

Pentecostal Story: The Hermeneutical Filter for the Making of Meaning¹

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Devoted saints come from the HOLINESS church, bringing the message of Heart-Purity and the Coming of the Lord, and wonderfully blessed of God, as fruitage needing but one thing—the latter rain.

—Aimee Semple McPherson²

Hermeneutics is an important subject for Pentecostals.³ Generally, the hermeneutical concern has focused attention upon the proper use of an exegetical method with the assumption that methods are somehow the neutral and objective means of establishing the validity of one's doctrinal interpretation of Scripture.⁴ For Pentecostals of all generations, the issue of biblical hermeneutics always arises whenever the doctrine of Spirit baptism is discussed.⁵ Thus the proper biblical interpretation of Luke-Acts has

¹ This is a revision of my paper entitled "Pentecostal Story as the Hermeneutical Filter," presented at the 30th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, March 8-10, 2001.

² Aimee Semple McPherson, *This Is That* (Los Angeles, CA: Echo Park Evangelistic Association, Inc., 1923), 787.

³ For some of the more recent articles on Pentecostal hermeneutics, see *The Spirit and the Church* 2, no. 1 (2000), and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Making: On the Way From Fundamentalism to Postmodernism," in *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Association* 18 (1998): 76-115.

⁴ See Kenneth J. Archer, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (April 1996): 63-81.

⁵ For example, Baptist theologian Stanley Grenz, in his *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, and Regent College Publishing, 2000), specifically challenges the Pentecostal view of Spirit baptism (the only community he directly takes on in this theological work) on grounds that Pentecostals have misunderstood the genre of Acts, misread the Luke-Act accounts, and cannot anchor their doctrine in the Pauline epistles. His charge is a restatement of the typical evangelical position. He offers three reasons for his rejection of the Pentecostal understanding of Spirit baptism as experience subsequent to regeneration. They are: (1) Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 was a one-time non-repeatable event; thus, one is Spirit-baptized at the moment of regeneration (419, 422); (2) Acts is primarily a historical document. "Historical narrative alone is not necessary a sure foundation for doctrine" unless it can be "confirmed by the Epistles" (421); Finally, Grenz appeals to

become the primary front in the battle, with both sides believing that the war can be won by exegetically demonstrating either the inadequacy or the adequacy of the Pentecostal doctrine.⁶ When the discussion shifts from the so-called distinctive doctrine of Spirit baptism to whether or not there even exists an authentic “Pentecostal” theology, hermeneutical concerns surface again in the disguise of theological method. No wonder hermeneutics continues to be an important topic at the annual meetings of the Society for Pentecostal Studies.

The contemporary hermeneutical concern recognizes that the use of exegetical-theological methods must take into consideration the social-cultural location of the person using it.⁷ The hermeneuts and the methods are not isolated islands. Both the methods and the hermeneuts are socially, culturally, and theologically shaped entities that contribute to the making of meaning.⁸ In order for interpretation to take place, the reader must participate. Readers are not neutral observers but instead are engaged by the text. “Reading involves using both the information that is present on the written page, as well as the information we already have in our minds.” The reader does not come to the text as a blank slate.⁹ Comprehension of a written text involves both a discovery and a creation of meaningful understanding.¹⁰ Therefore, the way in which Pentecostals or any community goes about doing “exegesis” and “theology” has as much to do with their social location and theological formation as it does with their

the apostle Paul’s writings, and because he cannot find the doctrine in “the explicit teaching of Paul” he rejects it (421). For a penetrating look into the origin of “initial evidence” see Gary McGee, ed., *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), chap. 6.

⁶ Simon Chan, in *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Tradition* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), correctly moves the discussion about “initial evidence” from the exegetical readings of Acts and Paul into a more robust theological integration into the Christian life. While he believes that exegesis cannot demonstrate the validity of tongues speech as the sign of Spirit baptism, he does argue that tongues can be shown to be the most natural and spontaneous response of Spirit-baptism experience, and he does so by approaching the issue from a broader theological perspective. See esp. chap. 2, “Glossolalia as Initial Evidence,” pp. 40-72.

⁷ Bernard C. Latagan, “Hermeneutics,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 153-54.

⁸ See Justo L. Gonzalez, *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996).

⁹ Jeff McQuillian, *The Literary Crisis: False Claims, Real Solutions* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998), 16.

¹⁰ See George Aichele et al., *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 1-8, which challenges the notion of the Enlightenment’s control of objectivity and stability of meaning.

employment of a so-called neutral, scientific exegetical-theological methodology. The role of the hermeneut in the interpretive process must also be considered. This touches upon the issue of community and identity.

What distinguished the early Pentecostal community from the Holiness folk was not their exegetical method,¹¹ nor simply the so-called unique doctrine of Spirit baptism¹²; rather, what distinguished the Pentecostal community from other Christian communities was their distinct narrative—a particular twist on the Christian story. The Pentecostal Movement's continuation of Holiness praxis in confrontation with cessationist fundamentalism and experiential liberalism created a fertile context in which an authentic Pentecostal story could emerge. The Pentecostal story is the glue that holds the similar, acceptable exegetical-theological methods together in a coherent and cohesive interpretive manner. The Pentecostal hermeneutic at the foundational interpretive level is its unique story. In the remainder of this essay I will identify the theological story of the Pentecostal community and show how that story has shaped the hermeneut-in-community and how this in turn enables the making of theological meaning.

Community Story and Interpretation

Harry Stout has demonstrated that there is an inescapable relationship between the community to which one belongs and the way in which one explains past religious history.¹³ In his essay "Theological Commitment and American Religious History" Stout addresses the issue of the historian's commitment to a community and its influence upon the telling of American Christian history.

In examining two prominent non-Christian historians of Puritanism, Perry Miller and Edmund S. Morgan, Stout demonstrates that one's theo-

¹¹ See Kenneth J. Archer, "Early Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation," in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18 (April 2001): 79-117. I explain the early Pentecostal exegetical method as the "Bible Reading Method." The Bible Reading Method was a paramodern commonsense approach to interpretation that utilized inductive and deductive reasoning skills.

¹² Spirit baptism is, of course, vitally necessary for an authentic Pentecostal spirituality. I agree with De Kock's observation that Spirit baptism is not "the sum total of Pentecostal spirituality [theology]." Wynand J. De Kock, "Pentecostal Power for a Pentecostal Task: Empowerment through Engagement in South African Context," in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16 (April 2000): 108.

¹³ Harry S. Stout, "Theological Commitment and American Religious History," in *Theological Education* 25 (Spring 1989): 44-59.

logical or non-theological commitment affects neither one's choice to pursue a religious subject, nor one's ability to be empathetic concerning the subjects being studied. Further, there is no difference in the selection and use of critical methods or critical sources. Stout is convinced that "on the level of method and sympathy for the subject there is no connection between atheistic commitment and religious history writing."¹⁴ Stout does believe, however, that one's commitment to a particular community does shape the telling of religious history in decisive ways because the view of the observer is connected to the "common memory" of the particular community to which he or she is "internally bound."¹⁵ He argues that it is the deeper level of philosophical commitment, or the historian's "point of view," that "directs the script and selects the themes in ways that invariably point back to the ultimate values of the story-tellers" (i.e., the historians).¹⁶

Drawing upon the work of H. Richard Niebuhr, Stout argues that the storyteller's point of view allows for "an existential relationship between the individual and his/her subject that stays with writers throughout their work. Insofar as all history writing involves an ongoing dialectic between the subject/actors and historian observer, the view of the observer does make a difference."¹⁷ The historian who observes is caught up in an existential dialectic between subject/actor and being a historian/observer; hence "history stories are neither past nor present, but both simultaneously," and this results in a 'participatory history.'"¹⁸ One's point of view inevitably shapes the story and guides both the methodological analysis being used and the interpretation of the analysis.

A person's "point of view," as Stout calls it, is formed by that individual's participation in a community. The historian's or biblical scholar's point of view guides the methodological critical analysis and inevitably shapes the present retelling of past history. The "point of view," as discussed by Stout, could also be understood as the narrative tradition of the community with which the historian is presently affiliated. Therefore, the narrative tradition of a community becomes an essential part of any hermeneutical strategy, for the making and explaining of meaning is inherently communal.

¹⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹⁵ Ibid., 48.

¹⁶ Ibid., 52.

¹⁷ Ibid., 47-48.

¹⁸ Ibid., 48.

Pentecostal Story as a Hermeneutical Narrative Tradition

Alasdair MacIntyre, a philosophical ethicist, has had a major impact upon the understanding of moral reasoning.¹⁹ MacIntyre, unlike the "Enlightenment Project," argues that all moral reasoning takes place from within a particular narrative tradition. He demonstrates that interpretive practices of a community are always dependent upon the community's narrative tradition. The narrative tradition provides the context in which moral reason, along with its interpretive practices, can be understood.²⁰

MacIntyre's concept of narrative as a descriptive category is difficult to grasp because of the different and, at times, contradictory ways he employs it.²¹ But it nonetheless plays a central role in his understanding of moral reasoning. In fact, his argument concerning moral reasoning relies upon the interaction of four major concepts: narrative, tradition, virtue, and practice.²² For my purpose here, however, I will only be concerned about narrative. One of MacIntyre's central theses is that "man is in his actions and practices, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal." Therefore, "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question, 'of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'"²³ MacIntyre's primary concern has been to demonstrate that "dramatic narrative is the crucial form for an understanding of human action" and moral reasoning.²⁴

According to L. Gregory Jones, there are two principles that underlie MacIntyre's diverse descriptions of narrative: historicity and human action.²⁵ Jones states, "What MacIntyre is concerned to establish in all the uses of narrative is their historical character. . . . MacIntyre believes that

¹⁹ See, e.g., Nancey Murphy, Brad Kallenberg, and Mark Nation, eds., *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997).

²⁰ See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2d ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). Also see MacIntyre's sequel, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

²¹ L. Gregory Jones, "Alasdair MacIntyre on Narrative, Community, and the Moral Life," in *Modern Theology* 4, no. 1 (1987): 53.

²² Brad J. Kallenberg, "The Master Argument of MacIntyre's *After Virtue*," in Murphy, Kallenberg, and Nation, eds., *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition*, 20.

²³ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 216.

²⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, "Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science," in Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, eds., *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989), 150.

²⁵ Jones, "Alasdair MacIntyre on Narrative, Community, and the Moral Life", 57.

human action, in order to be intelligible, requires an account of a context which only a true dramatic narrative can provide.”²⁶ Therefore, any interpretive method with its epistemological system is “inescapably historically and socially context bound” and is “inseparable from the intellectual and social tradition in which it is embodied.”²⁷ Furthermore, the community’s narrative envelops the tradition and makes the methodological argument understandable and meaningfully acceptable.²⁸ The “community,” then, “is the bearer, interpreter and concert expression of its tradition.”²⁹

Does this lead, then, to relative pluralism? No, it just emphasizes that all moral reasoning is dependent upon and takes place within a narrative tradition. Nancey Murphy writes: “MacIntyre has complex and ingenious arguments to show that, despite the tradition-dependence of all specific moral arguments, it is nonetheless possible to make respectable public claims, showing one tradition of moral reasoning to be superior to its rivals.”³⁰ Trevor Hart further explains how MacIntyre’s account of moral reasoning challenges relativism. MacIntyre is “reminding us that traditions are rooted in communities, and thereby reinforcing the suggestion that rationality, far from being an isolated and uniquely personal or subjective thing, is in fact an interpersonal matter as well.” Narrative traditions, then, “are justified by their supposed appropriateness as accounts of reality. They refer us appropriately to the world, and facilitate a meaningful engagement with it in its rich diversity.” MacIntyre, then, “is not a relativist but a realist.”³¹

At this point, I need to clarify how I understand the Pentecostal narrative tradition and its relationship to Christianity. The Pentecostal community is a distinct coherent narrative tradition within Christianity. Pentecostal communities are bound together by their charismatic experiences and common story. The Pentecostal narrative tradition is one embodiment of the Christian metanarrative.³² Yet, because the Pentecostal

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*, 4, 8.

²⁸ Jones, “Alasdair MacIntyre on Narrative, Community, and the Moral Life.” Jones challenges MacIntyre for his lack of emphasis upon community, p. 59.

²⁹ Kallenberg, “The Master Argument of MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*,” 64.

³⁰ *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition*, 2.

³¹ Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1995), 68. See also MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*. “Post-Enlightenment relativism and perspectivism are thus the negative counterpart of Enlightenment, its inverted mirror image,” 353.

³² By metanarrative I am referring to a grand story by which human societies and their individual members live and organize their lives in meaningful ways. The Christian

community understands itself to be a restorational movement, it has argued that it is the best representation or embodiment of Christianity in the world today. This may sound triumphalist; yet, Pentecostals, like all restorational narrative traditions of Christianity, desire to be both an authentic continuation of New Testament Christianity and a faithful representation of New Testament Christianity in the present societies in which they exist.³³ Of course, the understanding of what was and should be New Testament Christianity is based upon a Pentecostal understanding. Moral reasoning, which includes biblical-theological interpretation, is contextualized in the narrative tradition of the Pentecostal community. Pentecostals will engage Scripture, do theology, and reflect upon reality from their own contextualized communities and narrative tradition.³⁴

Pentecostal Story and the Making of Meaning

The Pentecostal story or narrative tradition is the primary hermeneutical context for the production of theological meaning. The Pentecostal narrative tradition provides Pentecostals with an experiential, conceptual hermeneutical narrative that enables them to interpret Scripture and their experience of reality. The Pentecostal narrative tradition is the hermeneutical horizon of the community and the means of articulating its identity.

The community story is essential for shaping and communicating identity. Trevor Hart explains, "Stories . . . are very important to our identity as human beings in community. Every human community has a story which it tells both itself and others concerning its distinct origins and *raison*

metanarrative refers to the general Christian story about the meaning of the world, the God who created it, and humanity's place in it. This is a story that begins with a good creation includes a fall into sin, redemption through the Messiah, Christian community, and final restoration of all creation. The Christian metanarrative is primarily dependent on the Bible for this general narrative. For a basic outline of the "Storyline" of the Christian metanarrative, see Gabriel Fackre, *The Christian Story: A Narrative of Basic Christian Doctrine*, vol. 1, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, England: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996). Fackre writes that "Creation, Fall, Covenant, Jesus Christ, Church, Salvation, Consummation, . . . are acts in the Christian drama," with the understanding that "there is a God who creates, reconciles, and redeems the world" as "the 'Storyline'" (8-9).

³³ Pentecostals see themselves as continuing the reformation process of Protestantism.

³⁴ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*, 354. Concerning contextualization, see Gonzalez, *Santa Biblia*: "Contextualization may certainly lead to fragmentation: but is not necessarily its result. *Unconscious* contextualization, on the other hand, will certainly lead to fragmentation. . . . What leads to fragmentation is lack of recognition that all these theologies, as well as all expressions of traditional theology, are contextual, and therefore express the gospel as seen from a particular perspective" (17).

d'être, and about the sort of place this world in which it exists is."³⁵ The Pentecostal narrative tradition is an eschatological Christian story of God's involvement in the restoration of the Christian community and God's dramatic involvement both in reality and the Pentecostal community.³⁶

The Pentecostal community identity is forged from its reading of the biblical narrative of Acts and then the Gospels. Pentecostals desire to live as the eschatological people of God. They are caught up in the final drama of God's redemptive activity, which is channeled through Jesus and manifested in the community by the Holy Spirit, and they enthusiastically embrace and proclaim the Full Gospel.³⁷ This places Jesus at the heart of God's dramatic story, which in turn emphasizes the missionary role of the community.

The Pentecostal community reads Scripture from a Pentecostal perspective shaped by its particular story. As in all readings, there will be a transaction between the biblical text and the community, and this will result in the production of meaning. Therefore, there exists a dialectic encounter between two poles: the biblical text and the community. This encounter is possible because within the biblical story and the Pentecostal community there are a number of working plots.

Plots exist on a number of levels. Dan Hawk argues that plot functions on the surface level of the story, and in this sense, plot "may refer to the framework of the story."³⁸ Plot can also refer to the more detailed "arrangement of incidents and patterns as they relate to each other" in a story. These two functions of plot recognize that it operates within the self-contained world of a biblical narrative. Yet, Hawk also argues that there exist real yet abstract notions of plot operating within the mind of the reader. The reader then also "exercises a tendency to organize and make connections between events." Hawk argues that this function of plot in the mind of the reader is a "dynamic phenomenon" that "moves beyond the formal aspects of the text and addresses the interpretive processes that take place between text

³⁵ Hart, *Faith Thinking*, 107.

³⁶ This will be presented later in this essay.

³⁷ The Full Gospel (five- or fourfold Gospel) is the Pentecostals' doxological confession concerning Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, Spirit Baptizer, and Soon Coming King. This confession is the very heart of Pentecostal ethos. Donald Dayton has demonstrated that the Full Gospel forms the basic *gestalt* of Pentecostal thought and rhetoric. See Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 173.

³⁸ L. Daniel Hawk, *Every Promised Fulfilled: Contesting Plots in Joshua* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 19. Hawk is drawing upon Paul Ricoeur.

and reader.”³⁹ This happens because a “narrative . . . elicits a dynamic interpretative relationship between text and reader.”⁴⁰ This understanding of plot affirms an existential intertextual phenomenon that makes the act of communication possible between text and reader.

When the Pentecostal in community reads Scripture, he or she will place the biblical stories into the cohesive Pentecostal narrative tradition. This is not simply a linear process. Pentecostals will allow for the biblical stories to challenge and reshape their understanding and even their tradition, because Scripture is understood to be the authoritative source and norm for theologizing.

The dialogical and dialectical encounter between the Bible and the community makes the making of meaning possible. This implies that the making of meaning and the validation of that meaning will take place primarily within the community; thus, authoritative meaning rests in the pragmatic decision of the community.⁴¹ The community must discern what the text means and how that meaning is to be lived out in the community. This decision-making process is imperative for Pentecostals, because Pentecostal interpretation includes an act of willful obedient response to the Scripture’s meaning.

Theological Precursors for the Emergence of the Pentecostal Story

The purpose of this section is to identify two essential theological influences that enabled the Pentecostal community and its unique story to come into existence. This will be accomplished first by demonstrating the impact that the latter rain motif had upon early Pentecostal identity and how that theological concept set the stage for the “restoration” of the Full Gospel, which gave birth to the Pentecostal community.

³⁹ Hawk, *Every Promised Fulfilled*, 27.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ See Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1980). Fish left formalistic thinking about texts and here argues that communities write texts in the very act of reading. I do not totally agree with Fish’s pragmatic view that communities dominate and use texts as they see fit, but Fish is correct in his argument that interpretive communities do have the final decision in proclaiming what a text means.

The Latter Rain Motif

D. William Faupel has demonstrated that the latter rain motif provides the primary organizational structure for the Pentecostal narrative tradition.⁴² Thus the early Pentecostal exegetical method, although similar to the other budding popularistic evangelical traditions, differs because the Pentecostals held to a distinct narrative in which the latter rain motif played a significant role in the fabrication of the Pentecostal story.⁴³ The latter rain motif also provided the early Pentecostals with an important organizational and relational role in the interpretive process; in other words, it enabled Pentecostals to relate and interpret the Old and New Testament intertextually according to a promise-fulfillment strategy. The promise-fulfillment strategy also allowed them to extend the biblical promise(s) into their present community thus enabling them to participate in the past promises, presently. G. F. Taylor explained the significance of the latter rain motif as follows:

God fashioned the land of Palestine to be the model land of all lands, to contain the produces of all zones and climes, to be a miniature world in itself, and so He arranged the coming and going of its rain clouds on a spiritual pattern, to beautifully adumbrate the movements of the Holy Spirit. So just what the rain is to the earth, the Holy Spirit is to the soul. God arranged the showers of rain in the land of Canaan, as a type of the operations of grace. Many Scriptures allude to the early and latter rain, and these are used as types of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴

The early and latter rain motif is based upon the typical weather cycle in Palestine and the biblical promise that God would provide the necessary rain for a plentiful harvest (the former and latter rains) if Israel remained faithful to its covenant relationship with Yahweh.⁴⁵ The latter rain motif

⁴² *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), see chap. 2, pp. 19-43.

⁴³ The biblical references used to develop the early and latter rain motifs were Deut. 11:10-15; Job 29:29; Prov. 16:15; Jer. 3:3, 5:24; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zech. 10:1, and James 5:7.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *The Spirit and the Bride* (ca. 1907), 90. He dedicated chapter 9 of this work to the explanation of the early and Latter Rain (90-99).

⁴⁵ See A. H. Joy, "Rain," in J. Orr, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4 (Chicago: Howard Severance, 1915), 25-26. Faupel (*The Everlasting Gospel*, 30) points out that the Pentecostals misunderstood the Palestinian weather cycle. They thought that the early and latter rain pattern took place before and then after the hot dry North

provided the Pentecostal community with a stable conceptual framework through which it interpreted God's involvement with the whole of human history. It "provided the broad framework in which the Pentecostal worldview could be constructed."⁴⁶ Therefore, the latter rain motif played a prominent role in the fashioning of the narrative tradition of the early Pentecostal community by providing the basic structure for the Pentecostal story.

Latter rain terminology was common among the various Holiness groups.⁴⁷ People were praying for and expecting a great outpouring of God's Spirit at the turn of the twentieth century. They longed for the promised latter rain, which would bring in the end-time harvest and thus assure the coming of the Lord. A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA), wrote in his denominational magazine:

We may . . . conclude that we are to expect a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in connection with the second coming of Christ and one as much greater than the Pentecostal effusion [Acts 2] as the rains of autumn were greater than the showers of spring. . . . We are in the time . . . when we may expect this latter rain.⁴⁸

American summer, thus a spring and then a fall rain. Actually it takes place during the winter rainy season of Palestine, with October being the early rain and April being the latter rain.

⁴⁶ Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 35-36. See pp. 32-36 for an important discussion on the significance of the latter rain motif contribution to the structure of the Pentecostal message. See also Edith Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 93-97, for a discussion of the influence of the latter rain concept upon the lifestyle of the early Pentecostals.

⁴⁷ Blumhofer (*Restoring the Faith*, 96) argues that "proto-fundamentalists" such as A. T. Pierson prayed for the latter rain outpouring and "diligently" charted the rainfall patterns of Palestine; yet, unlike the Pentecostals, "[proto-fundamentalists] did not expect the full recurrence of apostolic 'signs.'" I disagree with Blumhofer's statement, because there existed within her "proto-fundamentalist" coalition those traditions and people who are cessationist, like Keswickian dispensationalist A. T. Pierson, and those like A. B. Simpson, who are Keswickian but not cessationist. Thus, whether or not you expect miracles to be restored to the church depends upon whether or not you are a cessationist. Also, the Wesleyan Holiness, Pentecostal, and proto-fundamentalists (cessationist and noncessationist) will predominantly embrace Scofield's dispensational hermeneutic (all Baptist fundamentalists had already done so), yet such noncessationists as the Pentecostals will modify in light of the latter rain narrative. Therefore, not all proto-fundamentalists were cessationist, and some, like A. B. Simpson, were praying for the restoration of all the supernatural gifts to the Church. Thus the term *proto-fundamentalist* adds more confusion than clarification concerning these early revivalist groups. A better way to classify such groups would be to recognize them as either cessationists or noncessationists in theological orientation.

⁴⁸ Cited in Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God*, p. 151. For a very important presenta-

Simpson, like many at the turn of the century, was praying and longing for the eschatological fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, which, he and others believed, was beginning to take place. They had already begun to experience a sprinkling of the latter rain showers (sanctification, divine healing, and premillennialism). Because the "early rain" (Acts 2) empowered the early Church with supernatural gifts, Simpson and those who did not embrace a cessationist view expected a full and greater restoration of all the gifts during the latter rain just prior to the second coming of Christ.⁴⁹

Pentecostals, however, seized the early and latter rain motif and utilized it as an apologetic explanation for the importance of their movement. The early rain was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the first-century Christians at Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. The latter rain was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon saved and sanctified Christians at the turn of the century. The time in between the early and latter rain was a time of drought caused by the "great apostasy" of the Roman Catholic Church.

The biblical latter rain motif became an important contribution to the Pentecostal story. In fact, there would be no Pentecostal story without it. The latter rain motif enabled the Pentecostals to hold together the Full Gospel message because it provided a coherent explanation for the restoration of the supernatural gifts, while also providing the primary organizational structure for their story. The Pentecostals became the people of the prophetically promised latter rain, which meant that they had fully recovered not only the apostolic faith, but also apostolic power, authority, *pathos*, and practice.⁵⁰

tion of A. B. Simpson's relationship with Pentecostalism, see Charles W. Nienkrichen, *A. B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement: A Study In Continuity, Crisis, and Change* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992). Nienkrichen argues that the contemporary attitude of the current Christian Missionary Alliance denomination was primarily shaped by the latter revisionist interpretation of Simpson's writings by A. W. Tozer then by Simpson, himself.

⁴⁹ For Simpson's understanding of the "latter rain" motif see Nienkrichen, *A. B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement*, pp. 65-8. Nienkrichen correctly points out that there is a logical corollary of Simpson's doctrine of "latter rain" and his emphasis upon the restoration of New Testament miracles, which "was his categorical rejection of cessationism", p. 66. Simpson would not embrace the normative argument of the Pentecostal's concerning Spirit baptism as being evidenced by speaking in tongues, even though he was sympathetic to the movement and supportive of the manifestation of supernatural gifts, p. 129.

⁵⁰ Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, p. 39.

Pentecostals often appealed to the manifestation of miracles as validation of their message. "Signs and wonders" became an important "proof" for validating the Pentecostal story, and with this came the development of a "signs theology." For example, in *The Apostolic Faith* under the banner "Signs Follow," one reads:

The signs are following in Los Angeles. The eyes of the blind have been opened, the lame have been made to walk, and those who have accidentally drunk poison have been healed. One came suffering from poison and was healed instantly. Devils are cast out, and many speak in new tongues. All the signs in Mark 16:16-18 have followed except the raising of the dead, and we believe God will have someone to receive that power. We want all the signs that it may prove that God is true. It will result in the salvation of many souls.⁵¹

The purpose of the Latter Rain outpouring was to bring the true Church to perfection and unity, while empowering the individual Christian with supernatural power in order to be a witness in these last days.⁵² Thus, Myland said, "No matter how often you said, 'saved, sanctified, and healed,' you still need Pentecost."⁵³ The latter rain outpouring was "the fullness of the Spirit and the power of the Gospel of Christ restored."⁵⁴

The primary candidates for the latter rain outpouring were the financially poor and outcast of society. Myland wrote:

"Thou, O God, hast prepared of Thy goodness for the poor." . . . I don't know what the poor can do, the church has little use for them; but God sent this Latter Rain to gather up all the poor and outcast, and make us love everybody: feeble ones, base ones, those that have just been cast out of human society; no one wants them, all the outcasts of India and China; these are what God sent the Latter Rain people to pick up.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Los Angeles, Cal., October 1906, vol. 1, number 3, p. 4.

⁵² D. Wesley Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power* (Chicago, Illinois: Evangel Publishing House, 1910), pp. 29, 52, 88, 96, and 99.

⁵³ Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant*, p. 61.

⁵⁴ Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant*, p. 54.

⁵⁵ Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant*, p. 53. See p. 84 where he argued that all who wanted to be used by God must become servants and handmaidens. See pp. 113-4 where he condemns the wealthy non-Christian and on p. 87 where he rebukes the Christian who has money. Myland proclaimed "If the Lord should burst through the air with the sound of the trump and voice of the archangel, many who profess to believe these truths could not go up to meet him because they are bound down by bank stocks, bonds, and real estate- these are weights upon them."

The Pentecostals were marginalized people who heeded the call to empty themselves of “self-love” and “self-will” and immerse themselves in the latter rain outpouring, which was the restoration of the Gospel of Christ for the preparation and participation of the end-time harvest.⁵⁶

In sum, the latter rain motif provided the Pentecostals with a persuasive theological apologetic account for the existence of their community. The latter rain motif provided the basic structure for the Pentecostal story. The Pentecostal story brought together the Full Gospel message and extended the past biblical latter rain covenant of promise into the present Pentecostal Movement. The Pentecostals, then, understood themselves as the prophetically promised eschatological community who would bring about the unity of Christianity and usher in the Second Coming of Christ.

Primitivistic Posture

In this section I will explain the influences that motivated Pentecostals to read Scripture in a restorative manner. This is directly related to the importance and priority placed upon the Book of Acts and its harmonization with the rest of Scripture. Their community concerns were important in causing the Pentecostals to ask specific questions and look to Scripture for the answers.

Mark Noll has stated that the typical attitude of nineteenth-century conservatives toward Scripture was that “the Bible was a book to be studied *with* the history of the church, not *against* it.”⁵⁷ Pentecostals knew that past church history lacked a consistent attestation of the supernatural gifts operating throughout Christianity. Rather than dissuading them, it reinforced the veracity of their claim. Pentecostals were convinced that they were simply returning to primitive Christianity and that they had restored the Full Gospel, which was “the restoration of the faith once delivered unto the saints.”⁵⁸

Pentecostal culture wholeheartedly embraced the pronouncements made by the influential Wesleyan Holiness leader John P. Brooks, who was the chief architect of “Come-outism.” Brooks denounced all denominational

⁵⁶ Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant*, p. 52. The Azusa Street revival was often compared to the humble surroundings of Christ’s birth.

⁵⁷ Richard T. Hughes (ed.), *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 1988), p. 125.

⁵⁸ B. F. Lawrence, *The Apostolic Faith Restored* (St. Louis, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), p. 12.

churches as sects and declared that the true Church was to be found among the local Holiness churches.⁵⁹ Brooks was convinced that the true Church was a visible community of local congregations. The members of these local holiness congregations were “regenerated” and “going on to perfection.” He rejected hierarchical ecclesiastical governmental structure and argued that local churches were to be independent and governed by local elders and deacons who were called by Christ from among the congregation.

Brooks made some important arguments that were later echoed throughout early Pentecostal literature. He also reflected the mindset of those who circulated among the Holiness groups. Brooks believed that the New Testament contained all the information necessary for Christian belief and polity. He was also convinced that the sanctified Christian lifestyle, rooted in love, would eradicate all selfish and sinful interests, which had created sectarianism, denominationalism, and creedalism. The power of the Holy Spirit enabled one to live a sanctified life, which ultimately would bring about unity among all true sanctified Christians.

Brooks argued that the whole New Testament was “the statute book of the Church.” No new polity was needed for the Church, only a return to the God-inspired account.⁶⁰ The Reformation brought about a restoration of doctrine but failed to recover “the primitive polity and order of the Church which had been hidden, since the creation of hierarchy, in oblivion of centuries.”⁶¹ Brooks advocated that real Christians must withdraw from all forms of human-made organizational Christianity and band together in local congregations in order to form the authentic Church, which must be patterned after the true Church as revealed in the New Testament. The primitive Church of the New Testament was intended by God to be “permanent and perpetual.” He stated:

[The Church of the New Covenant] must continue the same, in oneness of faith, of order, of sacraments, of polity, till Christ should come again. These must abide unchanged, to preserve the identity of the Church. To change the one faith of the Church, or its order, or its sacraments, or its polity would be

⁵⁹ John P. Brooks, *The Divine Church* (Columbia, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1891), p. 283. Brooks was convinced that authentic salvation with a desire to pursue holiness and a return to the New Testament doctrine and polity was all that was needed to bring unity and perfection among all true Christians. The Pentecostals believed that unity and perfection would come as a result of the latter rain outpouring.

⁶⁰ Brooks, *The Divine Church*, pp. 26-8.

⁶¹ Brooks, *The Divine Church*, p. 39.

an innovation on its constitution, and it would no longer be the Church that Christ founded.⁶²

Brooks was a “primitivist.”⁶³ Like all primitivists, he desired to return to the pure Church of the New Testament era. For Brooks, the present Church was perverted and apostate. Like other restorationists, he had to transcend at least eighteen hundred years of Christian history in order to discover the pure, primitive or true Church. The Wesleyan Holiness traditions resonate with primitivistic concepts of the Church.⁶⁴

Primitivists were keenly aware of the differences between the primitive Church of Scripture and the Church of history. Brooks simply argued that the great “dissimilarity” was caused by the apostasy of the patristic Church, which was epitomized by the Roman Catholic Church. It was seen as the mother of all sectarian churches, which had fallen into complete apostasy through the Emperor Constantine. As a result, “the true Church dropped out of sight, and what remained was apostate ecclesiasticism.”⁶⁵ The true Church began to resurface again as a result of the Reformation and could clearly be seen among the independent Holiness churches.

Brooks argued that the apostasy of the early Church caused the cessation of divine miracles. He did not believe that God desired to have the miracles cease with the death of the apostles; instead, he argued that the divine power of God would be manifested within the true Church but that one should not expect to see miracles in the apostate Church. God’s approval had been withdrawn from the apostate Church but not permanently removed.

The truth is that the marks of supernaturalism with which the church was originally clothed were intended to abide with it, and to accredit its doctrine as Divine, just as Christ’s own doctrine was accredited as Divine; because as already observed, the ministry of the church was to be a continuation of the ministry of Christ, and in his design, no doubt, was to be accompanied with the same phenomena of supernaturalism that verified his own ministry. . . . And as in the future that Church (the true Church) shall more and more

⁶² Brooks, *The Divine Church*, p. 17.

⁶³ Richard T. Hughes states that “the common thread that bound all primitivists together was a mutual striving to live and move in a perfect church, patterned after an apostolic model” in *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 214-5.

⁶⁴ See Steven L. Ware, “Restoring the New Testament Church: Varieties of Restorationism in the Radical Holiness Movement of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” in *PNEUMA* 21:2 (Fall 1999), pp. 238-47.

⁶⁵ Brooks, *The Divine Church*, pp. 219ff., 225.

emerge into notice from amidst the confusions and carnalities of sectarian Christendom, it cannot be doubted that there will be a reassertion of all the original gifts of which it was in the beginning made the possessor by its divine Lord, the gift of miracle included.⁶⁶

Brooks's arguments help set the stage for the expectation of the restoration of the charismatic gifts to a holy community.

Brooks—like other prominent Holiness noncessationists, notably A. B. Simpson—provided the Pentecostals with a powerful argument for the acceptance and validity of their movement. The manifestation of the gifts among the Pentecostals should be understood as a divine sign of the movement's legitimacy. The Pentecostals claimed that their movement ushered in the latter rain era, which the Holiness/noncessationist movements were anticipating. Hence, the latter rain motif functioned as a plot line of the Pentecostal story. The following statement by B. F. Lawrence reveals the importance that primitivism and the latter rain motif had upon Pentecostal identity:

The honest-hearted thinking men and women of this great movement, have made it their endeavor to return to the faith and practice of our brethren who serve God prior to the apostasy. They have made the New Testament their rule of life. This effort, which is so general throughout the movement, has had a particular effect upon those who were exercised thereby. . . . The Pentecostal movement has no such history; it leaps the intervening years crying, "*Back to Pentecost*." In the minds of these honest-hearted, thinking men and women, this work of God is immediately connected with the work of God in the New Testament days. Built by the same hand, upon the same foundation of the apostles and prophets, after the same pattern, according to the same covenant, they too are a habitation of God through the Spirit. They do not recognize a doctrine or custom as authoritative unless it can be traced to that primal source of church instructions, the Lord and his apostles.⁶⁷

Hence the validity of the Pentecostal community's existence was based upon the interpretation of Scripture. Not only was there biblical support for their existence, but the community was also being divinely approved. God was confirming to the world that the Pentecostal Christians were the fulfillment of the anticipated latter rain. The Pentecostals had the testimony of miracles to confirm their claim.

The Apostolic Faith, under the bold heading "The Promised Latter Rain Now Being Poured Out on God's Humble People," stated that,

⁶⁶ Brooks, *The Divine Church*, p. 21.

⁶⁷ Lawrence, *The Apostolic Faith Restored*, pp. 11-2.

All along the ages men have been preaching a partial Gospel. A part of the Gospel remained when the world went into the dark ages. God has from time to time raised up men to bring back the truth to the church. He raised up Luther to bring back to the world the doctrine of justification by faith. He raised up another reformer in John Wesley to establish Bible holiness in the church. Then he raised up Dr. Cullis who brought back the wonderful doctrine of divine healing. Now He is bringing back the Pentecostal Baptism to the church.⁶⁸

The focal point of the latter rain was the “restoration of the Gospel,” but the primary character of the story was Jesus. The doctrines being restored, the fivefold Gospel, all have to do with one’s understanding of the ministry of Jesus—a soteriological and ecclesiastical concern. The Pentecostal community was a continuation of the ministry of Jesus made possible by the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst.

In sum, the Pentecostals, who had been shaped by the Holiness culture of Come-outism, read Scripture without the need to appeal to the development of tradition beyond the New Testament. The unadulterated Christian history was recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. There was little need to trace a historical account of the activity of the supernatural gifts throughout church history. Pentecostals, however, needing to present a plausible reason for the lack of supernatural manifestations, simply adopted and represented an already acceptable solution. The gifts had generally ceased due to the great apostasy of the Church; however, the gifts would be restored to those Holiness Christian communities that sought the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹ The arguments of Come-outism, as woven into the latter rain motif, helped to create the Pentecostal story.

Mark Noll writes, “When studying biblical primitivism, it does seem important to ask which part of the Bible functions as the standard, for it is rarely the entire text.”⁷⁰ For Pentecostals, the standard was the Book of Acts. They read the whole of Scripture through the Book of Acts as if they

⁶⁸ (Los Angeles, Cal., 1906, vol. 1, number 2, p. 1, lead article). See also D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 1996, who argues that this pattern is found repeatedly in Pentecostal literature and presents a partial listing (p. 38, footnote 52).

⁶⁹ Richard Hughes aptly explains the primitivistic quest of the Pentecostals. “[T]he Holiness tradition emphasized an *ethical primitivism*, concerned with a sanctified way of life, the Pentecostals sought an *experiential primitivism* directed toward recovery of the apostolic gifts of the Spirit, especially glossolalia and healing. Indeed, Pentecostals sought nothing less than a restoration of the Jerusalem Pentecost . . .” in *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, p. 243.

⁷⁰ Hughes, *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, p. 121.

were looking forward and backward simultaneously. Therefore, Acts served as their beginning and ending point in the development of biblical doctrines. Donald Dayton's comment that Pentecostals read Scripture "through Lukan eyes especially with the lens of Acts" correctly captures this reality.⁷¹ Implicit in their interpretation of the relation between the Old and New Testament, however, was the important notion that the ministry of Jesus was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophetic promises.

Acts was the authentically inspired historical record of the "primitive Church." The Pentecostals compared their contemporary Christianity with the original "apostolic" pattern in Acts, and found contemporary Christianity lacking in both power and purity. They sought to continue the restoration of doctrine and practice started by the Protestant Reformers. The Pentecostals, unlike the Reformers but similar to the Holiness non-cessationist primitivists, sought the restoration of miracles. The Pentecostals, along with the Wesleyan Holiness community, embraced the Book of Acts as the normative expression of authentic Christianity.⁷²

The Pentecostal Story and the Central Narrative Convictions of the Community

The purpose of this section is to articulate the story of the first generation of Pentecostals and the central narrative convictions of that unique story. The central narrative convictions are those convictions that arise out of the story and are central to the story.⁷³ The central narrative convictions

⁷¹ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, p. 23.

⁷² Donald Dayton, "Asa Mahan and The Development of American Holiness Theology" in *The Wesleyan Theological Journal* 9 (Spring, 1974), pp. 60-9, shows how the Book of Acts became very important in the latter period of the Holiness movements. This was due to the influence of Asa Mahan, especially his book titled "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit" which signaled an important shift in the language and theological emphasis to the book of Acts (Pentecostal themes).

⁷³ For an insightful discussion concerning "Foundational Narrative Convictions" as they relate to hermeneutical communities see Douglas Jacobsen's "Pentecostal Hermeneutics in Comparative Perspective", a paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, March 13-15, 1997 (Oakland, CA). I modified his concept foundational narrative convictions to central narrative convictions. Jacobsen identifies what he perceives to be the foundational narrative convictions of Pentecostalism as "God is doing a new thing through us" and this is different from anything that has happened before in history. He points out that at the heart of Pentecostalism is a confidence, a confidence that permeates everything Pentecostals do. I disagree with Jacobsen's description of Pentecostalism foundational narrative conviction even though I agree that Pentecostalism articulates a bold confidence in God. This confidence is not so much a new thing as it is a restored "latter rain"

are key theological concepts inherent in the Pentecostal story, which is dramatically articulated through the proclamation of the fivefold (Full) Gospel.

The Pentecostal story explains why the Pentecostal community exists, who they are as a community, and what responsibilities they should perform, and how they fit into the larger scheme of Christian history. It shades perceptions that color and make meaningful the reading of Scripture as well as experienced reality. The story cannot be reduced to static presuppositions. The coherent story is more than a rational cognitive grid (such as presuppositions seem to suggest), which means that it cannot be removed or laid aside. It may be modified or changed but it cannot be set aside.

Douglas Jacobsen hints at this dialectical interactive epistemological process of the interpreter rooted in a hermeneutical community and the reading of Scripture. He writes:

Our communally different readings of the Bible have largely been derived from the text [Scripture]. Our different experiences have shaped the way we see the text and situate the text in relation to ourselves and the world, but our readings of the Bible have also helped form those very experiences, helped form our foundational views of life.⁷⁴

Every Christian tradition has a story that shapes, influences, and in some aspects determines the “meaning” of the biblical passage. The community story gives the readers a particular angle from which they see the Bible as whole. The story constructed out of Scripture will also indicate what passages in the Bible will function as a canon within the canon.

The Pentecostal story operates within the socio-cultural Pentecostal worldview and holds its central assumptions and beliefs together in a coherent and cohesive manner.⁷⁵ The story has always been the primary

that is greater than the “former rain.” I will demonstrate that the central narrative convictions of the (early) Pentecostals are (was) the Five-fold Gospel made relevant through the latter rain story.

⁷⁴ Jacobsen, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics in Comparative Perspective”, p. 5. Jacobsen lists and briefly describes ten distinguishable elements that he believes apply to all biblical hermeneutics. They are: Experience, Inherited Interpretive Schemes, Intuition, Systematic Analysis, Communal Corroboration, Reader-Response “Expansion” of the Text, Ritual Response, Desired Result, Academic analysis and a Second Naïveté, see pages 2-4, for a fuller discussion. Hermeneutics is much more than adopting a certain exegetical approach.

⁷⁵ Charles Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996). Kraft defines a worldview “as the culturally structured assumptions, and commitments/allegiances underlining a people’s perception of reality and their response to those perceptions”, p. 52.

hermeneutical filter used to sift the Scriptures for theological meaning. It is the hermeneutical foil in which meaning is produced.

J. Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh suggest that "worldviews give faith answers to a set of ultimate grounding questions."⁷⁶ They argue that such questions could be framed as:

(1) *Where are we?* or What is the nature of the reality in which we find ourselves? (2) *Who are we?* or What is the nature and task of human beings? (3) *What's wrong?* or How do we understand and account for the evil and brokenness? (4) *What's the remedy?* or How do we find a path through our brokenness to wholeness.⁷⁷

The Pentecostal story performs a similar function in that it provides meaningful answers to these ultimate questions.

The story also serves as the Pentecostal version of Christianity. Hence, by identifying the Pentecostal narrative tradition, we simultaneously recognize the important contribution of the social location of the reader in her community.⁷⁸ Biblical hermeneutics is concerned with the historical horizon of Scripture but also with the equally challenging horizon of the contemporary reader.

Elsewhere I have shown how the first generation of Pentecostals interpreted Scripture with methods similar to those used by both the non-cessationist Holiness community and, to some extent, the cessationist dispensational fundamentalist community.⁷⁹ Pentecostals used typology, inductive reasoning, and even dispensational schemes. Yet, what distinguished the early Pentecostal hermeneutic from that of their Holiness sisters was the distinct narrative that held these similar methods together. This distinct story encouraged them to interpret Scripture from a new angle. They were the marginalized people of the latter rain.

⁷⁶ *The Transforming Vision: Shaping A Christian World View* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1984), see chapter 2.

⁷⁷ Middleton and Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used To Be: Biblical Faith In A Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 11.

⁷⁸ I am purposefully using "her" in order to remind the readers that it was a woman who first spoke in tongues at Parham's Bible school in Topeka Kansas and that women played a significant role in carrying the Pentecostal message throughout the world. Also it was black sanctified women who made significant contributions to the Azusa Street revival and Pentecostalism in general; see Cheryl J. Sanders, *Saints In Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁷⁹ See footnote 12 above.

The latter rain motif provided the early Pentecostals with an experiential conceptual framework and also enabled them to explain their movement convincingly. It provided the hermeneutical lens for the interpretation of Scripture and their present experience of reality.

The early rain came at Pentecost, and immediately the seed which Jesus and His disciples had sown sprang up. This early rain continued for more than a hundred years, during which time the church was kept inundated with mighty floods of salvation. But when the church became popular and was formed into a great hierarchy, the long drought began, interspersed with a local shower of gracious revival now and then through the middle ages. Under the reformations, the latter rain began to be foreshadowed. The holiness revivals which have been going on in our land for the last few years are the preliminary showers of this rain. They have been glorious and wonderful: so much so that many have taken them for the latter rain itself. But we know that these revivals, though gracious, have fallen short of the apostolic revivals—the early rain. The Scriptures seem to teach that the latter rain is to be far greater than the former. . . . The early rain began on the Day of Pentecost, and the first manifestation was speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance, and then followed the healing of the sick, casting out devils, etc. So it would only be natural that the latter rain Pentecost should be repeated and followed by the same manifestation. [The latter rain] seems to have its starting point in the year 1906 in Los Angeles, Cal.⁸⁰

The Pentecostal story was transmitted orally and through publications. Taylor's explanation of the latter rain is typical and can represent the Pentecostal story.

Like all stories, the Pentecostal story has a beginning, middle, and end. In the beginning, God poured his Spirit out on a saved and sanctified Christian community with the biblical sign of speaking in tongues (Acts 2). The Church started out pure and unified. After the death of the apostles, however, the world became more influential upon the Christian communities. The deathblow would be the conversion of Constantine, which triggered the rapid apostasy of Christianity. As a result of wandering from the truth and practice of Jesus and the apostles, the early Church would become an apostate church. The rains, which fell upon the New Testament apostolic church, began to wane.

The middle of the story begins when the church embraced the Roman Empire (Constantine's granting of equal religious status to Christianity through the Edict of Milan). Consequently, God withdrew his Spirit from

⁸⁰ Taylor, *The Spirit and the Bride*, pp. 90-1.

the apostate hierarchical Roman Church. This was the beginning of the so-called Dark Ages. The rains had stopped. During the long drought of the Middle Ages, however, the living God always had a faithful persecuted remnant. The persecuted remnant was made up of the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Through John Wesley and the Holiness revivals, the Reformers were preparing the faithful remnant of the Church for the restoration of the promised latter rain. This brought the middle section of the story to a close. The occasional sprinkles that came during the drought, which grew more intense yet still sporadic toward the end of the drought, created a sense of anticipation that the rains were going to fall again, just as promised.

The latter rain Pentecostal outpouring was the beginning of the end of the all-encompassing dramatic Pentecostal story. Jesus was coming very soon—before their generation would die—to bring fallen human history to an end. Only the ones who were saved and “baptized with the Holy Ghost” with the biblical evidence of tongues, and who retained the sanctifying work of the Spirit manifesting divine love, would escape the great Day of Judgment coming upon the world. Thus, one needed to experience the latter rain Pentecost in order to be included among the “sealed bride of Jesus.” The latter rain began to fall and it became a torrential downpour.

In conclusion, the Pentecostal story was teleological in that it brought the beginning and end of the church age together. The story affirms the past by holding onto the hope of the future through the present participatory promise of Spirit baptism. The Pentecostal story enabled Pentecostals to eclipse modernity and return to a premodern era in which the supernatural was normal, not abnormal. The Pentecostal story brought together the restoration of charismatic gifts with the imminence of the Second Coming. This narrated hermeneutical approach had a cohesive theological structure and centered upon the restorative dramatic story of God’s passion for humanity. The Pentecostal story contributed to and placed constraints upon their interpretive creativity. This narrative was central to Pentecostal identity and spirituality and not only served as the primary filter through which Scripture was sifted for meaning, but was also used to interpret their experience of reality and their understanding of Christian history.

When Pentecostals read Scripture, they do so from within their cultural-contextual worldview. They read Scripture as the marginalized people of the latter rain. At the center of the dramatic narrative is Jesus, the divine-human Messiah. Jesus is a mighty miracle worker empowered by the Holy Spirit. The fivefold Gospel, then, is the central narrative convictions of

one's salvific relationship with the living God. The Pentecostal salvific relationship with Jesus is the controlling theological center. Thus, the latter rain motif cohesively holds together the restoration of the full Gospel message and reinforces the significance of the signs and wonders within the Pentecostal community. Pentecostals are concerned to be living in continuity with the past "apostolic Christians" while existing presently as the "eschatological bride of Christ."

The analogy of a spider's web may present a better picture of how the story holds together as a cohesive interpretive narrative. At the center of the web is Jesus, with emphasis placed upon the restoration of the supernatural gifts to the pure or holy community. Coming out of the center of the web are five stabilizing theological strands identified as the full or fivefold Gospel, which serves as central narrative convictions of the community.⁸¹ The outer circumference of the web is the latter rain motif, which was the common frame of reference of early Pentecostalism. Woven into this web are testimonies, experiences, and scriptural passages, all of which serve to strengthen the whole web, which is the story.⁸² Therefore, what is unique to Pentecostalism cannot be reduced to a novel method or one particular doctrine. What is unique is the story that creates a living theological tradition—Pentecostalism.⁸³

⁸¹ I realize that sanctification may not be a stated cardinal doctrine of those influenced by Finished Work, however holiness of life remains an important aspect of all Pentecostal groups.

⁸² Even though there exists some theological differences among the Pentecostal groups, which no doubt add a distinct "regional" accent to the general Pentecostal story, it does not substantially change the structure of the story. See Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel* chapter two for thorough overview of the early Pentecostal message.

⁸³ For an example of how the Pentecostal story and its central narrative convictions can creatively and overtly contribute to a Pentecostal theology see Kenneth J. Archer's "Nourishment for our Journey: The Wesleyan Pentecostal *Via Salutis* and the Sacramental Ordinances" a paper presented to the Society for Pentecostal Studies March 20-22, 2003 (Asbury, KY). A revision of the paper by the same title is forthcoming in the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2004.

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