
L. William Oliverio, Jr., *Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Late Modern World: Essays on the Condition of Our Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022). xiv + 252 pp. \$50.00 hardcover; \$35.00 paper; \$35.00 eBook.

L. William Oliverio, Jr., associate professor of public theology at Northwest University, Kirkland, Washington, and co-editor of *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, has, over the last decade, established himself as one of the more important voices in ongoing discourse regarding Pentecostal hermeneutics. This volume is a compilation of twelve essays previously published in 2009–2020, which have here been lightly revised for this project (ix–x). These essays build upon and advance the hermeneutical project begun in Oliverio’s published PhD dissertation, *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), completed at Marquette University in 2009. Much like the earlier monograph, the present set of essays represents focused and deeply thoughtful philosophical-theological engagement with its subject matter.

The book divides into three parts, each of which consists of four chapters. Part One, “Historical-Constructive Hermeneutics,” consists of

chapters 1–4. Chapter 1, “Toward a Hermeneutical Realism,” reproduces the final chapter of the author’s dissertation, serving here as a fitting point of departure and an introduction to his further contributions to the topic at hand. Chapter 2, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics and the Hermeneutical Tradition,” presents the author’s introduction to a set of essays (co-edited by the author and Kenneth Archer) exploring diverse Pentecostal approaches to constructive, pneumatologically oriented hermeneutics. Chapter 3, “Pentecostal Theological Hermeneutics,” describes the earliest Pentecostal hermeneutic as “a hermeneutic of revelation and origination” (50) that then necessarily began to receive stabilization through subsequent developments within the tradition: “The three other types of Pentecostal theological hermeneutics [i.e., evangelical-Pentecostal, contextual-Pentecostal, and ecumenical-Pentecostal] ... have each stabilized Pentecostal interpretive approaches in a general area” (51). Oliverio notes the contributions to contextual-Pentecostal hermeneutics of scholars like Amos Yong, James K. A. Smith, and those within the Cleveland School (Kenneth Archer, Lee Roy Martin, John Christopher Thomas). Within the ecumenical-Pentecostal approach, he highlights the work of Simon Chan, Frank Macchia, Steven Studebaker, and Wolfgang Vondey. This chapter also explains what constitutes theological hermeneutics and details how Pentecostal theology, which “has itself been a family of implicit theological hermeneutics of life since its origins” (46), has more recently developed explicitly Pentecostal theological hermeneutics with Amos Yong leading the charge (48). Oliverio observes that advocates of this approach “almost always consider multiple theological approaches as at least potentially illuminating rather than a single doctrinal perspective,” and “multiple vantage points [are] considered advantageous as opposed to a single interpretive standpoint as superior to others” (48). While adherents of such a hermeneutic, according to the author, maintain orthodoxy and differentiate between “theological accounts as truthful and faithful” as opposed to “false or inadequate” (48), one wonders how such adjudication can be reached without in fact privileging some interpretive standpoint or theological approach over others. Chapter 4, “Contours of a Constructive Hermeneutic,” provides the most thoroughgoing and recent (2020) elucidation of Oliverio’s own vision for a constructive philosophical-theological Pentecostal hermeneutic. In addition to the previously utilized theological grid of the “full gospel,” Oliverio proffers the “nexus of Creation-Incarnation-Pentecost-Eschaton” as “provid[ing] the major acts through which the many stories of Scripture might emerge into an epochal narrative for a Pentecostal theological hermeneutic” (70). He further suggests a “spiritual-moral aspect” and the continued use of the trialectic Spirit-Word-community

(71–72). Oliverio here sharply criticizes those continuing “the search for a ‘right’ or ‘correct’ hermeneutic” as “mix[ing] up the interpreter’s authority with the authority and givenness of God’s Word and Spirit and embody[ing] modern overconfidence far more than Christian orthodoxy” (73). It may strike some as rather ironic that, apparently for Oliverio, those who strive for *correctness* and *certainly* in their hermeneutic are *most certainly incorrect* in attempting to do so.

Part Two, “Ecumenical Hermeneutics,” consists of chapters 5–8. Chapter 5, “Spirit Baptism in the Late Modern World,” affirms the ecumenical-Pentecostal interpretation of Spirit baptism championed by Frank Macchia and utilizes this in formulating the author’s Pentecostal response to the WCC’s document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. Oliverio regards this as a development of the implicit theological potential latent within the tradition itself, and the ecumenical appeal of this tack is obvious. It remains unclear to me, however, how this expansive understanding of Spirit baptism does not constitute a departure from a classical Pentecostal interpretation of Spirit baptism. Yet, according to Oliverio in another chapter, this interpretive move by Macchia “has deepened, rather than watered down, the Pentecostal doctrine” (55). Chapter 6, “Scripture, Experience, and Community,” traces the historical development of Pentecostal hermeneutics, utilizing the author’s fourfold typology (early, evangelical, contextual, ecumenical), stressing the central theological importance of the trialectic interplay of Scripture, Spirit, and community, and giving ample consideration to contributions of the ecumenical-Pentecostal approach. Chapter 7, “Religion and Holy Affections,” compares the biblical hermeneutics of Jonathan Edwards and Pentecostals, both of whom place strong emphasis upon the affective elements in interpreting Scripture, suggesting ways in which Pentecostal theology might draw resources from Edwards’ theological thought in its own further development. Chapter 8, “Breaking Out of the Immanent Frame,” reviews James K. A. Smith’s *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. Oliverio regards Taylor’s *A Secular Age* as possibly “the most significant book written so far this century on religion in Western culture” (153), and Smith’s book offers important guidance, summation, and dialogical supplement on this work (153). Oliverio discerns here a call for Pentecostals to “unpack the ontologies implicit in what we claim to have experienced” (164).

Part Three, “Interpretations of Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” consists of chapters 9–12. Chapter 9, “Spirit-Word-Community,” presents, in review-essay format, a synopsis and evaluation of Amos Yong’s *Spirit-Word-Community*, which, as Oliverio observes, serves as “paradigmatic to [Yong’s] theological project” and “is perhaps the best entry point into

Yong's thought as it sets out his original vision." I would add that Oliverio's summation and reflective evaluation of the book in this review essay provides perhaps the best entry point into this dense theological book, which is certainly not for the theologically and philosophically faint of heart. Chapter 10, "The One and the Many," explores Yong's attempt to address pluralism and the dissolution of meaning in late modernity, elucidating how the "many tongues" of Acts 2:11 are pressed to include many perspectives, practices, disciplines (187–90) and thus point to a unifying trinitarian center for the seemingly disparate realities of our world (177). Chapter 11, "The Theological Hermeneutic of Amos Yong," as an article originally published in 2020, sets forth the most up-to-date engagement with Yongian thought found among this collection of essays. Here Oliverio points out and explicates central trajectories in Yong's theological hermeneutic, including sections expounding Yongian pneumatological imagination, hermeneutical trialectic, pneumatological interpretation of Scripture, interdisciplinary theology, and his "many tongues" principle. The chapter also "adds a comparative twist" in that it relates Yong's theological project to those of Karl Rahner and Thomas Aquinas (192). Chapter 12, "Reading Craig Keener," interacts with Keener's *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in the Light of Pentecost*.

One highlight of the book is how Oliverio provides a theologically and philosophically rich engagement with Amos Yong's work throughout the essays, several of which specifically focus on evaluating, responding to, and building upon Yongian methodology and theology. A few examples of the kind of insightful engagement found throughout these essays will have to suffice. First, interacting with *Spirit-Word-Community*, Oliverio observes that Yong "contends that the given objects of interpretation are no[t] static but fluctuate in time and space in their biological, natural, cultural, and ecclesial worlds, thus necessitating the need for dynamic categories of understanding. This requires that the mediation of the cultural with biblical and theological traditions goes both ways. Social, natural, economic, political, and other forces *influence, shape* and, at times, *even dictate* interpretation" (172 n. 14; italics mine). This observation facilitates understanding of Yong's work in that it encourages the reader to inquire as to what may prompt, or even drive, Yong to make a particular interpretive move. The hermeneutical point of departure makes all the difference. Some balk at Yongian interpretations of Scripture, for example, precisely because they approach the scriptural text from a very different hermeneutical perspective: denying, for instance, that contemporary social, economic, or political realities can ever properly dictate a faithful reading of the biblical text; affirming, rather, that meaning remains anchored to the

original author and that Scripture stands as the authority even when it directly clashes with contemporaneous socio-cultural sentiment. My point here ought not to be construed as an attempt to disprove or dislodge Yong's approach as opposed to my own more evangelical-Pentecostal orientation (something a short review could never accomplish anyway), but rather simply to highlight the importance of hermeneutics as determinative of the trajectory and final product of our interpretations. If we are to engage meaningfully, we must first understand accurately what is going on, hermeneutically speaking.

Second, the author insightfully highlights the necessity of observing the Peircean philosophical orientation of Yong's approach if one is to correctly understand his work (204). Also beneficial is Oliverio's discussion of whether Yongian theology falls more naturally within a contextual-Pentecostal or ecumenical-Pentecostal classification (125–26). In short, while I have hardly scratched the surface here, the detailed summaries and probing analysis of Yong's work that one finds in this volume offer much help for anyone wanting to more fully comprehend and more meaningfully engage the complex and ever-broadening theological corpus of Amos Yong.

Those already well-versed in ongoing discussion and debate surrounding Pentecostal hermeneutics will find here a convenient compilation of Oliverio's various contributions to such dialogue brought together in a single volume for easy reference and use. One drawback of this is the resultant repetitiousness and disjointed feel of the book. And while the review copy that I received did have a surprising number of typographical errors throughout, this will no doubt be corrected in future printings. Those who are new to this dialogue will find an informative and thorough introduction to much of the literature. Anyone wishing to seriously engage Pentecostal theological hermeneutics will want to read this volume.

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