

# Reading Scripture and Nature: Pentecostal Hermeneutics and Their Implications for the Contemporary Evangelical Theology and Science Conversation

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*This article recommends that more intentional focus on the theological character of the biblical message that involves the work of the Holy Spirit can be helpful in resisting the concordism, prevalent in some evangelical circles, that insists on harmonizing Scripture with science. Help in developing such an interpretive approach can be found, surprisingly, in Pentecostal Bible-reading practices. Our case study of Pentecostal hermeneutical sensibilities opens up space for a reading of nature that is complementary with a reading of Scripture. The objective is to invite evangelical Christians to develop a theology and hermeneutic of nature that sustains the scientific enterprise even while registering Pentecostal perspectives, especially in the dialogue between theology and science.*

Many conservative evangelicals are concordists when it comes to their views regarding how the Bible relates to modern science.<sup>1</sup> What this means is that they assume that the plain sense of Scripture, rightly understood, should be confirmable by and harmonizable with—be in concord—rather than contradict the findings of modern science, correctly interpreted. When applied to the creation narrative in the book of Genesis, however, such expectations are challenged, and many conservative evangelicals feel as if they have to opt for what the Bible says (that God created the world in six days) rather than what science says (that the world has evolved over a long period of time). This explains, in large part, the popularity of creationism—the idea that scientific evidence can be marshaled in support of the biblical account—among conservative evangelicals not only in North America but also, increasingly, around the world.<sup>2</sup>

Insofar as many Pentecostals consider conservative evangelicals their allies and agree with them about the authority, infallibility, and even inerrancy of the Bible, to the same degree many Pentecostals also presume a concordist hermeneutic along with the accompanying young-earth view of the world. This explains, at least in part, why many Pentecostals are creationists who are suspicious, at best, about the theory of evolution. But what if concordism is itself a modern concoction, developed by modernists—including conservative

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evangelicals—who feel as if they need to adapt the explanatory power of modern science to interpret the Bible, resulting, paradoxically and ironically, in a scriptural method of interpretation that is itself at odds with a biblical self-understanding? What if the concordist privileging of modern scientific modes of reference and causality is out of sync with the way that Scripture presents itself? Might application of concordist assumptions about science do violence to (at worst) or miss the point of (at best) the Scriptures in general and the Genesis creation narrative in particular?

Others have provided very convincing responses urging against adoption of such concordist presuppositions.<sup>3</sup> In this article, I want to add to these arguments from a specifically Pentecostal perspective. In brief, I will suggest, negatively, that Pentecostal hermeneutical instincts and sensibilities should lead them to question, even reject, concordism, especially in its creationist manifestations, since that is inconsistent with their own instinctive approaches to Scripture; put positively, I will present a rudimentary argument for a Pentecostal theological hermeneutic that reads the book of Scripture soteriologically—i.e., primarily as a theological book focused on God’s redemptive work in the world—while remaining capable of acknowledging and even benefitting from modern disciplinary perspectives, even modern science. If this is true, then the result is that evangelical Christians can seek to engage existentially with the realities pointed to by the Scriptures, while being less concerned about what the relevant secular or scientific disciplines may or may not say about such matters.

I will make my case in three steps, corresponding to the three major sections of this article, by arguing that (1) Pentecostal biblical interpretation (hermeneutics), our case study, is fundamentally soteriological and pneumatological, that is, focused on the ongoing redemptive work of the Holy Spirit, rather than merely historical; (2) such a soteriological and pneumatological way of reading the Bible can be appropriately applied to the Genesis narrative as well, resulting in a more expansive theology of creation than that produced by concordism in its creationist guises; and (3) the result will be a distinctive contemporary contribution to the Christian understanding of the “two books” of God’s revelation, Scripture and creation/nature, one that preserves the integrity of

both the life in the Spirit and the modern scientific enterprise but yet provides an overarching theological narrative that can hold the two together.<sup>4</sup> We will conclude with some brief reflections on how such an approach to Scripture might be helpful, especially for evangelicals who wish to make peace with modern science.<sup>5</sup>

## This Is That! Pentecostal Biblical Hermeneutics—A Case Study

In order to appreciate Pentecostal hermeneutical views, let us focus first on how Pentecostals have read the book of Acts. Modern historical criticism, of course, has debated about the historicity of Acts. Since Luke presents the Acts narrative as derivative from consultation with the relevant eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1–4; cf. Acts 1:1), on modernist historiographical terms, the reported events either happened as indicated or they did not. Modernist readings thus are presented either *in faith*, believing that since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, Acts is accurate regardless of its believability, or *in skepticism*, countering that there are too many inconsistencies in the text or that the fantastic nature of what is described suggests there are ideological motivations or other reasons for what now appears as a largely mythic or legendary, rather than more strictly historical, document.

On this issue, at one level, Pentecostals are modernists and read their Bibles in faith as the inspired, infallible, and often, inerrant Word of God, even if they may never have heard of these terms. This is in part because the earliest Pentecostals at the turn of the twentieth century came mostly from the Holiness movement and carried over their commonsense realist approach to the Scriptures.<sup>6</sup> Yet at the same time, if their other commonsense realist cousins, the fundamentalists, were interested in defending the historical veracity of the biblical claims, Pentecostals were more motivated pragmatically by what the Bible meant for their day-to-day lives.<sup>7</sup> Hence, it was not so much that Pentecostals dismissed the historical dimensions of the biblical accounts, but that they collapsed the presumed distinction between the scriptural text and its contemporary readers. For them, what was important was not so much what happened back then, as it was how the back-then and the here-and-now were connected.

Pentecostal scholar Rickie Moore has highlighted the difference this Pentecostal approach makes for biblical interpretation.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the historical-critical methodology long prominent in the guild of biblical scholarship measures the historicity of the Bible against modernist canons of plausibility, a Pentecostal hermeneutics highlights instead the uniqueness of biblical history vis-à-vis any contemporary generation of readers or interpreters. So whereas modern historical criticism emphasizes the objectivity of the text over and against the interpreter, Pentecostals observe instead the “this is that” — our or my experience (this) is equivalent to the reality accomplished in the lives of the biblical characters or anticipated by them (that) — character of the Bible in relationship to its readers. If modern interpreters approach the Bible as a historical document containing objective truths (facts) about the world (the past, in the case of historical references), Pentecostals view the Scriptures as a narrative that invited its readers and hearers to receive, inhabit, and participate in the world of God. And while modern approaches emphasize the critical distinction between what the text meant in its original context (which was the task of the biblical critic to uncover), as opposed to how such meanings might be applied to our contemporary lives (the task of the homilist), Pentecostal approaches see first and foremost the *rhema* or living and revelatory Word of God making demands on each generation of readers in a way that collapsed the horizons of what the text pointed to and that of the text’s later readers.

In short, Pentecostal hermeneutics emphasizes not the historicity of the biblical accounts but its capacity to open up possibilities for contemporary readers and hearers by the power of the Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Scripture’s purpose is not primarily to give us truthful or factual knowledge about the past (Pentecostals assume this commonsensically without making much of it); rather, Scripture “is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). The goal, thus, is not merely “head knowledge” about what happened but “heart knowledge” that leads to sanctification, participation in the divine life, union with God — in short, reception of the salvation of God made available through Christ by the Holy Spirit. None of this is to deny that the historical dimensions of the Acts narrative are unimportant; it is simply to affirm that Pentecostals read Acts not merely as

history but as *salvation history*, i.e., not merely as a historical document about what happened but as a literary-theological document about what may and even should happen.

Of course, the wider theological academy has also been discovering that the Bible can and should be read theologically and soteriologically rather than merely historically and that the line between history and theology is much more blurred than assumed within the modernist framework. Thus, many other scholars have come to recognize, even appreciate, the theological nature of the Acts narrative.<sup>10</sup> But Pentecostals have, from the very beginning, read Acts as having ongoing and contemporary relevance, as seen in the doctrine of initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which the first Pentecostal generation found as normatively portrayed in the second Lukan volume.<sup>11</sup> While the details of this doctrine can be debated, my point is that it has been precisely this specific interpretive approach that historically has set apart Pentecostal readings of Acts in particular and of the Bible in general from those in non-Pentecostal and noncharismatic ecclesial traditions. And it has been precisely such a “this-is-that” hermeneutic which nurtured Pentecostal contributions to the theological reading of the Acts narrative.<sup>12</sup>

Now modernists might cringe at such an approach, asserting that it does violence to the Bible simply because it allows for the interpreter to assert too much of his or her own self-understanding into the biblical narrative. Pentecostals can respond on at least three levels. First, modernist interpreters should not presume that their own rationalistic, positivistic, and historicist perspectives do not influence their readings of Scripture. Second, it is not so much that our subjectivities are inserted into the biblical narrative — after all, a hard-and-fast distinction between *exegesis* (a taking out of the text) and *eisegesis* (a reading into the text) is a modern concoction anyway — but that our subjectivities are themselves interrogated directly by the Spirit’s witness through the biblical text. Last but not least, such an approach is consistent with the broader apostolic witness for whom the events narrated in the Bible are never mere facts of what happened but are always signs of God’s intentions and purposes in the world.

The Johannine notion of miraculous signs, for example, supports this understanding.<sup>13</sup> From a modernist perspective, the implausibility of such



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accounts as historical events demands other explanations. Yet this ignores the Johannine self-understanding, which insists that the miraculous works of Christ were recorded for the explicit purpose that the gospel's readers "may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Pentecostals have approached the Acts narrative precisely in that spirit. The focus has never been on a historical apologetic for the textual accounts happening in all particulars as described. Rather, the motivation has always been to invite hearers (Pentecostals are people who privilege the oral testimony) of the Word to experience the power of God for themselves. It is not so much what God has done in the past that matters, but what counts is that the past intersects with the present.

Critics might insist that such a Pentecostal hermeneutic presumes the historicity of the events described in Acts, otherwise why might Pentecostals assume that such remains possible in their lives today?<sup>14</sup> At one level, this is true: insofar as Acts purports to be about what did happen, as we have earlier noted that the author himself tells us, to that degree the Pentecostal commonsense realist presumes the historicity of the narrative fairly. At this level, I would go further to affirm that the various historiographical methods can be helpful in illuminating the nature of the world behind the text, even to the point of supporting—complementing, to use my term—Pentecostal faith.<sup>15</sup> However, the presumption of historicity is not equivalent to embracing a historical-critical hermeneutic as the sole or major interpretive lens for understanding Acts in particular or the biblical narrative in general. Instead, as I have suggested, Pentecostals have often ignored (at worst) or at least had a diffident relationship with (at best) historical criticism in favor of literary and narrative models focused less on what the Bible meant then on its present application.<sup>16</sup> In short, they have never privileged a historical approach to the Bible, opting always instead for a salvation history reading that locates them in relationship to the saving and eschatological work of God.

In the end, however, my claim is that such a "this-is-that" approach to the Bible is not really distinctive of Pentecostalism. As a restorationist movement, Pentecostals have long participated in Reformation traditions that have sought to return to and retrieve

the apostolic example for Christian life. Pietist movements of all sorts, baptistic traditions, and Wesleyan-Holiness Christians in all of their various streams—each of these and more have established hermeneutical practices that focus on the relevance of the apostolic experience for contemporary Christian faith.<sup>17</sup> What Pentecostals add to the mix, more specifically, is the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit: in particular, how the Spirit empowered the people of God as recorded in the Scriptures and how that same empowerment is available to Christians in all post-biblical times. Might this pneumatological twist that highlights how the Holy Spirit enables our participation in the biblical message be helpful for a reading of the Bible as a whole and perhaps even the Genesis narrative more particularly?

## This Is That! A Pneumatological Hermeneutics of the Creation Narratives?

I now want to suggest that the pneumatological "this-is-that" hermeneutic as applied to the Acts narrative can also profitably illuminate a reading of the creation narrative, a reading that would help conservative evangelicals overcome the concordist assumptions behind the scientific creationist model. To do so, we will need to see first what best describes the genre of the creation narratives, and then how amenable Genesis 1–2 is to such a re-reading.

There are probably three dominant types of interpretations of the creation narratives, which I call the scientific, mythological, and literary-theological views.<sup>18</sup> There are inevitable overlaps between these views, even as there are profound differences among those who may be classified within each type. But in brief, the first two are modern approaches, the former insisting that the inerrancy of the Bible means that the book of Genesis, rightly interpreted, must be compatible with modern science, rightly understood, and the latter countering that the incompatibility between the plain sense of the first chapters of the Bible and modern science means that the former cannot be understood literally or scientifically, and thus should be interpreted either spiritually or mythically (with, except on occasions, no pejorative intentions behind the last designation). These two views often characterize conservative evangelicals or scientific creationists on the one side who view

the first book of the Bible as ancient science, and liberal Christians or theistic evolutionists on the other side who view this same text as ancient myth.

The third approach, however, is both the most elastic and perhaps also inclusive of the most ancient readings of Genesis, under my definition. This would include not only moral, spiritual, and allegorical interpretations of Genesis prevalent during the first Christian millennium (which inevitably read the Hebrew Bible in general figuratively and typologically in the light of New Testament or christological revelation), but would also include various literary interpretations increasingly popular across the broader theological academy. I would locate my own inclinations within this last trajectory of interpretation, especially its emphasis on how the Genesis narrative should be understood in its ancient Near Eastern context on the one hand, and from a salvation history perspective on the other.<sup>19</sup> With regard to the former, Genesis should be understood as presenting ancient Israel's theology of the one creator God who, in contrast to the pagan deities of the Mediterranean world, overcomes the primeval chaos (the *tohuwabohu* of Gen. 1:2) by the word of his *ruah*.<sup>20</sup> The latter refers to the broader theological horizons of the biblical canon, first the covenantal framework within which God the creator enters into relationship with Israel,<sup>21</sup> and then the founding incarnational and Pentecostal events of the Christian Scriptures.

While widely divergent in many ways, interpreters and exegetes who hold to a literary-theological approach to Genesis 1–2 in general reject attempts to harmonize the creation accounts—there are two accounts: 1:1–2:4, and the rest of Gen. 2—with modern science. Instead of telling us *how* the world was created, Genesis informs us *that* the world was made by a God who seeks to enter into covenant with human creatures. Thus, this ancient text need not be made to conform to modern scientific theories; instead, it is about human existence, history, spirituality, and relationality—i.e., it is anthropological, theological, and soteriological rather than scientific.<sup>22</sup> Put narratively and canonically, Genesis is also about the God who redeems and renews the creation as a whole, as well as its creatures, in spite of its fallen character.

I suggest, then, that Pentecostals in particular and Christians in general can read the creation narratives of Genesis as they do the historical narratives of

Acts: in the light of the soteriological work of the Holy Spirit. While Acts presents itself as a history of the early Christian movement, the historicity of the narrated events is less the point than the invitation to enter into, receive, and inhabit the saving work of God in Christ through the Spirit. Similarly, while Genesis presents itself as a story of the creation of the world, its historicity—or, in this case, its scientific accuracy—is also less the point than its invitation to enter into a covenantal relationship with the creator God. If the pneumatological this-is-that hermeneutic enables readers to participate in God's redemption of the world through the Church, then might not this also hold forth promise for a pneumatological reading of the Genesis story that enables participation in God's creative activity as well? Now while modern scholarship would differentiate the genre of Acts from that of Genesis—an important distinction in various respects—both are narratives, theologically and soteriologically, of divine activity in the past that have relevance for faithfulness to the divine covenant and to participation in the salvation history of God's work in the present.

Paul Elbert is a Pentecostal scholar who has begun to provide such a reading of the Genesis narrative that highlights the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup> Elbert observes that the *ruah* of God “swept over the face of the [primordial] waters” (Gen. 1:2), and from there he correlates the Spirit's work in divine creation with the Spirit's communication through ancient Near Eastern linguistic patterns and rhetorical conventions. At one level, Elbert's is a sophisticated reading of the Genesis account in its ancient Near Eastern context; at another level, however, his interpretation depends to some degree on concordist presuppositions. The result, refracted through Elbert's Pentecostal lens, is a prophetic view of Genesis 1 that both anticipates contemporary experimental scientific findings and provides apologetic confirmation for the truthfulness of the Bible's creation story. While not necessarily opposed to Elbert's reading, I am also not enthused about it, since I think that Pentecostals, in particular, are motivated intuitively less by scientific apologetics than by personal testimony.<sup>24</sup> Put otherwise, Pentecostal sensibilities are dependent not on correlating Scripture with scientific data (or Scripture with historical research) but on identifying the “that” of what the Bible points to as anticipating the “this” that the Spirit of God continues to accomplish today.<sup>25</sup>

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Given these commitments, I suggest that a more viable theological reading of Genesis would, at a minimum, indicate participation in the creative and redemptive work of the Spirit along the following lines. First, the pneumatological “this-is-that” recognizes that the Spirit empowers the creation’s response. The Spirit not only hovers over the watery chaos but also enables the Word of God to be spoken, which in turn brings forth the creation’s responses. Thus, “God said, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.’ And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it” (Gen. 1:11–12). Then later, “God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind’” (Gen. 1:24). What happens next is that the biblical author says, “And it was so,” before saying, “God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:25). In short, these jussive and passive imperatives throughout the Genesis 1 account invite participation of the earth and its creatures, and they actively respond to that invitation.<sup>26</sup> These aspects of the creation narrative resonate with contemporary experiences of the Spirit’s empowering work.

Secondly, Genesis 1–2 is meant, not to provide scientific details about the formation of the earth, but to illuminate the purposes for which God created the world. These include, of course, humanity as the apex of creation—in which the breath of God is given (Gen. 2:7)—now charged to care for the world. Thus, human beings participate not only as co-creators with God, in the sense of responding to God’s creative image, but also as partners with the divine providence over all things.<sup>27</sup> God also said to *ha adam*: “have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28). Read theologically and soteriologically, then, the creation narratives invite humanity to exercise moral responsibility, even a degree of spiritual oversight, over the creation and its creatures, in relationship to God.

Last but not least, read also canonically, the original creation narrative provides a template for and foreshadows the redeemed creation that is promised

later in the Hebrew Bible as the “Day of Yahweh” and in the New Testament as the new heavens and earth.<sup>28</sup> Read from the perspective of the active work of the Spirit in the world, we now live between the times—between the original creation and the new creation—albeit yet still imbued with the same *ruah* of God. The difference here, amidst the fallen yet already-but-not-yet-fully-actualized new creation, is that now we “who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly [with the creation] while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23). In short, the creative work of the divine *ruah* begun prior to the appearance of *ha adam* continues to the present and anticipates the sanctifying and redemptive work of the Spirit of Christ in the future. While declared good, the creation is still incomplete, and human creatures are not only part of what needs renewal, but also are potentially the ones who herald, through their groans, cries, and prayers inspired by the Spirit, that renovative work.<sup>29</sup>

These brief considerations invite us to think theologically about the creation instead of scientifically. Just as Acts tells us what happened in order to enable us to inhabit the eschatological gospel story in the footsteps of the earliest Christians, so Genesis tells us what happened in order for us to participate in the creative-redemptive work of the *ruah* of God amidst the chaos and sin of the world. Further, if Acts provides a theological perspective on salvation history that neither requires nor denies historical-critical scholarship, then Genesis similarly provides a theological perspective on the creative and redemptive works of God that is neutral with regard to the various modern scientific analyses, theories, or conclusions (all of which, by the way, are still being negotiated within the scientific community). There is a difference: with regard to Acts, while there is a literary dimension to Acts, it still presents historical perspectives on what happened in the earliest Christian communities, so much so that historical-critical scholarship has more direct relevance for understanding the earliest followers of the Messiah; but with regard to Genesis, the literary dimension is predominant, with the result that the historical events behind the text are minimally accessible, if not excluded altogether, and to such a degree that the results of modern science are not immediately correlatable with the biblical account. But still, in either case, the concerns are less about how God



has created, orchestrated, or ordered the world and its events than about what God has intended to accomplish through the divine creative and redemptive activity.

Thus, Christians in general and conservative evangelicals in particular are free to allow historical-critical scholarship to run its course (or even to adopt or adapt historical-critical methods vis-à-vis Acts) in order to understand first-century Mediterranean history on the one hand, even as they are free to allow scientific inquiry to proceed or to engage in scientific inquiry themselves (although not so directly vis-à-vis the Genesis narrative) in order to understand the history of the world on the other hand. However, Christians certainly do not have to master the methods or results of either historical criticism or of the natural sciences, nor do they have to adjudicate the disputes within these fields of inquiry in order to hear from, receive, or participate in the Word of God as mediated through the Scriptures in general or Genesis and Acts in particular. In fact, we need historical critics and natural scientists precisely in order to provide some perspective on these texts so as to prevent any of us from reading into the Bible or making it say whatever we want. When issues are still contested, we should pause to consider that any particular interpretation tied to such debates needs to be held loosely, rather than dogmatically.

## The Books of Scripture and of Nature: Toward a Hermeneutics of Science

The preceding prepares the way for seeing how a pneumatological perspective can contribute to the ancient tradition that came to distinguish between the books of Scripture and of nature as two complementary sides of the same coin.<sup>30</sup> By this, I mean that Scripture, read in faith, provides us with the theological significance of nature, understood on its own terms. Thus there are two levels of importance, although each level has its own integrity. If concordism insists that Scripture and science are, or should be, about the same thing, then the Scripture-nature complementarity that I am suggesting says that the Scriptures provide a higher-level set of meanings for scientific findings without undermining the integrity of science or its methods. In order

to see this, we will give a brief overview on the history of the two books metaphor before turning to more contemporary applications.

While Augustine was one of the first of the early church fathers to call nature a book,<sup>31</sup> the basic idea goes back even further and certainly has seen major developments since the fifth century.<sup>32</sup> The Christian tradition has perennially appealed to the Scriptures with regard to thinking about the revelatory power of the creation: “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1), and, in the New Testament, “since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made” (Rom. 1:20). There are other scriptural allusions, for example, to the sky being like a scroll (Isa. 34:4 and Rev. 6:14), which have lent themselves to the emergence of the metaphor of the book of nature.

During the patristic and especially medieval periods, then, Scripture and nature were interpreted in the light of each other. Following the dominance of Augustine and the neo-Platonic worldview, however, the visibility of the natural world was thought to point clearly toward the invisible things of the spiritual world. Hence, the interpretation of nature’s symbolism was multileveled, parallel to that of Scripture, although both were considered revelatory instruments of the character and works of God. Hugh of St. Victor (1078–1141) understood that nature revealed God’s power, wisdom, and goodness, and that attendance to the message of nature enabled participation in the sanctification and redemption of nature itself, so that in Christ, the world would be completed, reconciled with and returned to God.<sup>33</sup>

The Renaissance, Reformation, and early modern periods, however, saw major shifts in the Christian understanding of the book of nature.<sup>34</sup> First, the medieval conviction about nature’s revelatory powers was expanded so that nature illuminated not just theological truths (like Scripture) but also could be expected, if properly mined (or interpreted), to disclose the secrets of the creation itself.<sup>35</sup> Second, the medieval four-fold sense of interpretation—literal, moral, allegorical, and spiritual—was increasingly abandoned, especially among the magisterial Reformers, in favor of the literal sense.<sup>36</sup>

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Correspondingly, the clarity of nature was understood, not in terms of its universal accessibility (as was held during the first millennium), but as enabled by the emergence and use of the empirical methods of early modern science that brought the causal mechanisms of nature into plain view.<sup>37</sup> Third, the Reformers' insistence on interpreting Scripture directly, rather than relying on authorities favored the growing class of elite scientists, who also urged the importance of engaging nature directly (experientially and experimentally) rather than relying on the discoveries of their ancestors. Last but not least, if Jesus' mention of the Scriptures and the power of God (Matt. 22:29) was an oblique reference to the two books, as Francis Bacon (1561–1626) took it to be,<sup>38</sup> then not only did the book of nature require its own distinctive methods of interpretation, but the identification of the powers of nature also suggested that nature was less a set of facts to be uncovered than a web of processes and potentials to be mastered and deployed.<sup>39</sup>

The result during early modernity, at least in part, was the emergence of the scientific method as the key to unlocking the book of nature. Whereas the medieval schoolmen distinguished ontological and divine causality from cosmological or creaturely causality—for instance, that God is the first or primary cause of all there is, while creatures are valid secondary causes—the early modern scientists began to focus their expertise on tracing the efficient and material causes operating in nature. As the scientific enterprise has continued to unfold over the last few hundred years, various disciplines have attempted to secure primacy of place, but each has defended itself against the encroachments of others. Contemporary science is thus characterized by a vigorous interdisciplinarity (in which the lines between disciplines are blurred) and multidisciplinarity (featuring collaborative inquiry between two or more disciplines), both of which combine to illuminate the natural world.

Non- or antireligious scientists might conclude that the revelatory power of the book of Scripture has been entirely eliminated by that of the book of nature and its scientific methods. Concordists who insist on the harmonization of the Bible and science have sought to restore the authority of the book of Scripture but go about it erroneously: by legitimizing its credentials on the basis of modernist

assumptions about science. On the one hand, this is understandable, given the explanatory power of modern science—who would not want to affirm truths consistent with the most powerful fount of knowledge produced by the modern world? But on the other hand, concordists overlook the fact that the scientific method's focus on the book of nature means that its purview is by definition limited to the natural world. This means that science is not equipped to make metaphysical or religious claims, and it is only by transgressing these boundaries that science (or book of nature experts) can render or adjudicate such claims. In short, concordists have to stretch science beyond its boundaries in order to harmonize Scripture with it.

I suggest that Pentecostals can contribute to a contemporary theology of the two books by developing its pneumatological imagination in ways that adapt both premodern and modern understandings.<sup>40</sup> In the following, I sketch two basic trajectories for a Pentecostal reconsideration of the relationship between the books of Scripture and of nature. First, recognizing that the *ruah of God* both hovered *over* the primeval chaos and yet was dynamically at work as the breath *within* the creatures of the world, we can posit a pneumatological theology of creation that understands the Spirit to be present and active *over* and *within* history and creation, even while illuminating both worlds to human minds. Such illumination, however, is by nature theological, soteriological, and eschatological (related to God's final salvation of the world), providing a perspective on history's and nature's ends as intended by God. Second, what the history of Christian thought has called the interpretation of nature, Pentecostals call discernment. But whereas theologians or scripturalists will discern (exegete) the books of Scripture and nature theologically and soteriologically, others will discern (interpret) the nature and history of the world from their respective disciplinary perspectives. The theological discernments (readings) inevitably will go beyond the nontheological interpretations, but that neither delegitimizes the latter nor undermines the possibility for complementary perspectives to emerge.<sup>41</sup>

The preceding discussion invites us to think analogically about the relationship between theology, concerned with the book of Scripture, and contemporary science, concerned with the book of nature.



The multi- and interdisciplinary character of the sciences require discursive practices that depend on peculiar methodological presuppositions, cultural practices, and institutional arrangements.<sup>42</sup> If the work of the Spirit was to harmonize the many tongues on the Day of Pentecost so as not to eliminate their differences but to declare the wonders of God (Acts 2:11), then might it not be possible for the same Spirit today to harmonize the many discursive practices of the various theological, natural, and human sciences so as not to eliminate their differences but to exalt the glory, power, and goodness of God?<sup>43</sup>

This means, then, that Christians can proceed in faith to suggest overarching theological interpretations of both books, while recognizing that the many disciplines also have their integrity, methods, and contributions. Therefore, historians might interpret the events of history (i.e., early Christianity of the book of Acts) in ways that complement Pentecostal and Christian understandings, even as scientists might interpret the events of nature (i.e., the events of natural history behind the Genesis account) in ways that complement theological and soteriological perspectives. Concordism would insist that theological, historical, and scientific interpretations all proceed at the same level, and I believe this is a mistake. Instead, I suggest that the view of the two books as complementary is distinctively theological and does not need to claim either historical or scientific expertise in these respective domains. Thus historical-critical approaches and natural scientific methods can proceed to do their work. From a theological point of view, the truth will ultimately be complementary, even if, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly” (1 Cor. 13:12). This is based on the nature of historical and scientific inquiry, which revises itself over time as each engages in the honest search after the truth and deploys the methods at its disposal.

Of course, biblical and theological interpretations should be consistent with the various historical and scientific consensus<sup>44</sup>—that is what we would expect if all truth were ultimately theologically funded. But given the fallibility and finitude of all human knowing—in things theological as well as in things historical and scientific—it may be that the desired complementarity does not arrive, either because of a lack of consensus in one or more fields of inquiry,

or because of contradictory perspectives within or across disciplines. In the case of the former, when no consensus has been achieved, biblical and theological accounts should be tendered provisionally, perhaps sufficiently vaguely so as to be consistent with alternative historical or scientific theories under adjudication (regardless of what happens),<sup>45</sup> or with the recognition that later findings may warrant revisitation of the issues. In the case of the latter, if contradictions persist, this simply means that those working on contrary sides of the issue need to be open to further researching the matter and to revising their position as appropriate (while being cognizant that the complexity of some disagreements may not yield complementary resolution even in their lifetime). Yet in all of these cases, those interested in the theology and science dialogue or those working in the sciences can rely on the Spirit’s illumination in their endeavors, which is negotiated variously in their immediate confessional community, in wider communities of faith, amidst their disciplines, and within the backdrop of the broader scientific community.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

My goal in this article has been twofold: to encourage fellow Pentecostals to develop their own hermeneutical approach both to the book of Genesis and to the book of nature, and to show how such an approach informed by interpretive instincts derived from reading their canon-within-the-canon, the book of Acts, can contribute to the wider, especially evangelical, discussion about the relationship between the Bible and science, between the book of Scripture and that of nature. Such will be a narrative and theological approach that sees the work of the Spirit in history and in creation without denying the validity and even helpfulness of other interpretive methods. If this is possible, then conservative evangelicals can extricate themselves from the kind of concordism that requires harmonization of a literal reading of Genesis 1–2 with modern science. Instead, evangelicals should mine their “this-is-that” view of the Bible as God’s living Word so that the goal is not merely an intellectual understanding of what happened (which is illuminated by historiographical and scientific inquiry) but a practical and saving knowing of how we can inhabit the eschatological world of God in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

# Article

## Reading Scripture and Nature

In short, a pneumatological view of the books of Scripture and of nature sees both books as comprehensible in faith, by the Spirit. Yet while such a pneumatological hermeneutic reads both Scripture and nature in Christ according to the saving intentions of God, it also leaves space for “natural” —i.e., scientific and historical—renditions of the same realities. But just as the realities of the first century cannot be exhausted by historical-critical analysis, so neither can the realities of the formation of the world be exhausted by scientific analyses. In fact, it is also inevitably the case that such “natural” approaches will always be subject to what Paul Ricoeur calls the “conflict of interpretations,” since it is in the nature of historical and scientific inquiry to continually revise its conclusions as more and more data come into clearer light.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, light is being shed, however gradually and inexorably, so that historical-critical analysis can certainly enlighten the realities of the first century, even as science can also just as certainly elucidate the realities of the history of the world. Yet amidst the ongoing inquiries, evangelicals can expect that the “this” of our experiences relates to the soteriological “that” of the realities described in Scripture, even while the latter are being studied either with historical-critical tools (Acts) or scientific ones (Genesis).

This takes nothing away from such scientific and historical investigations, since these unveil the natural mechanisms and historical conditions operative in the long formation and history of the world. Simultaneously, evangelicals believe that they are in but not merely of the world, so that whatever else science and history might suggest, there is also the saving work of the Spirit that is present and active. Of course, in this scenario, there is minimal possibility for apologetics as traditionally conceived in either direction: it is impossible either to verify or to falsify Christian faith except eschatologically. On the other hand, it may also be practically impossible to either verify or falsify some historical claims or some scientific theories, even in the long run. But that devalues neither historical nor scientific work, even as the implausibility of classical apologetics does not minimize evangelical commitments. This curiously paradoxical situation is, however, indicative of the life of the Spirit, whose “wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes” (John 3:8). ≈

## Acknowledgment

I am grateful to my colleagues, Wolfgang Vondey and Dale Coulter, for their feedback on an initial draft of this article. I also appreciate my graduate assistant, Tim Lim, for his comments. Most importantly, thanks to Darrel Falk for inviting me to write something for the BioLogos Foundation, then for his careful reading of an earlier version of this article, which has since been published on the Foundation website, and finally, for permission to submit a slightly revised and expanded version of the article to *PSCF*. *PSCF* editor Arie Leegwater encouraged me to revisit the theme of the two books metaphor in the light of previous articles on this topic in this journal, and his input has improved this article. Needless to say, I remain fully responsible for the views expressed herein.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>I use “conservative evangelicals” in this article to include fundamentalists, fully recognizing that there are differences between evangelicalism and fundamentalism. For purposes of this article, however, the ideological, theological, and presuppositional divergences are less germane than are the similarities and what binds folk in this arena together (against common perceived enemies). This is especially the case in terms of how many Pentecostals would understand themselves vis-à-vis the wider cultural issues. Still, for an overview of the spectrum of conservative evangelical views about science, see my essays, “God and the Evangelical Laboratory: Recent Conservative Protestant Thinking about Theology and Science,” *Theology and Science* 5, no. 2 (2007): 203–21, and “Science and Religion: Introducing the Issues, Resolving the Debates—A Review Essay,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup>For the growth and expansion of creationism worldwide, see Michael Roberts, *Evangelicals and Science* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 167–77.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., Paul H. Seely, “The First Four Days of Genesis in Concordist Theory and in Biblical Context,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 49, no. 2 (1997): 85–95; and Denis O. Lamoureux, *Evolutionary Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008).

<sup>4</sup>My colleague Wolfgang Vondey rightfully reminds me that Pentecostals generally are less interested in books, metaphorically understood — whether of Scripture or of nature — than in engaging a living and self-revealing God (whether through the Bible or the creation). Yet I also think the ancient and venerable two books metaphor is helpful for Pentecostals to negotiate their own hermeneutical options vis-à-vis modern science, and thus will retain that verbiage and conceptualization in this article. For Vondey’s own considerations about a Pentecostal theology of revelation, see his *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), chap. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Here, I am playing off the title of, and thereby see my essay as an ally to, Darrel R. Falk's excellent *Coming to Peace with Science: Bridging the Worlds between Faith and Biology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup>Bradford McCall, "A Contemporary Reappropriation of Baconian Common Sense Realism in Renewal Hermeneutics," *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 32 (2010): 223–40.

<sup>7</sup>The pragmatic character of Pentecostal spirituality is richly portrayed by Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>8</sup>The following summarizes Rickie D. Moore, "Deuteronomy and the Fire of God: A Critical Charismatic Interpretation," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 7 (1995): 11–33, a must-read for any Pentecostal reflection on biblical hermeneutics; see also Moore, "Canon and Charisma in the Book of Deuteronomy," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992): 75–92.

<sup>9</sup>This is both a historical claim about the now century-old Pentecostal movement and a normative claim about how Pentecostals understand their relationship to the Bible going forward, as summarized in Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community*, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement series* 28 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

<sup>10</sup>A summary of the trends over the last half century has been provided by François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950–2005)*, 2d rev. ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006).

<sup>11</sup>This story is told by James R. Goff Jr., *Fields White unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 1988), esp. chap. 3; see also some of the chapters in part I of Gary B. McGee, ed., *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991).

<sup>12</sup>E.g., Roger Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 1995). My own proposals are in the following books: *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005); and *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

<sup>13</sup>E.g., Leon Morris, *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), chap. 2; and Raymond F. Collins, *These Things Have Been Written: Studies on the Fourth Gospel*, *Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs* 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), chap. 10.

<sup>14</sup>This has been most forcefully registered by John C. Poirier in his articles (with B. Scott Lewis), "Pentecostal and Postmodernist Hermeneutics: A Critique of Three Conceits," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15, no. 1 (2006): 3–21; and (independently), "Narrative Theology and Pentecostal Commitments," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16, no. 1 (2008): 69–85. While I am appreciative of Poirier's concerns, I find his emphases on historicity puzzling in the light of the above discussion. Further, he neither engages substantively with Pentecostal scholars who have discussed the contested issues (e.g., Rickie Moore, Walter Hollenweger,

Scott Ellington, Mark Cartledge, James K. A. Smith, myself) nor with the wider hermeneutical debates on especially narrative hermeneutics, resulting in a monolithic and inaccurate understanding of the latter. Most problematic, Poirier makes too many false assumptions—e.g., about authorial intention as being central to hermeneutics, about hermeneutics being either objective or subjective, about narrative hermeneutics being opposed to the historical-critical method or being based on opposed ontologies, about the links between quantum physics and postmodern hermeneutics—with the result that his discussions of the scientific, philosophical, or theological issues are inconsistent and not coherent. A more substantive response to Poirier's arguments, however, will have to await another occasion.

<sup>15</sup>For example, by Gordon Fee, Robert Menzies, Max Turner, or many other Pentecostal and charismatic exegetes working in the wider biblical studies arena. My colleague, Graham Twelftree, has long engaged in critical dialogue with the Jesus Seminar scholarship, and deploys historical-critical tools to argue for fairly traditional Pentecostal conclusions with regard to miracles and exorcisms, among other classical Pentecostal phenomena.

<sup>16</sup>This is, of course, a very general claim, given, as indicated in the previous endnote, the many that have expertly deployed historical-critical tools in their exegetical work. Yet I believe that literary and narrative methods resonate more with Pentecostal sensibilities than do historical-grammatical approaches. Scholars as widely divergent as Walter J. Hollenweger, Roger Stronstad, Clark Pinnock, John Christopher Thomas, Larry McQueen, among many others, have argued these points.

<sup>17</sup>For more on the complementary hermeneutics of Baptists, Pietists, Wesleyans, and Pentecostals, see Yong, "The 'Baptist Vision' of James William McClendon, Jr.: A Wesleyan-Pentecostal Response," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 32–57.

<sup>18</sup>These do not map very well onto the three views in David G. Hagopian, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001), which is limited to conservative evangelical options: 24-hour-day view, day-age view, and framework view.

<sup>19</sup>Narrative is a type of literature that includes a wide range of genres, as described by George W. Coats, *Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), 5–10. My claim is that Pentecostals, in particular, and Christians, in general, inhabit such texts theologically rather than merely observe them discursively.

<sup>20</sup>Predominant here is Susan Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation*, *Scholars Press Studies in the Humanities* 6 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985). See also Joan O'Brien and Wilfred Major, *In the Beginning: Creation Myths from Ancient Mesopotamia, Israel and Greece*, *American Academy of Religion Aid for the Study of Religion series* 11 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

<sup>21</sup>E.g., Bruce K. Waltke, with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 55–78; C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006); and John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove,



# Article

## Reading Scripture and Nature

IL: IVP Academic, 2009). Note that for Walton, the seven days of creation functionalize and inaugurate the cosmic temple within and upon which Yahweh sits enthroned. A recent book that grapples seriously with the theological nature of Genesis is R. W. L. Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>22</sup>As argued, e.g., by Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>23</sup>Paul Elbert, "Genesis 1 and the Spirit: A Narrative-Rhetorical Ancient Near Eastern Reading in Light of Modern Science," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15, no. 1 (2006): 23–72.

<sup>24</sup>My main question concerns Elbert's claim (if I understand him correctly) that the Genesis creation narrative has a prophetic character, one anticipating the experimental findings of modern science that in effect confirm the truthfulness of the creation myths. But this is like saying that, after I reconstruct a historical event based on very few original sources, and my descendants later find other sources that corroborate my reconstruction, this then leads me to label my original reconstruction as prophetic. I do not think this is the best way of treating the Genesis narratives.

<sup>25</sup>Is Pentecostal hermeneutics thereby fideistic? No more or no less than other Christian approaches to the Bible. But, whereas the faith of conservative evangelicals would be compromised if Genesis were not vindicated by modern science, I would say that Pentecostal hermeneutics is falsifiable if the works of the Spirit described in the Scriptures were to cease and no longer occur as part of Pentecostal spirituality.

<sup>26</sup>See Michael Welker, "What is Creation? Rereading Genesis 1 and 2," *Theology Today* 48 (1991): 56–71.

<sup>27</sup>See Philip J. Hefner, *The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture, and Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), esp. chap. 2, and *passim*.

<sup>28</sup>See Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake, IN: Carpenter Books, 1984).

<sup>29</sup>A much more lengthy discussion of the preceding paragraphs can be found in my *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), chap. 5.

<sup>30</sup>This complementarity between the two books is associated, in my mind, to that which goes under the same label as applied to explaining the relationship between theology and science. Complementarity in the theology and science arena refers to the idea that each provides valid insights into the one world which we inhabit, and which should at least be noncontradictory, if not also convergent in some respects. My use of the term is informed by, among other sources, James E. Loder and W. Jim Neidhardt, *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers and Howard, 1992), especially section 1; Edward Mackinnon, "Complementarity," in W. Mark Richardson and Wesley J. Wildman, eds., *Religion and Science: History, Method, Dialogue* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 255–70; and (a succinct exposition), Alister E. McGrath, *Science and Religion: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010), 165–74.

<sup>31</sup>Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, 32.20; see Augustine, *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, in Roland Teske, trans., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* Part I, vol. 20 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2007), 422.

<sup>32</sup>The most complete discussion, and certainly now the standard account, is the four-volume work by Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote, eds., *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700*, 2 vols., Brill's Series in Church History 36 (Boston, MA: Brill, 2008), and *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: 1700–Present*, 2 vols., Brill's Series in Church History 37 (Boston, MA: Brill, 2008).

<sup>33</sup>On Hugh's theology of nature, see Constant J. Mews, "The World as Text: The Bible and the Book of Nature in Twelfth-Century Theology," in Thomas J. Heffernan and Thomas E. Burman, eds., *Scripture and Pluralism: Reading the Bible in the Religiously Plural Worlds of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 123 (Boston, MA: Brill, 2005), 95–122.

<sup>34</sup>A book-length discussion is found in Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>35</sup>Kenneth J. Howell, *God's Two Books: Copernican Cosmology and Biblical Interpretation in Early Modern Science* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

<sup>36</sup>This despite the strategic protestations of Galileo, in his letter to the grand duchess Christina, that Scripture remained ambiguous, subject to various interpretations (when compared with nature); see Stillman Drake, trans., *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), 173–216.

<sup>37</sup>With regard to the transformation of the two books metaphor in the early modern period, I have been helped by the overview of G. Tanzella-Nitti, "The Two Books Prior to the Scientific Revolution," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 57, no. 3 (2005): 235–48; but the interpretation is mine and Tanzella-Nitti should not be held responsible for it.

<sup>38</sup>Steven Matthews, "Reading the Two Books with Francis Bacon: Interpreting God's Will and Power," in Kevin Killeen and Peter J. Forshaw, eds., *The Word and the World: Biblical Exegesis and Early Modern Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 61–77, at 67.

<sup>39</sup>See Peter Harrison, "Reinterpreting Nature in Early Modern Europe: Natural Philosophy, Biblical Exegesis and the Contemplative Life," in Kevin Killeen and Peter J. Forshaw, eds., *The Word and the World: Biblical Exegesis and Early Modern Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 25–44, esp. 33–8.

<sup>40</sup>I present the details of such a pneumatological imagination in my book, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, and Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), part II. Many of my claims in this article are grounded in my views about epistemology and interdisciplinarity argued at (some would say, exhausting) length in this earlier volume.

<sup>41</sup>I see my theological approach to the two books as consistent with what is suggested by others who have contributed to this journal—e.g., Angus J. L. Menuge, "Interpreting the Book of Nature," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 55, no. 2 (2003): 88–98; Walter R. Thorson, "Hermeneutics for Reading the Book of Nature: A Response to Angus

Menuge," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 55, no. 2 (2003): 99–101; and George L. Murphy, "Reading God's Two Books," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 58, no. 1 (2006): 64–7. Menuge and Thorson agree that nature is also interpreted, but they differ over whether intelligent design is to be read scientifically (Menuge) or theologically (Murphy). I tend to agree that contemporary intelligent design is by and large a theologically funded project (here standing with Murphy, who sees ID as a natural theology) while also seeing that in some cases, discussion of some of the corollary issues such as function are more strictly scientific (so here, open to Menuge's claims about the scientific engagement of nature).

<sup>42</sup>See Frederick Grinnell, *Everyday Practice of Science: Where Intuition and Passion Meet Objectivity and Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. part I.

<sup>43</sup>See Yong, "Academic Glossolalia? Pentecostal Scholarship, Multi-Disciplinarity, and the Science-Religion Conversation," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14, no. 1 (2005): 63–82.

<sup>44</sup>Philip Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit: God, World, Divine Action* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), esp. chap. 3, argues convincingly, about how theology's engagement with the sciences needs to recognize what can be said within scientific constraints. Thus, for example, the spherical nature of the earth confirmed by science dictates that intimations of a flat earth in the scriptural accounts need to be reinterpreted. I take this as meaning that science is not supremely authoritative, but that when engaging specifically with the sciences, theologians need to understand that specific context and thus have to accommodate themselves, at least in part, to that field of discourse.

<sup>45</sup>Thus, for example, theological interpretations should be potentially compatible with both intelligent design and theistic evolution, perhaps even with progressive and young-earth creationisms, all of which are currently being negotiated within evangelical Christianity. To affirm this of *theological* interpretation is not to say that each of these are equal options in the science classroom—in that arena, other experts with more than just theological interests need to adjudicate the issues. This is, in part, what it means to retain the integrity of disciplines rather than either to reduce any to others or to subsume all under theology, as it was during the medieval period. For further discussion of these matters, see my *The Spirit of Creation*, esp. chaps. 2 and 5.

<sup>46</sup>For instances of such interconfessional and interdisciplinary inquiry, see Amos Yong, guest ed., "Pentecostalism, Science, and Creation: New Voices in the Theology-Science Conversation," a collection of six articles in *Zygon: Journal of Science and Religion* 43, no. 4 (2008): 875–989; Amos Yong, ed., *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Press, 2009); and Amos Yong and James K. A. Smith, eds., *Science and the Spirit: A Pentecostal Engagement with the Sciences* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).

<sup>47</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

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