Christian community to partner with Scripture in creating its meaning.

Second, the Spirit is reduced to an implicit and ambiguous role within the hermeneutical process. It is difficult to distinguish the voice of the Spirit from the voice of Scripture or the community in Archer's hermeneutic. The effect is that there is implicit trust in the affirmation of the Spirit when Scripture is interpreted or the community affirms a theological position. While sympathetic towards the difficulties of being able to pinpoint the voice of the Spirit in the hermeneutic process, I do not find Archer's proposal as instructive in describing the Spirit's role. In fact, immediately following his proposal for the role of the Spirit, Archer sets validation guidelines as interpretive fence posts for what "orthodox" reading would be. For instance, Pentecostal interpretations must be in line with Pentecostal CNC's and be open to evaluation to the biblical academic academy. In essence, not only does Archer collapse the role of the Holy Spirit to what is said through Scripture and the believing community, but he also limits the Spirit by asserting that the Spirit aligns with the Pentecostal CNC's and of the biblical academic academy. If it is predetermined that the movement of the Spirit must affirm the CNCs, how can the Spirit correct the CNCs or other theologies the community holds?

Archer does not give the Spirit a clear discernable role in the hermeneutical process. Instead, he proposes that the discernment of the community and the text of Scripture, as interpreted by that community, is implicitly guided by the Spirit. This proposal collapses the role of the Spirit with the discernment of the community. Desiring to emancipate Pentecostal hermeneutics from modernity, Archer has made it post-modern. And to protect Pentecostal hermeneutics from the subjectivism of post-modernity, he has constructed an elaborate scheme of validating rules that seek to tame the prophetic nature of the Pentecostal movement.

2) Access to the Apostolic Experience

While Archer contends that a cultural-linguistic contextual understanding is important in interpreting a text, he maintains that the historical, original intention of the author is inaccessible to readers.¹⁹⁰ Instead of pursuing the intention of the author, he asserts that a reader should pursue the intention of the text. Archer's proposal asserts, when reading the Bible, that meaning is not "discovered;" meaning is "made."¹⁹¹ The only access the present-day reader has is access to today and her own community. Archer's stance holds that while access to the apostolic experience is impossible, there is access to the text that the apostles produced.

In a sense, Archer's proposal has the effect of reading the words of the apostles with an immediacy. Interpreters are invited to read the biblical text as if it were written to them because this is all there is access to. However, this falls short of how Pentecostals envision the lives of the apostles affecting their lives. They desire to see Pentecost anew. They desire to learn from the apostles' earthly, historical lives in how they, ordinary men

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 220.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 234.

and women, walked in the light of the Spirit in the midst of a dark world. Pentecostals see a correspondence in what happened in the apostolic age with the possibilities of today. Archer's narrative approach undermines the historicity of biblical texts by conceding that original meaning and intention is unknowable. In his article, "Locating Pentecostals at the hermeneutical round table," Pentecostal scholar Scott Ellington articulates what is at stake by adopting a narrative approach to Scripture. He describes the merits of the narrative approach that it focuses primarily on the story as it presents itself and sets aside the attempt to verify the historical reliability of the account. It puts the question of history aside. However, Ellington asserts that Pentecostal actions like praying for healing depends on the historical reliability of healing texts of the New Testament.¹⁹² For miraculous healing to be possible for the Pentecostal community today, the healings of the New Testament must be historically accurate.

In fact, Archer is unable to faithfully employ narrative criticism in his own analysis. In his analysis of Acts 2, Archer writes, "In Acts 2, Pentecost is the *historic* point in the mission of God where the very Spirit of God breaks into the present."¹⁹³ He is noting that the historic moment where God's Kingdom is eschatologically invading the world is of key importance. The church came from this historic moment. However, in his hermeneutic proposal, Archer writes, "Narrative criticism, unlike the historical critical methods that fragment the text, will bracket historical referential concerns and examine the text as a closed universe of the story world."¹⁹⁴ In his own analysis, Archer departs

¹⁹² Scott A Ellington, "Locating Pentecostals at the hermeneutical round table," *Journal Of Pentecostal Theology* 22, no. 2 (2013): 253-255.

¹⁹³ Archer, *The Gospel Revisited*, 53. Italics are mine. Archer makes a similar historical observation latter in this same chapter that salvation must penetrate creation in "space-time" for salvation to be extended to the created world and not be merely a spiritual reality (Archer, *The Gospel Revisited*, 56).

¹⁹⁴ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 228.

from his own method precisely on the grounds that Ellington critiques narrative criticism. The historical referent is too important to neglect. The Baptism of the Spirit is only possible today if it historically happened on the day of Pentecost.

Additionally, Pentecostal L. William Oliverio takes issue with Archer's view that intention is unintelligible. Oliverio disagrees with Archer's proposal because it neglects interpretive responsibility. He faults Archer for not considering "the implications for the reader's responsibility to differentiate his interpretation of the text (in a meaning producing event) from its original intent, even as such is an interpretive construal."¹⁹⁵

Oliverio is appealing on moral grounds that in reading someone else's writing, a reader has a moral obligation to protect the otherness of the text and seek to respect the author's original message. While I appreciate Oliverio's concern, Archer would respond to this critique by stating that he would have every desire to respect the author's intention if it were available to the reader. Archer agrees with reader-response critics that an interpreter only has the text and not the author, which would make it "very difficult" to determine the author's intention.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ L. William Oliverio, *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 231. Oliverio's critique arises from his commitment to "hermeneutical realism." (See page 248.) Hermeneutical Realism affirms that humans are limited in what they are able to perceive due to their perspectivalness. However, Oliverio, as a hermeneutical realist, also holds that humans are able to directly perceive the real world. This view is one of qualified faith in the human ability seek out and find spiritual truths, yet at the same time admitting the limitations of humanity to fully comprehend and perceive all of reality. At best, humans can speak in qualified terms of what they perceive. He writes, "...the view of the meaning of a thing interpreted which I am promoting here for Pentecostal theological hermeneutics is one that holds that it is something other than what an interpreter herself produces in an interpretation, itself a subsequent meaning producing activity... I am making a relational and moral statement that my understanding is not identical with the author's intention nor can it claim authority over the text as its meaning. Rather, I am responsible for my interpretation." (Pg. 348-349.) Other than Oliverio's moral concern of the responsibility of the reader, he does not offer substantial critique to Archer's proposal. Archer does hold that the text meant something to the author and the original reader. Further, he would not necessarily take issue with affirming that the text has an historical referent. He merely maintains that a contemporary reader is unable to access original intent as well as prove scientifically the historicity of the historical referent.

¹⁹⁶ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics*, 218.

However, Oliverio does not offer a proposal that affirms access to the historical referent of Scripture or the intention of the author. I find his position of “Hermeneutical Realism” as double minded. (See footnote 91.) On one hand, humans can perceive reality and trust their spiritual perceptions. On the other hand, their interpretations of reality are constructs that cannot be trusted to have authority. However, Pentecostals place their epistemological hope in Christ’s revelation and the ability of the Holy Spirit to carry it to people. While Pentecostals do admit that people can form wrong opinions or perceive revelation wrongly, they are much more optimistic in the access they have than is proposed by both Archer and Oliverio. Furthermore, the Pentecostal community’s faith in their perception is not located in their ability to reason or employ historical-grammatical techniques, but it rests on the faithfulness and power of the Holy Spirit and the authority of Jesus Christ.

3) Emphasis on Transformation

Archer follows suit with Pentecostals in affirming that a valid interpretation of Scripture must be capable of being expressed in the lives of the Pentecostal community.¹⁹⁷ While Archer does emphasize that his Pentecostal hermeneutic, properly employed would lead to action, I do not believe it would lead to transformation. Archer’s proposal leaves little space for challenging the Pentecostal worldview. Archer states that one of the distinctives of a Pentecostal interpretation is how it corresponds to Pentecostal CNC’s, “Latter Rain” motif as well as other Pentecostal experiences/values. In essence, the Pentecostal experience of the 20th and 21st centuries becomes the significant measure for evaluating Scripture. Bradford McCall writes concerning Archer’s proposal:

¹⁹⁷ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 259.

This narrative constitutes the “community” component of hermeneutics as “tridactic dialogue.” What is not clear is the degree to which Archer thinks that the other components of the tridactic dialogue, namely, Scripture and the Spirit, are capable of critiquing or even correcting the community’s hermeneutical filter (that is, its distinct narrative). Nor is it clear under what conditions or by what criteria one might recognize the Spirit’s critique of the community’s narrative. Thus we are left with the following impasse: If Scripture and the Spirit are not capable of critiquing or correcting the community-derived filter, then what prevents the filter from functioning as mirror, reflecting back upon the community, rather than as lens, looking outward?¹⁹⁸

McCall’s concern can be clearly seen in Archer’s treatment of the Acts 2 passage. Archer uses the Pentecostal “Fivefold Gospel” as a means of engaging the text.¹⁹⁹ Because his hermeneutic uses his values as a lens, it is unlikely that his lens will ever be substantially challenged/or corrected by his reading of Scripture. So while Archer’s hermeneutic may lead to action, it does not lead to transformation. One uses his own values to evaluate the text, instead of asking the text to evaluate his values.

In attempts to liberate Pentecostal hermeneutics from the modernist approaches that emphasize the historical meaning, Archer has proposed a postmodern hermeneutic that replaces the ideal of objectivity by advocating for an interpretation that comes from a faith-community narrative. In pursuit of fashioning a Pentecostal hermeneutic, Archer has constructed a hermeneutic, which appears Pentecostal in vocabulary and form but excludes the heart of the Pentecostal hermeneutical approach. Next, I will explore Karl Barth’s hermeneutic which was not proposed to be a Pentecostal hermeneutic but has several affinities with Pentecostal hermeneutical distinctives.

¹⁹⁸ Bradford McCall, "A contemporary reappropriation of Baconian common sense realism in renewal hermeneutics," *Pneuma* 32, no. 2 (2010): 232-233.

¹⁹⁹ Archer, *The Gospel Revisited*, 56-63. After a discussion of Pentecost representing God’s openness to humanity, Archer uses the fivefold gospel to show how the Pentecost experience denotes a theology of “synergistic soteriology.” Although the aspect of “healing” is somewhat neglected in his analysis, he does include it as having the ability to testify to a “material salvation” (pg 63).

Karl Barth – The Analogical Hermeneutic*Biography*

Karl Barth lived from 1886-1968. He was born in Basel, Switzerland to Johann Friedrich Barth, a pastor as well as a lecturer at the College of Preachers in Basel.²⁰⁰ Although his father was committed to conservative theology, the younger Barth broke with his father's views and studied at schools which taught the liberal theological views of the time: "Berlin, Tübingen, and Marburg."²⁰¹ After graduating, Barth accepted his first pastorate in Safenwil, where he served for ten years. During his pastorate and the duration of World War I, Barth became disenfranchised with the liberal views he had been taught and pioneered a new approach to theology. In 1921, he accepted his first teaching position Göttingen. He subsequently taught at Münster from 1925-1930, in Bonn from 1930-1935, and in Basel 1935-1962. A prolific writer, Barth's most known works are *Commentary on Romans* (1919) and the *Church Dogmatics*.²⁰²

Influences and Concerns

Barth received training in the "modern school" of theology which depended upon historical research. He broke with this theological school after finding this theological approach inadequate in helping him preach to the marginalized in his pastorate in Safenwil and observing how it was used to support the Kaiser's desire in creating World War I.²⁰³ As a result, Barth endeavored to discover a new theological approach that utilized historical-critical methods that, in the words of Barth scholar Daniel W. Hardy,

²⁰⁰ Daniel W. Hardy, "Karl Barth," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, edited by David Ford and Rachel Muers, 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 22.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 22.

²⁰² Ibid, 23. This multi-volumed work's first installment was published in 1927 and remained uncompleted when he died in 1968.

²⁰³ Ibid, 22.

allowed “the Word of God to come afresh to him, free...of accommodation to the culture of his day.”²⁰⁴

Integral to understanding Barth’s approach toward the Bible is his proposal of *analogia fidei* (analogy of faith). Barth’s *analogia fidei* is how God’s self-revelation relates to the human words used to describe God. First, Barth maintains that knowledge about God, revelation, can only come from one direction, from God to human. Revelation can never be discovered by the efforts of human beings. Describing this idea, Kevin Vanhoozer writes, “Understanding results not from some natural or semantic connection between sense and referent (a given), but from the act of divine revelation (a gift).”²⁰⁵ Vanhoozer notes the desire to find meaning (sense) from a fixed observation available to human detection and ability (referent). This method of approaching the Bible would be that of the biblical scholar who maintains that meaning is found by observable, repeatable, and demonstrable means like textual criticism, and historical-critical methods, or structuralist approaches. Barth is not opposed to these methods of inquiry. He contends that they on their own are unable to illuminate the Word of God to people. In order for someone to perceive God’s revelation, God must “gift” that person with his revelation. Knowledge from God may only come from God.

Second, language is unable to accurately convey knowledge of God because he is wholly other to human experience. God’s speech to people, his revelation, must be spoken in human words so that humans can understand, but people are dependent upon God to even understand what he means by the words he uses. For Barth, the human

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 22-23.

²⁰⁵ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Discourse on matter: hermeneutics and the 'miracle' of understanding," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 1 (January 2005): 14.

words God uses are analogous to the divine reality. Bruce McCormack in describing this concept uses the example of the term “Father” in describing God. He writes,

To apply the word “Father” to God, for example, is misleading if we think by doing so that God is like a human father... We will not be able to remedy the problem simply by trying to strip our words of what we think are their negative connotations. There will be a solution only if God teaches us how to apply our language to himself.²⁰⁶

In turn, the Bible is not the revelation of God itself but the recorded witness of that revelation.²⁰⁷ In order for the Bible to become revelation, God must “gift” it anew to the readers today.

Third, he grounds the possibility for revelation to speak anew to present day Christians, not upon literary theories or interpretive methods, but upon the time-fulfilling event of Jesus’ death and resurrection²⁰⁸ and the continued illumination of the Holy Spirit. Vanhoozer writes, “The gap between what is written (the sense) and what is written about (reference) is closed, from above, by the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who brings about in the interpreter the correspondence between scriptural sense and christological referent by redirecting his or her cognitive apparatus.”²⁰⁹ In this way, Barth’s epistemology for his hermeneutic does not rest in critical methods or scientific-like inquiry but upon the revelatory incarnation of Christ.

Due to Barth’s emphasis on the divine to human direction of revelation and the foundational place he gives to Christology, he has often been criticized as advocating for

²⁰⁶ Bruce McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis of the New Testament," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 332.

²⁰⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. by G. W. Bromiley, ed. G. W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, Vol. I.1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 111. Barth highly regards the historic revelation that has led to written Scripture. In that sense, he freely admits the Bible is revelation to the historic situation into which it was written. But for present-day Christians to receive revelation from God, they need God fresh revelation to speak to them through the Bible.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 116.

²⁰⁹ Vanhoozer, “Discourse on Matter,” 14.

a form of christomonism. According to Barth scholar Marc Cortez, christomonism is “a theological system that reduces everything to Christology.”²¹⁰ According to his critics Barth is asserting that all human reasoning about God is harmful and only that which is revealed from God is reliable. P. Paul Knitter writes about Barth’s theological stance:

The practical, factual necessity stems from God's revelation in Christ — negating all other forms of revelation. All of man's attempts to know God, outside of Christ, are not *only futile but* counter-active; they not only miss the truth, but they fall into untruth, into a "Fiktion", into a "Gegengott" — all because "Wahrheit" is only in Christ...²¹¹

Barth’s commitment puts him at odds with natural theology. In the extreme, critics charge Barth that he has negated that there is a human role in the revelation process.

However, Barth’s supporters maintain that he is not a christomonist and does not have an antipathy towards reason. Barth scholar Marc Cortez affirms that Barth’s theology is “christocentric”, not christomonistic, through showing how Barth defines Christ as being the starting point of revelation as well as citing Barth’s trinitarian orientation.²¹² Concerning the charge that Barth negates the human role in the revelation process, Cortez contends that these critics have failed to account for Barth seeing revelation as a dialectic between God and human beings. Cortez writes, “such criticisms revolve primarily around a failure to appreciate the dialectic involved in Barth’s redefinition of human reality, particularly human freedom, as a determinate

²¹⁰ Marc Cortez, "What Does It Mean to Call Karl Barth a 'christocentric' Theologian?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60, no. 02 (2007): 130.

²¹¹ Paul Knitter, "Christomonism in Karl Barth's Evaluation of the Non-Christian Religions," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 13, no. 1 (1971): 102. "Fiktion" is translated fiction. "Gegengott" means something "against God". "Wahrheit" is translated as truth.

²¹² Cortez, "What Does It Mean to Call Karl Barth a 'christocentric' Theologian?" 133-142. Cortez contends that Barth is not christomonistic by defining Barth's Christocentric approach through five different points: 1) veiling and unveiling in Christ, 2) a methodological rule of using Christ in understanding revelation, 3) a particular Christology, 4) Barth's trinitarian orientation, and 5) Barth's concept of divine-human relation.

correspondence to God.”²¹³ By “correspondence” Cortez is alluding to the innate image of God that every human possesses. By “determinate”, he means humans have limitations in their shared attributes with God. In this way, humans have a role in discerning, recognizing, and investigating truth with reason, but it is only possible through the gracious revelation of Christ.

Hermeneutic Proposal

Barth scholar Bruce McCormack has written a helpful article detailing Barth’s hermeneutic entitled “Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth’s Exegesis of the New Testament.” McCormack identifies three stages to Barth’s hermeneutic found in Church Dogmatics Vol. I.2 as *explicatio, meditatio, and applicatio* (explanation, meditation, and application).²¹⁴ I will briefly describe these three steps of Barth hermeneutical strategy.

Explanation

In this first stage, Barth starts with historical-critical exegesis. His goal in using critical methods is to ascertain “what stands in the text.”²¹⁵ Barth uses “source criticism, lexicography, grammar, syntax and appreciation of style” to “try and hear them [the words of the prophets and apostles] as documents in their concrete historical situation.”²¹⁶ However, Barth sees understanding the historical sense of the text as the initial stage of understanding. McCormack notes that for those who only employ this first, historical-focused stage have the historical author, like Paul, as their object. However, as previously noted, Barth sees the biblical authors as only witnesses to God’s revelation. McCormack

²¹³ Cortez, "What Does It Mean to Call Karl Barth a 'christocentric' Theologian?" 141-142.

²¹⁴ McCormack, “Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth’s Exegesis of the New Testament,” 325. This is referenced in footnote 8.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 326.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 327.

writes, for Barth, “True understanding only arises where the interpreter too is confronted by the same object as the first witness...”²¹⁷ Barth described this as if present day readers are watching the biblical writers through their windows in the street staring up at something in the sky out of the reader’s view.²¹⁸ Perceiving the revelation that the biblical writers saw is the second stage of Barth’s hermeneutic strategy.

Meditation

In Barth’s second stage, he seeks to press beyond the words of Scripture in their historical sense, as witness, and seeks access to the revelation, that stands behind the words. In this step Barth believes he “has penetrated the real subject matter.”²¹⁹ Referencing the analogy described in the previous stage, in this stage, Barth stops looking at the writer outside the window and observes the thing, the *Sache*, the writer is looking at – the thing to which, according to Vanhoozer, “the author directed his or her thoughts.”²²⁰

Once perceived, the revelation ceases to be revelation to the author and becomes a revelation to the exegete – no longer merely a witness to revelation. The change is so substantial that Barth claims that he is able to identify with the author in a palpable way claiming to almost forget that he is not the author. He writes,

As the one who seeks to understand, I must thrust forward to the point where I almost stand before the mystery of the *subject-matter*, where I no longer stand before the mystery of the *document* as such, where I almost forget that I am not the author, where I have understood him so well that I allow him to speak in my name and can myself speak in his name.²²¹

²¹⁷ Ibid, 327.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 326.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 328.

²²⁰ Vanhoozer, “Discourse on Matter,” 17.

²²¹ Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief 1922* (Zürich: 1984), xii, from the translation *The Epistle to the Romans ... Translated from the Sixth Edition by Edwyn C. Hoskyns* (Oxford University Press: London; Printed in U.S.A., 1968), xii, quoted in McCormack, “Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth’s Exegesis of the New Testament,” 328. Barth often uses the term “mystery” for revelation.

McCormack notes that Barth does not believe he is able to perfectly understand the author's intended meaning, but that he has peered into the revelation to which Paul's words were directed.²²²

McCormack describes this as the "hardest" stage of Barth's hermeneutical process.²²³ The reason for the difficulty of this stage is that it is not accessible by the will of people but rests solely in the work of God to reveal the mystery to which Scripture points. Barth contends that this process is not about the reader understanding, or *grasping*, the Word of God but instead the reader *being grasped* by the Word of God. As Barth writes, coming before God's revelation is not about readers mastering the contents of the Bible but readers being "mastered by the subject-matter, who are subdued by it, that we can investigate the humanity of the word *by which it is told us.*"²²⁴ Through this process not only does God reveal who he is, but God is also revealing what it means to be human, to love, and be faithful to his kingdom. The perceiving of all eternal truth rests upon the gracious act of God as giver/revealer.

Application

The third stage of Barth's hermeneutic is returning to the text and looking at it again, with the revelation that has been perceived in stage two in mind. This involves being critical of the reading conducted in the first stage. The reader must be ready for the text to speak to him anew. McCormack quoting Barth relates that, "The goal of this stage is an 'objective reworking of the text' – one which gives expression to the exegete's

²²² McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Exegesis of the New Testament, 328.

²²³ Ibid, 329.

²²⁴ Barth, Church Dogmatics Vol. 1.2, 470, quoted in McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Exegesis of the New Testament, 329. Italics are mine.

understanding to the text in the light of the subject matter in his or her own words.”²²⁵

This stage allows for the previous historical-critical interpretation of the text to be enhanced, corrected, and understood by the revelation that God has given to the exegete.

A closing observation of Barth’s hermeneutic is in order. Although Barth critiques the historical-critical method, he does not repudiate it. Instead, he maintains it is useful but has its limits.²²⁶ Barth believes that critical exegetical work is both the “starting-point”²²⁷ for posturing oneself to receive revelation from God as well as a “limiting horizon”²²⁸ that could safeguard against subjective readings that may be proposed. While the critical exegetical protects against subjectivism, Barth’s second stage allows for God to speak on his own terms without philosophical limitation. Because the reader is posturing herself to hear from God, his revelation is gifted to her anew. This means that revelation is not bound to the historical understanding of the text from which it arises. As a result, a text is not locked into having one meaning. This flexibility and grounded-ness rests in Barth’s approach of analogy, which allows his hermeneutic to avoid the literalists “univocal” view of Scripture as well the subjectivists “equivocal” view.²²⁹

Barth and Acts 2:1-21

²²⁵ McCormack, “Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth’s Exegesis of the New Testament, 329.

²²⁶ Ibid, 322. McCormack believes Barth’s respect of the historical-critical method is similar to that of Kant’s view of reason. He has such high respect for the method that he believes it “could itself play a role in establishing its own limitations.”

²²⁷ Ibid, 327.

²²⁸ Ibid, 333.

²²⁹ George Hunsinger, “Beyond literalism and expressivism: Karl Barth’s hermeneutical realism,” *Modern Theology* 3, no. 3 (April 1987): 218. Hunsinger observes Barth’s hope of creating a legitimate posture before Scripture that honors God as the source of revelation (not historical analysis) and safeguards against subjectivists claiming divine utterance. He writes, “The ‘univocal’ solution proposed by the literalists was ruled out, because it could not do justice to the referent’s abiding mystery. It failed to honor the mysterious divine hiddenness in the midst of the divine revelation. Likewise, the ‘equivocal’ solution proposed by the expressivists was ruled out, because it could not do justice to the referent - this time to its self-predication. It failed to honor the perspicuous divine self-unveiling in the midst of the divine hiddenness. The alternative was therefore to construe the mode of reference ‘analogically.’ The reticence of analogy honored the mystery, the predication of analogy the perspicuity, of God’s self-revelation as attested in scripture.”

Barth's sample of Acts 2:1-21 come from his work *Church Dogmatics* Vol. I.1, Chapter 2: The Revelation of God. In this section of his work, he is concerned with showing how the revelation of God to humans is known and made possible in God's very own triune nature. Revelation is fully contingent on him, and Scripture testifies concerning the aspect of self-revelation as a part of God's character and identity.²³⁰ This selection comes from the part of the chapter, which considers how the Holy Spirit makes it possible for people to become proclaimers of God's Word.²³¹ I will demonstrate Barth's three stages of his process as he considers the Acts 2 passage. However, McCormack notes that Barth's published work typically reflects interpretation from his third stage.²³²

Explanation

In Barth's analysis of the Pentecost narrative, he is deeply concerned with 1) dealing with the content of the passage and 2) establishing the text within its historical and scriptural context (in this order).

First, Barth considers the content of the Pentecost event observing two main "effects"²³³ that would need to be elaborated upon in a faithful exposition of the text: 1) the tongues of fire that appear above the heads of the disciples, and 2) the utterances which proclaimed God's message. While not wanting to neglect the first effect, Barth spends more time discussing the second.

He comments that this outpouring of the Spirit has ushered the proclamation of "the wonderful works" through both the speaking of the various tongues by the disciples

²³⁰ Hardy, "Karl Barth," 30-31.

²³¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.1, 454-456.

²³² McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Exegesis of the New Testament," 329.

²³³ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* Vol I.1, 455.

as well as the comprehension of those in attendance and the prophetic message given by Peter. He maintains that Peter not only preaches the *kerygma* but also primarily proclaims the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel that the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh, enabling both men and women to prophesy.²³⁴

Through his analysis, Barth shows a careful consideration of the Greek text as it is intermingled within his comments. Furthermore, he is mindful to elaborate upon continuities and discontinuities of Scriptural motifs. For instance, he describes how the term “tongues” employed in Acts 2 is the same word that Paul employs in 1 Corinthians, but he wants to note that Paul does not give the same significance to “tongues” as Luke gives it in Acts 2.²³⁵

Second, Barth uses historical and scriptural context to defend his assertion of the central significance of the Pentecost event. He describes the significance of the event as “the commissioning, authorising, and equipping of the apostolate” to witness through the work of the Holy Spirit.²³⁶ He finds evidence of this significance in the historical and Scriptural context of the event. He cites Acts 1:8 as the antecedent of the event where Christ links the gift of the Spirit with empowerment for witness. He also cites John 15:26 and sharing this link between “πνευμα” (*Spirit*) and “μαρτυρεω” (witness).²³⁷

Meditation

Although Barth does not explicitly state the revelation that he has perceived in contemplating this passage, it evidently is the mystery that through the empowerment and

²³⁴ Ibid, 455.

²³⁵ Ibid, 455. Though he briefly comments on the difference in the two acts’ significance, he does maintain the two acts share the central significance that both acts of speaking in tongues are significant in that they find their source in power of the Holy Spirit.

²³⁶ Ibid, 455.

²³⁷ Ibid, 455. Barth also includes parallel passages for Jn. 15:26, Mk 13:11 and Lk 12:12, which contribute to the credibility of his asserted significance of the Pentecost event.

work of the Spirit, human beings are able to proclaim the Word of God. He writes, “The Holy Spirit is the authorization to speak about Christ; He is the equipment of the prophet and apostle; He is the summons to the church to minister the Word.”²³⁸ This theological perception becomes central as he briefly reconsiders the Pentecost text in the “Application” stage of his hermeneutic.

Before moving to the final stage of Barth’s hermeneutic, it is worth noting that the effect of Barth’s meditation stage infuses his textual analysis with awe. Through reading his work, I am continually made aware of his amazement of God’s gracious revelation witnessed in the Bible and the revelation made aware to him in his endeavor to dive into the text. Although Barth is highly academic in his approach, hermeneutics is not merely a scholarly endeavor for him. In this passage concerning Pentecost, his analysis expresses a genuine wonder that God would enable people to be able to convey the Gospel of Christ and be a means of extending the invitation into God’s kingdom.²³⁹

Application

At the conclusion of his treatment of the Pentecost event, Barth quoting Acts 2:6 writes, “If we ask concerning the mind of the Spirit... we must answer that it consists in the fact that He is *the gift of speaking about the “wonderful works of God.”*”²⁴⁰ By revisiting the Pentecost narrative this way, Barth seeks to stay faithful to what happened on the day of Pentecost but also appropriates revelation for present-day readers. Barth observes in the Pentecost narrative, not merely a historic event but an eternal theological

²³⁸ Ibid, 455.

²³⁹ Ibid, 455. Barth writes, “The Holy Spirit is the authorization to speak about Christ; He is the equipment of the prophet; He is the summons to the Church to minister the Word.” Through considering that the presence and empowerment of the Holy as “authorisation” for working for Christ’s kingdom, Barth observes how gifted God’s people are. This demonstrates Barth’s awe, thanks and praise of God for his gifting the church with his presence.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 456. Italics are mine.

truth. Because of Pentecost, God's people are now able to, by the gifted presence of the Holy Spirit, be bearers of God's Word. The Church, throughout all generations, is able to boldly proclaim truth about God and his gospel.

Evaluation

McCormack states that when Karl Barth forwarded his new hermeneutical approach in his commentary on Romans, he was sharply criticized for abandoning the strict historical-critical method. Adolf Jülicher accused Barth of diving into purely a spiritualized hermeneutic disregarding the historical dimension of the biblical witness.²⁴¹ In reply to Jülicher's accusation, Barth responded, "I am no 'pneumatic'..."²⁴² Barth sought to defend himself from proposing a spiritualized, practical hermeneutic that primarily "would address contemporary problems."²⁴³ Consequently, he may have objected to the assertion that his hermeneutic approach has many affinities with the Pentecostal distinctives. However, while not identical, Barth's hermeneutic shares significant aspects with Pentecostal stance toward the Bible. The approaches even share commonalities in their origin story as being corrective, although not complete rejections, of the modernist agendas of the early 20th century.

1) Bible Reading as an Encounter – Radical Openness to God

The belief that the event of reading the Bible is a divine encounter is a place of high continuity between Barth and Pentecostals. Both hold that understanding the Bible is not as important as hearing from God. In fact, implicit in Barth's hermeneutic is the

²⁴¹ Adolf Jülicher, "A Modern Interpreter of Paul" in *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1968), 81, quoted in McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Exegesis of the New Testament," 322.

²⁴² Barth, *Der Römerbrief*, xii, quoted in McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Exegesis of the New Testament," 324.

²⁴³ McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Exegesis of the New Testament," 323.

conviction that “human language is entirely unsuitable to be a vehicle of the divine Word,”²⁴⁴ and the only way the words of the Bible become revelatory is in the gracious presence and illumination of God. Barth writes, “Because it is the *decisive activity* prayer must take precedence even of exegesis, and in no circumstances must it be suspended.”²⁴⁵ For Barth and the Pentecostal, a study of the Bible is first and foremost an essential aspect of the divine relationship where God reveals himself to his children. As Coombs writes of the Pentecostal experience, “We encounter the Spirit where he is and he helps us to interpret his works through his word.”²⁴⁶ Coombs’ statement is radically similar to Barth’s concept of God’s self-revelation and his proposal of “analogy of faith” – not only do people need God to speak to them and reveal himself, but they also need him to explain what he means by the words he uses.

Additionally, both Barth and Pentecostals are radically open to hearing anew from God. They are deeply concerned with not limiting what God may seek to say through Scripture by imposing philosophical or critical interpretive limits or filters upon it.

Coombs writes,

As a Pentecostal believer attempting to articulate a “hermeneutic of the Spirit,” this radical openness to God means that I must acknowledge the Spirit’s lordship over the text that he inspired and over the interpretive process. I must resist any approach to interpretation or any methodology that would have either the intentional or the unintentional effect of limiting the scope of the Spirit to apply the inspired text in whatever ways he pleases to the lives of believers, congregations, and communities.²⁴⁷

Similarly, Barth writes,

We understand Holy Scripture falsely, that is, not as Holy Scripture, if we regard it as a fixed, inflexible, self-contained quantity. God is a living

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 332.

²⁴⁵ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2, 695. Italics are mine.

²⁴⁶ Clayton Coombs, “Reading in tongues: the case for pneumatological hermeneutic in conversation with James K. Smith,” *Pneuma* 32, no. 2 (2010): 266.

²⁴⁷ Coombs, “Reading in Tongues,” 263.

God. He is from everlasting to everlasting.... He is not buried in this "once," in the writing of [the prophets and apostles].... Jesus Christ is the living Lord of the Church and of the world. But if this is true, the form assumed by the Word of God in the human word of prophets and apostles is not in his grave, but the organ of his rule, moved by the living hand of His Spirit, and therefore itself alive.²⁴⁸

He continues,

The word of the prophets and apostles was uttered once for all. But while it remains unaltered, this does not in any way prevent it from changing and renewing its form and therefore its range and effectiveness, continually presenting itself to different ages and men from different angles, in new dimensions and with a new aspect.²⁴⁹

Both Barth and Coombs share the conviction that to place interpretive rules upon the Scripture is a way for the reader to tame it and exercise control over it, which only God has the right to execute. While not discounting its historical, intended meaning, Barth asserts that reducing the meaning of the Bible to what it meant in history is akin to laying the Word of God in its grave – pronouncing what is alive as dead. Similarly, Coombs articulates that Pentecostalism deeply desires to allow God to speak and desires to throw off interpretive philosophies that seek to tame or lay to rest God's word.

The main difference between Barth and Pentecostalism in terms of encountering God in the Bible is that Pentecostalism is much more intuitive in its approach to God in the Bible. Pentecostals simply believe God is able and willing to speak afresh to them through his word. Coombs cites scriptural precedent as seen in Acts 2 and Acts 10, as reason why new revelation may lead to believers to interpret a passage in a different way. However, his precedent is underdeveloped and liable to critique.²⁵⁰ As described above,

²⁴⁸ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2, 683.

²⁴⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2, 684.

²⁵⁰ Coombs, "Reading in Tongues," 266. I find Coombs analysis and use of these examples are not thorough. Neither text necessitates a new interpretation of a text. In the case of Acts 10, the question that arises is whether the revelation Peter receives should set aside certain laws in the Torah. While Coombs' assertion finds support in Acts 15 concerning the act that took place in chapter 10, this one instance radically falls short of being an obvious precedent setting event for how Christians should reappropriate Scripture.

Barth is much more self-conscious and thorough in his analysis of how Scripture has a valuable historical meaning but is able to speak anew to the Church throughout time – while not being disconnected from the text’s historical meaning.

However, not all scholars agree that Barth’s proposal facilitates humility towards Scripture. In fact, critics argue that Barth encourages a subjectivism that gives authority to the reader. For instance, Nathaniel Gray Sutanto argues that Barth’s hermeneutical lens is based on Kantian philosophy, and, in effect, Barth separates the concerns of history and the concerns of faith.²⁵¹ In other words, the words of the Bible cannot be proved to be historical words but can only be believed as true through faith. Sutanto observes this most readily in Barth’s identification of Scripture as human witness to divine revelation rather than divine revelation in its own right. By making this distinction, Sutanto argues that Barth’s conception leads one to subjectively decide what in Scripture is of divine origin and which is of human origin.

In demonstrating this critique, he cites Francis Watson, who follows after Barth, proposing that Scripture is not to be identified inherently as divine revelation. Watson contends that it is important to distinguish between “the two antithetical voices of law and gospel” that exist within the biblical text.²⁵² Watson points to oppressive texts in the Bible that, if seen as divine revelation, would communicate that violent behavior should be normative for Christians.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, "On the theological interpretation of Scripture: the indirect identity thesis, Reformed orthodoxy, and trinitarian considerations" *The Westminster Theological Journal* 77, no. 2 (September 2015): 343.

²⁵² Ibid, 347.

²⁵³ Ibid, 350. See Francis Watson, "A Response To John Riches" *Biblical Interpretation* 6, no. 2 (1998): 240, or Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997).

In his evaluation of Watson, Sutanto contends that Watson's distinction results in the interpreter being able to read whatever theology they want into the text.²⁵⁴ Consequently, Sutanto claims that Watson's direction is "the natural implication" of Barth's proposal of distinguishing Scripture from the Word of God.²⁵⁵ He sees Barth's proposal as leading people to "read into it what we want to read, constructing a theological program of our own desires while using the text for our own agendas in order to look more palatable to the modern world."²⁵⁶

In many ways, Sutanto's criticisms miss the mark of Barth's own understanding of the Scripture's relationship with the Word of God. Barth does make a distinction between the Word of God and Scripture, but he holds that Scripture becomes God's Word when it "has grasped at man."²⁵⁷ Sutanto mischaracterizes Barth in understanding him to be advocating for a *system* of interpreting Scripture. Barth is more interested in advocating for a posture before Scripture – a direction through which meaning is obtained. The distinction between Scripture and the Word of God has more to do with establishing the limits of humans to know God by their own understanding and philosophies. According to Barth, the only way to know God, or truths about God, is through God's self-disclosure to human beings. Barth is not opposed to reason or historical inquiry. What he opposes is the exaltation of reason to becoming the highest authority in determining what is true. As Stephen G. Smith writes, Barth opposes secular

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 351.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 351. Although Sutanto acknowledges that Watson sees himself as breaking from Barth, Sutanto still contends that there is "nothing in Barth's system" that prevents Watson, and others, from taking such a stance.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 351.

²⁵⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.1, 110.

reason because “it subordinates the knowledge of God to the self-knowledge of humanity.”²⁵⁸

Barth’s proposal is unsettling in that he advocates for the interpreter to be dependant on God in the revelatory process. He contends that a person must wait upon the Lord for revelation. This places the establishing of meaning outside of human regulation. Barth is concerned that philosophical commitments and reason-based, methodological approaches are seeking to usurp God’s place as the divine revealer. When philosophy or reason sits as the authority, human understanding becomes the measure of what is true. However, with Barth, there is no methodological prescription. Instead of prescribing or condemning methodologies, he is calling for the personal humility of the interpreter to wait upon the Lord to speak, and this hearing is to be discerned as God’s Word by how the interpretation corresponds with Scripture, analogically.

2) Access to the Apostolic Experience

Similar to the point above, Barth maintains with Pentecostalism that believers have access to the apostolic experience through Scripture. Barth’s hermeneutical approach is contingent on the possibility that the Holy Spirit makes it possible for present-day readers to not only understand the words of the apostles but also the truth which God revealed to the writers. Barth does not find this possible as the result of a philosophical system or a hermeneutical strategy but only possible because of Christ’s time-fulfilling work of redemption.

Because of Barth’s “analogy of faith,” his proposal also fits nicely in both affirming access to the apostolic experience, bringing it into the present, while

²⁵⁸ Steven G. Smith, "Karl Barth and fideism: a reconsideration," *Anglican Theological Review* 66, no. 1 (January 1984): 69.

maintaining the historical meaning of the text. McCormack calls these two senses the “historic sense” and the “revelatory significance.”²⁵⁹ Barth upholds that “the historical sense” of the text is critical. McCormack writes, “revelatory significance will have to stand in analogical relation to the historic sense.”²⁶⁰ God’s past revelations in both action and word (biblical witness) are true, but humans cannot only rely on their perception of those events or words to understand their revelatory significance. God expands and informs the reader’s understanding of his revelatory speech. God pours out his revelation anew in the present day through the Bible, but this revelation will stand analogically in continuity with the witnessed revelation in the biblical text. In terms of Pentecostal concerns, Barth’s approach both upholds the historic veracity of the Bible and apostolic experience, while allowing present-day Pentecostals to understand the promises and ministry of the apostolic age as being relevant and freshly speaking to today.

In contrast, many scholars maintain that Barth has an antipathy towards history as a result of his opposition to natural theology. As previously discussed, Barth contends that a person cannot achieve knowledge of God except for God’s gracious self-revelation. As a result, he believes apologetic endeavors like historically proving the resurrection to convince people of the gospel are futile.²⁶¹ To Barth, historical proof, reason, or science cannot achieve knowledge of God. God can only be known by his gracious self-revelation.

²⁵⁹ McCormack, “Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth’s Exegesis of the New Testament,” 325.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 333.

²⁶¹ Rodney D. Holder, “Karl Barth and the legitimacy of natural theology,” *Themelios* 26, no. 3 (2001): 24.

Due to this commitment and lack of interest in proving the historical referent, Barth is identified as being anti-historical and promoting a form of fideism.²⁶² Rodney

Holder, following the reasoning of Roger Trigg, writes,

Barth says that we must rely only on revelation, and not on human reason, yet of course his own arguments are a product of human reasoning. The question is, ‘Why should we believe that which is purportedly God’s revelation to us?’ There are, after all, false prophets, and we need to ‘test the spirits’. How do we know revelation is from God? The only way is surely by appeal to reason. Yet this is precisely the path which Barth denies to us.²⁶³

Holder perceives a double standard in Barth. Barth’s work is very logical and utilizes reason and critical methodologies, yet maintains they cannot be the basis of knowledge.

Barth’s work seems to be contingent on philosophical commitments not on faith.

Additionally, Holder argues that Barth’s opposition to natural theology is in opposition to the Bible. He cites several Scriptures, including Acts 14:17 and Romans 1:19-20, which state that knowledge of God is available to human beings through nature.²⁶⁴ Additionally, he cites Paul’s apologetic witness of the resurrection through testifying about accounts of

²⁶² Smith, "Karl Barth and fideism: a reconsideration," 65. One of Barth’s supporters, Stephen G. Smith, in defining fideism, writes, “the charge of fideism means that one who makes some kind of truth-claim is unresponsive to the demand for justification of that claim. The cause for worry in this is the prospect of the real evil of unreason, which makes many things that we value insecure or impossible.”

²⁶³ Holder, "Karl Barth and the legitimacy of natural theology," 36. See Roger Trigg, *Rationality and Religion: Does Faith Need Reason?* Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 33. Acts 14:17, “Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.” Romans 1:19-20, “... since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” Both NIV.

Barth does comment on these verses through analysis of Romans 1:18ff (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2, 119-121). He concedes that Romans 1:18ff do affirm that God has revealed himself to humanity through his works. But, in describing the context, Barth demonstrates that what is known of God to humans, both Jew and Gentile, is the “shadow side” of God’s revelation, namely his wrath. Barth notes that 1:18-3:20 describe this “shadow side” of God revelation as leaving humanity in a place of condemnation. Barth goes on to describe that God has given a limited knowledge of himself through his creation, which renders humanity guilty of sin. In this vein, he notes that one of the main themes of Romans is that Jesus Christ is the saving revelation of God. As a result, Holder’s position has more affinity with Barth than he suggests. Yet, Barth maintains that that this verse does not prove that humanity has an inherent capacity to know God.

people who had seen the resurrected Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15.²⁶⁵ Consequently, Holder states that Barth's position makes discernment of the truth and evangelism irrational because if one cannot appeal to reason, there is no need for human involvement.²⁶⁶ According to Holder, in Barth's paradigm, special revelation from God is needed without rational discernment or human agency.

If Holder's evaluation is correct, than Barth's view of history may not line up with Pentecostal values. Because according to Holder, Barth's is not concerned with asserting the historical veracity of the Bible. Instead, Barth is concerned with God's Word manifesting today. In a sense, this would mean that to Barth, the past as represented in the biblical witness is not important. Instead, what is important is how the Word of God revealed through Scripture can be utilized in giving direction for the present.

However, in Holder's analysis, he only disagrees with Barth in a qualified sense. Holder affirms that for someone to come to a saving knowledge of the Triune God, someone must receive "God's self-revelation in Christ."²⁶⁷ As he goes on to argue, natural theology can only play a partial role in helping people understand God.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 35.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 36-37. In his critique, Holder neglects to account for how Barth envisions God's Word being spoken through the proclamation of the church. Barth writes, "Where Church proclamation takes place according to this will of God, where it rests on divine commission, where God Himself gives Himself to it as its theme, where it is true according to His judgment, where, in short, it is service to God, there on one hand its character as an event that can be seen and heard on earth is not to be set aside" (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.1, 95). He continues, "On the other hand, through the new robe of righteousness thrown over it, even in its earthly character it becomes a new event, the event of God's own speaking in the sphere of earthly events, the event of the authoritative vicariate of Jesus Christ" (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.1, 95). Here Barth contends that the Church is given the gracious gift to proclaim God's Word and be the instrument of God's revelation through human words in the present. This involves the willing obedience of humans but is not dependent upon it. Even in proclamation, human words only become God's Word through his gracious self-revelation. Contrary to Holder's analysis, Barth highly affirms the act of Christ's followers being his witnesses. Christ's followers are commissioned to be agents that help those of outside the church encounter Christ in the Christian's testimony and proclamation.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 33.

Particularly, natural theology testifies that there is a God and that he has specific qualities: “one creator;” “power and majesty.”²⁶⁸ But is Holder’s evaluation justified?

Many atheists are devoted students of nature and proclaim that there is no creator.

Hinduism and many animist religions are spiritual but observe through nature that there is a plurality of gods. Holder’s faith commitments have formed the way he spiritually discerns nature.

Additionally, Holder seems to prove Barth’s point. Without self-revelation from God, a person is left with a deficient and false view of the one true God. Again returning to Barth supporter Stephen G. Smith, he writes that Barth’s issue with reason and scientific methods is that they are unable to answer the question of what it means to be responsible for the revelation given in Scripture. He writes,

“There is no pure reason that transcends our historical situatedness with respect to the Gospel writers, for instance. If we challenge the authority or accuracy of a witness to revelation, we must ask: Where are we standing, when we criticize? What do we know about God that the Gospel writers do not? What in revelation are we responding to when we reject the witness of those who formulated a particular dogma? The structure of reason here is as it was in *The Epistle to the Romans*. We must listen to voices rather than dismiss them, and if we do agree or disagree it must be objectively, that is, by virtue of being concerned with the same object.”²⁶⁹

Barth is not anti-historical or anti-reason. As stated before, he recognizes that for someone to know God means that God reveals himself to that person whether it be through a vision, Scripture, or nature. All revelation is God’s self-revealing. The ultimate expression of God’s self-revelation, and the only one that saves, is found in the *historical* incarnation of Christ.

3) Emphasis on Transformation

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 34. Holder writes that “... the universality of the laws of nature, i.e. their applicability across of time and space would lead on to conclude that there is only one God.”

²⁶⁹ Smith, "Karl Barth and fideism: a reconsideration," 73.

Again, in terms of transformation, Barth and Pentecostalism have similar understandings about how Scripture changes believers and provides guidance in proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Barth writes,

We have to concern ourselves about this function of Scripture itself... in freedom under the Word and in the service of scriptural exegesis, devolves upon ourselves. The Word of God remains the Word of God even as that which gives itself to be, and is, appropriated by us. It wills to control us, as it takes abode within us. It crosses our threshold as the Lord. This is the state of affairs for which we have to make allowance in every way.²⁷⁰

For Barth, a faithful encounter with God in Scripture necessitates that the readers change their perceptions, habits, actions, thoughts, and loves based upon the revelation God makes known. To truly read the Scripture is to patiently receive the revelation of God. This revelation does not merely teach about God and his work through Christ, or how Christians can be good followers. According to Barth, people are unable to understand what it means to be human, to relate with God, or relate with one another without the revelation of God.²⁷¹ Both Pentecostal and Barth's hermeneutics hold that a true reading of Scripture is an encounter with God that will change someone. Both hold that the goal of reading the Bible is not to "grasp it"²⁷² but be "gripped"²⁷³ by it.

Barth's hermeneutical approach is powerful and has the potential to be instructive and empowering for Pentecostals. He serves as an example of a faithful witness who sought to be faithful to God and articulate academically how God interacts with the world

²⁷⁰ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2, 737.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 738-739. "In face of it, we cannot know beforehand what the real present is, what are its burning questions who and what we are, 'our generation,' 'the modern man,' etc. In a very real sense this will not appear until the Bible opens up before us to give us correct and infallible information concerning ourselves and our real questions, concerns and needs."

²⁷² Andrew Davies, "What does it mean to read the Bible as a Pentecostal?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18, no. 2 (2009): 223.

²⁷³ McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Exegesis of the New Testament," 329. Here McCormack quotes Barth from Church Dogmatic I.2. The resonance between the word choice of Davies and Barth is striking.

through Scripture. He bravely challenged the scholarship of modernity without despising the valuable discoveries it had made. While there is much to be gained in engaging with Barth's hermeneutic, he also serves as an example for a believer dedicated to discerning the continued speaking of Christ in how to engage with critical scholarship.

Conclusion

A Chat over Coffee

By way of conclusion, I am going to simulate a conversation between Stronstad, Archer, and Barth over a cup of coffee on the Saturday before Pentecost Sunday.²⁷⁴ The hope of this conversation is to highlight the similarities and differences between their hermeneutical approaches.

BARTH: Good morning, gentlemen. In preparing tomorrow's sermon, I've been thinking about you Pentecostals a great deal. And I have a question. As a Pentecostal, do you mainly see the day of Pentecost as a descriptive narrative, recounting a historical event? Or do you see Pentecost as a prescriptive account, where Luke is instructing believers that they each need to experience their own Pentecost? How do you two establish the meaning of these texts for the community?

STRONSTAD: Well, I see it as both. Luke records Pentecost as a historic event. The genre of the Acts is a theological historiography. In part, Luke wants to familiarize his readers with how the Christian community developed over time. And Pentecost is instrumental in understanding how it began. However, Luke does not merely retell history. He retells the early Christian community's history in a way that gives instruction for how believers should continue to live and be moved by the Holy Spirit. In the Pentecost narrative is an invitation for all those in Christ to participate in the Baptism of the Spirit as indicated in Joel regardless of gender, age, economic status, or people group. Anyone can be

²⁷⁴ The idea for this approach and structure for the conclusion was given to me by my thesis advisor Dr. David Hymes. He referred me to Daniel Migliore's article, "How Historical is the Resurrection?" I am indebted to both. See Daniel L. Migliore, "How historical is the resurrection: a dialogue," *Theology Today* 33, no. 1 (April 1976): 5-14.

empowered to be Christ's witness by the Spirit of God. Luke picks up on how this has been God's hope for a long time by quoting the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32.

ARCHER: I don't disagree that the Pentecost narrative seeks to recount a history. I also agree that it invites believers to experience the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. But I think you, Stronstad, are overplaying your hand in stating Luke's intention. We lack the historical understanding to really penetrate what Luke was hoping to communicate to the original audience. While I think the historical event was important, the more important aspect to emphasize is what Pentecost means for us today.

STRONSTAD: But in order to know what the text can mean to us today, we need to know what it meant for the community then. If we don't understand the intention, we run the danger putting our own agendas in the text.

ARCHER: But we do not have the ability to know with certainty what the author's intention is. What is available to us is the Spirit leading us in truth, the biblical text and the Christian community – in my case, the Pentecostal community. We can't access intention. All we can do is negotiate meaning from these entities. We have to ask, "What is the Spirit saying to our community in its current circumstance through the Scripture?" This is a discerning process that we do as a part of the Pentecostal community.

BARTH: Archer, I think your approach is a bit limiting on the power of God and doesn't take into account that God is the one who gives revelation to his community. We are able to see Luke's intention, as the Spirit inspired it, because the same Spirit brings it to us today. Due to God's immanence we are able to see the historical message of Scripture.

STRONSTAD: I appreciate your evaluation that the Spirit plays a role in accessing the historical meaning of the text, but in the end isn't your approach a subjective one? You hold that the meaning is achieved through personal meditation after considering the text. Doesn't this place you as an authority over the text?

BARTH: No, no, no. The last thing I would want is to be interpreted as saying that I have authority over the text. I hold strongly that historical analysis is crucial to understanding a text. After all, God's revelation, Jesus Christ, was given to us *in history*. The words of the prophets and the apostles were given to us *in history*. This means there must be an analogical connection between what the text meant for them and what it means for us. The revelation we are given by God as we meditate on the text can be tested and discerned by how it lines up with Scripture and its historic meaning.

ARCHER: Barth, you fail to admit the biases that you bring to the text. Your approach holds up the meditative individual as the center of the interpretive enterprise. But this is too reliant on the individual. Your approach puts discernment back on the individual and their ability to reason with the text and hear the Spirit. It is important that someone does not seek to interpret Scripture apart from the concerns of their community. They must interpret the Bible in dialogue with their community and their community's values. These values guard against individuals distorting God's message and walking in error. For instance, Pentecostals have the Fivefold gospel. We believe in Jesus as Savior, Healer, Sanctifier, Spirit Baptizer, and Coming King. These values established by the tradition of the Pentecostal community serve as safeguards that measure if Scriptural interpretations are trustworthy. The community's life and narrative set the evaluative ground for discerning and negotiating the meaning of Scripture.

BARTH – I understand your concern, but your hermeneutic doesn't take into account the bias of your community and its values. How can the Scripture be free to correct and shape the Christian community or your Pentecostal community? God's revelation must be free, unhindered, and authoritative. While you may see my hermeneutic as potentially subjective, I see perceiving revelation as only possible when someone truly meets with God through Scripture. Subjective interpretations are a result of people exercising authority over the text. When we humble ourselves and allow God to be the revealer, then we are able to receive God's revelation.

STRONSTAD – While I agree with you, Barth, that Archer gives the community too much priority in the hermeneutical process, I find myself as uncomfortable as Archer with your approach and its potential for legitimizing subjective readings. Focus on the text, considering the genre, and a deep historical-grammatical study is the best way to engage with Scripture that allows it to speak for itself. When someone proposes a reading, others can test that reading by evaluating its scholarship and methodology. Experience will play a part, sure. Perhaps, someone's experience can even bring certain illumination to the text. But in the end, by allowing the text, genre, and historical-grammatical method to have priority, all believers are empowered to have similar access to the text.

BARTH – Stronstad, I affirm your emphasis on genre, historical-grammatical concerns, and literary conventions. The problem with what you are proposing is that you don't take your rationalistic approach to its full conclusion. Your rational endeavor needs to be able to set limits on itself. You fall into error by simply equating God's revelation with Scripture. I agree that Scripture in one sense is God's revelation, but in its authority in witnessing to the true revelation of God – Jesus Christ. We are only able to truly receive

revelation when we encounter Christ through his Spirit. Perceiving God's revelation is not merely a rational exercise. It is also a spiritual and relational endeavor. We cannot invent, manufacture, or even discover God's revelation. He must give it to us.

STRONSTAD – I appreciate your emphasis on being humble towards God in the hermeneutical process, but I disagree with the role that you give believers in being able to discover God's revelation. He has given us rational minds and invited us to find him. You, Barth, run the danger of minimizing the reader's role in Scripture.

BARTH – Stronstad, this is a critique given to me for many years where I feel I have been misunderstood. I do hold that all revelation must come from the Triune God through the revelation of Christ. However, I hold that God gifts human beings with the ability to perceive truth because of the image that he bestows on each person – the image of God. Because we are made in his image, we have discerning and reasoning capabilities. Revelation may be dependent on God, but it is also a dialog between God and humanity. It is not that humans aren't gifted with the ability to see truth or seek it out, but all truth must be ultimately grounded on the foundation of Christ. The revelation of Christ gives all truth its proper context.

ARCHER – Well, I have to disagree with you here Barth. I believe the Spirit is actually dependent on the reader in the hermeneutical process. What I mean is that while the Spirit guides the readers just as the Spirit guided the biblical authors, the Spirit is dependent on the Pentecostal community to articulate and respond to the Spirit's leading. The reader, in community, has a huge role in negotiating meaning with the text and the Spirit. Consequently Stronstad, I think that your historical-grammatical approach puts too much weight on the individual and neglects the importance of community and its values.

BARTH – Well, I have enjoyed this discussion immensely. By means of concluding our chat, maybe we could mention what your main point would be in giving a Pentecost sermon. I can go first. My main point in speaking about the Pentecost narrative would be that God's gift of the Spirit is the mysterious grace with which God allows and empowers his believers to be bearers of his revelation to the world.

ARCHER – I would have to say that I would focus on the theme that Pentecost, God's Baptism of the Holy Spirit, is the breaking in of God's eschatological kingdom in the world. Primarily, Pentecost contributes to the project of the Fivefold gospel. Pentecost becomes God's means of salvation to the world through the witness of his community. It is a means of sanctification for believers. It births an eschatological community that lives under Christ's reign in a fallen and rebellious world. This empowerment of the Spirit is God's means of bringing physical and spiritual healing to the world.

STRONSTAD – I would discuss how the Spirit's Baptism, which initially comes at Pentecost, is the fulfillment of a long held desire of God to empower his people. This desire can be seen in the Old Testament and seen in Jesus's ministry, particularly in the Gospel of Luke. Pentecost means that God's empowering Spirit is available to everyone who would call on the Lord regardless of nationality, social class, gender, or age.

Closing Thoughts

The modernist approach to biblical hermeneutics and interpretation is characterized by its search for objectivity and its naturalistic approach. The approach has an optimism that through historical/scientific analysis, a present day reader has general access to the text's historical, intended meaning. However, post-modernists have identified limits to the modernist approach. While still holding to naturalistic approaches

to interpretation, they hold that the historical, intended meaning is inaccessible. All that is primarily available now is the reader and the text. This encounter between reader and text is where meaning is made. This necessitates an acknowledgment that subjectivity is latent within a reading of every text. The Pentecostal community shares post-modernists' critique of modernity by agreeing that naturalistic philosophy and methods have their limits. However, they do not concede that access to the Bible's historical/intended meaning is inaccessible because God is able to illuminate the process. Without outrightly disregarding certain modernist interpretive approaches and recognizing the limits of the modern approach, Pentecostalism has adopted modernity's methods while critiquing its principles. Archer describes this stance as "paramodern."²⁷⁵

Stronstad does not disregard the limits of modernist approaches to the Bible. He holds that the presence and guiding of the Spirit is necessary for the text to be understood properly by a present day reader. However, Stronstad's place for the Holy Spirit in his hermeneutic is ambiguous and undeveloped. Due to the Spirit's implicit role in Stronstad's proposal, his proposal amounts to a modernist approach that utilizes the identification of genre and grammatical-historical methods to access the meaning of the biblical text. He shares an underlying optimistic view with modernity that through pursuit of objectivity²⁷⁶, a reader can, to a high degree, access the intended, historical meaning of the Bible. This optimism is a commonality between the outlined Pentecostal distinctives

²⁷⁵ Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), 44-45.

²⁷⁶ Roger Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 1995), 68-69. Though Stronstad gives room for experience within his proposal, it would be wrong to characterize his hermeneutic as embracing "subjectivism." Stronstad simply states that someone who has experienced a phenomenon, like Baptism of the Holy Spirit, being healed, or the forgiveness of sin, has not only cognitive knowledge but experiential knowledge. It is comparable to reading/studying about the Grand Canyon as opposed to visiting it. Stronstad affirms that the one who has both experiential and cognitive knowledge will have a better understanding of those relevant parts of Scripture than those with only the cognitive experience.

and Stronstad's proposal. Not only is the meaning of the text available to the reader, but the text will be able to explicitly challenge him today. This is because the reader's posture is one of discovery of God's historical revelation – what God said and did. After understanding God's historical revelation, the reader hopes to live out God's message in the present.

Archer does not share Stronstad's optimism. Archer calls into question Stronstad's underlying faith in being able to establish the historical meaning of the biblical authors. Archer applies the post-modern critiques to the biblical hermeneutics and contends that the biblical text may have set the stage for possible meanings (and limited them) but biblical meaning is ultimately established in the mind of the reader. In his appropriation of postmodern methods, Archer too has given the Spirit an implicit role in the hermeneutical process. He relies heavily upon postmodern literary theory, which, in expressing its limits, operates purely within naturalistic rules. As a result, Archer has walked in agreement with the Pentecostal critique of modernity, but he has disavowed Scripture's ability to convey a historic message to the present. Instead, reading Scripture is in danger of being an exercise of continually reinforcing one's values rather than being confronted and molded by Holy Scripture. Archer has intended to preserve and legitimate a distinct Pentecostal hermeneutic through a critique of modernism. Instead, he has challenged the possibility of discovering the original meaning and has perpetuated its naturalistic principles.

As Archer has acknowledged, the early Pentecostal movement existed as a counter movement to modernity, not through rejecting the concept of objective knowledge, but in rejecting the principle that naturalistic methods are the only legitimate

means to knowledge.²⁷⁷ Pentecostals recognized the Holy Spirit as supernaturally, outside of modernity's paradigms, asserting his influence and power. Early Pentecostals made room in their liturgical lives and intellectual pursuits for the Holy Spirit to speak.

Barth's "hermeneutical manifesto"²⁷⁸ arose from similar concerns as the Pentecostal community. Namely, they both observed the limits of the modernity project in the historical-critical method. Barth perceived that naturalistic analysis and methods were inadequate as a means of discovering or receiving God's gracious message. Through his proposal of "analogy of faith," Barth contends for a posture towards Scripture that affirms the historical meaning of the text but demonstrably relies on the revelation of the Holy Spirit to determine meaning. In affirming historical pursuit as possible yet identifying its limitation in its naturalistic approach, Barth could be labeled – to employ Archer's term – as "paramodern."

Where Stronstad and Archer offer ambiguous and implicit roles in their proposals, Barth bases his whole theological approach and hermeneutic on God's initiative to speak – reveal – both in the historic witness of Scripture as well as to believers today. He affirms that while historical reflection can both serve as a "starting-point" and as a measure that "limits the interpretive horizon," he also affirms that the exegete must be open to new "surprises" and messages from the Lord through familiar texts.²⁷⁹ The Bible has a historical message to convey from the past, but it is also God's instrument of revelation to his children today. By creating space for the Holy Spirit to explicitly speak

²⁷⁷ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, 42-45.

²⁷⁸ Bruce McCormack, "Historical Criticism and Dogmatic Interest in Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis of the New Testament," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 322.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 333-334.

in the “Meditation” step of his proposal and locating the making of meaning in the speech of God, Barth rejected the naturalism of modernity alongside the Pentecostalism of the early 20th century.

Barth’s hermeneutic carefully walks the line of historically honoring the text without rendering it an artifact. Through the Bible, God continues to guide, encourage, and challenge his church, if they choose to listen. In the past, Pentecostals have had a difficult time articulating the role of the Spirit in the interpretive process to those outside the Pentecostal community without being subjectivists. Barth’s hermeneutic shows promise in helping Pentecostals articulate an approach to the Bible that appropriately and demonstrably acknowledges the Holy Spirit as having lordship over the Bible while honoring the text and its historical authors.

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