A PROPOSED PENTECOSTAL QUADRILECTIC

EXPLORATIONS FOR ASIAN PENTECOSTAL HERMENEUTICS

LORA ANGELINE E. TIMENIA

Abstract

Developing a general framework for Asian Pentecostal hermeneutics is necessary for a continent where the Holy Bible is “Scripture among scriptures.” Although Pentecostal Christianity in Asia is growing, interpreting Scripture in a manner relevant to local contextual realities is necessary to propagate grassroots theologies. As such, the current Pentecostal hermeneutical triad of Spirit-Scripture-Community (Archer) or Spirit-Word-Community (Yong) needs further articulations of a reader’s tradition and cultural/ethnic contexts. The concept of an interpretive “Pentecostal community” needs clarification in the Asian setting where multiple interpretative communities exist. This study proposes a framework that recognizes the dialectical role of the text’s context and the reader’s context in biblical interpretation. The offered framework is a quadrilectic—a dialectic of Spirit-Scripture-Tradition-Context. Modifying Yung Suk Kim’s critical contextual biblical interpretation with the pneumatological lens of Craig Keener’s Spirit hermeneutics, the author suggests that Asian readers (in this study, Filipino Pentecostals) use a pneumatological lens (ala Keener) in their critical contextual biblical interpretation.

Introduction

The development of identity hermeneutics, in this case, Asian Pentecostal hermeneutics, owes its aegis to the prevailing realization that biblical interpretation is contextual and that no construal occurs without a reader’s method or judgment. In his book, Biblical Interpretation: Theory, Process, Criteria, Yung Suk Kim writes, “Interpretation means explaining a text from a wide array of perspectives.”¹ He does not mean that perspective trumps all in exegesis; perspective, in the form of contextual lenses, plays a vital role in the negotiation of meaning. Kim explains, “Biblical

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interpretation involves three layers of difficulties (the text, translation, and interpretation) and three elements of interpretation (the text, the reader, and the theological lens).” Accordingly, biblical interpretation must be both critical and contextual in that both the historical-literary context of the text and the fluid contexts of the actual or intended readers must be in a mutual dialogue.

Critical contextual interpretation is nothing new. The apostles in the New Testament practiced critical contextualization of Scripture as they entered new cultures in the propagation of the gospel. Andrew Walls explained it well:

Theological activity arises out of Christian mission and Christian living, from the need for Christians to make Christian choices and to think in a Christian way. This compulsion to think in a Christian way becomes more powerful and more urgent whenever the gospel crosses a cultural frontier since the process of crossing cultural frontiers almost inevitably creates situations not previously encountered by Christians, and a different climate of thought poses intellectual questions not considered before.

For example, in Acts 11:19–21, in the endeavor to introduce Jesus to the Gentiles in Antioch, evangelists used the word kyrios (Lord), a word customarily attributed to cultic deities, instead of the Jewish word, messiah. Yet, Kyrios Iesous (Lord Jesus) effectively translated the Jewish concept and served its purpose in introducing the identity of Jesus to the Gentiles. History proved it to be effective as Acts 11:21 records, “The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.”

As Christianity spread in the first century, Jesus’ followers had to wrestle with how to live the Christian life amid a pluralistic and Hellenistic society; they wrestled with the tensions of the Jewish tradition, Jesus’ Way, and grassroots realities. The Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, spent much of his ministry responding to these interpretative issues, writing occasional and pastoral epistles to the toddling New Testament church. No wonder Jesus promised the empowerment of the Holy Spirit before the commencement of his disciples’ witness (Acts 1:8), and glossolalia (speaking in other tongues) became the demonstrable sign of such empowerment (Acts 2:4). I propose that this promised pneumatic empowerment was crucial in the communication of Jesus’ message and way of living to a world of diverse languages and contexts.

This point brings us back to the issue of developing an Asian Pentecostal hermeneutic. As Christianity advances with its sacred Scripture, the Bible, Christians in

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2 Yung, Biblical Interpretation, 11.
5 Unless otherwise noted, Scriptural verses are taken from the New International Version, 2011.
Asia face multitudinous contextual issues and competing interpretative communities. Early Christians’ questions still bother Christians in Asia today: how does one contend for the faith in different contextual milieus? How does one live a Spirit-empowered life amid competing religious spirits? In the face of these queries, how an Asian Pentecostal interprets Scripture matters.

This article no longer concerns itself with answering the questions of necessity and significance. The fact that Christianity in Asia is still a minority and that Christian Scripture is one of the sacred texts in the continent provides the impetus for delving into critical contextual biblical interpretation. Perhaps a more appropriate question is: what elements are needed to develop an Asian Pentecostal hermeneutic?

At the outset, this article proposes that an Asian Pentecostal hermeneutic comprises the quadrilectic elements of Scripture, Spirit, tradition, and context. That is to say, in the process of critical contextual biblical interpretation, the Asian Pentecostal hermeneut holds in dialectical tension the mediation of the Holy Spirit, the historical-literary context of Scripture, Pentecostal tradition, and the reader’s Asian context.

Delineating Concepts and Assumptions

Delineating Concepts

Loaded discussions and unclear definitions surround some of the terms or concepts used in this article. A few important terms will be delineated. The key terms to be defined here are Asian, Pentecostal, Asian Pentecostal, critical contextual biblical interpretation, and context.

Asian

The word “Asian” is a descriptive term that refers to people, languages, customs, religions, and cultures native to the Asian continent. Asia is vast and diverse as the world’s largest and most populous continent. It comprises five geopolitical identities: Western Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, Eastern Asia, and Southeastern Asia. Because of its diversity, Asia cannot be viewed in monolithic terms; instead, it is a continent composed of polyvocal and plural civilizations.

Nevertheless, many scholars use the general term “Asia” about works with an Asian orientation. R. S. Sugirtharajah explains, “In a sense, the current usage of ‘Asia’ as

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a continental unity is a combination of two factors—the Western habit of naming the ‘other’ and the Asian strategy of invoking Asian values to withstand Western materialism." On the one hand, Asia is a Western naming; on the other hand, it is the agreed-upon strategy for maintaining traditional values and a somewhat loose sense of identity.

Asian values and shared traits have also been used to develop theologies or hermeneutics. Some traits shared by the Asian community include collectivism or group-oriented cultures, honor-shame practices, patron-client systems, ritual purity, suffering and persecution, the embeddedness of religion in culture, spiritual worldviews (or folk religiosity), preference for stories or storytelling, and the non-dichotomization of the sacred and the secular. These traits, values, and socio-religious realities allow for the development of pan-Asian Christian theologies.

**Pentecostal**

“Pentecostal” describes a believer belonging to the fourth major Christian tradition in World Christianity: Pentecostalism. Pentecostals owe their name to the Pentecostal outpouring in Acts 2. Classically, a Christian believer who affirms a pneumatic (Holy Spirit) experience akin to that of the disciples at Pentecost and identifies oneself as belonging to a family of believers who espouse the continuity of a Pentecostal outpouring in prophetic and missiological terms were called Pentecostals. However, this definition has become less espoused today since Pentecostalism has widened its streams to include Charismatics, Neocharismatics, and other Pentecostal-like groups. Allan Anderson argues that there cannot be exact definitions of “Pentecostal” and “Pentecostalism” because it is a diverse global movement emphasizing “experience and spirituality rather than in formal theology or doctrine.”

The difficulty in defining exact terms is understandable. However, for this article, “Pentecostal” will be defined in both broad and narrow terms. Broadly, Pentecostals refer to believers who belong to the world Christian tradition of Pentecostalism, which

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shares the core tenet, “God is still active in the world through the Holy Spirit, so that miracles and spiritual gifts are an expected component of the Christian life.”

Narrowly, Pentecostals affirm the classical doctrine of post-conversion Spirit baptism as pneumatic empowerment for prophecy and mission. This study holds broad and narrow definitions in tension because the particular (or local) stream does not occur in a vacuum; it is best understood as part of a whole. Hence, the current study narrows the term to thoroughly understand one form in the cacophony of other forms within its global family.

**Critical Contextual Biblical Interpretation**

As explained by Yung Suk Kim in his book *Biblical Interpretation*, critical contextual biblical interpretation is an interpretative method that dialectically engages the reader, the text, and the contextuality of the text and the reader. In his footnote, Kim explained that critical meant “examining biblical writings from a diversity of interpretive perspectives,” while contextual meant “considering life contexts of the text and the readers alike.”

Adapting Daniel Patte’s elements of interpretation, Kim illustrates his three-element method as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WE Are READING</th>
<th>THE BIBLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Reader</td>
<td>The Theological Lens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual/relational choice</td>
<td>Theological/hermeneutical choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Why do we read?</em></td>
<td><em>What do we read?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, Kim highlights the importance of the reader of the Bible, who reads from various social locations and diverse life settings. He echoes Hans George Gadamer’s

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14 Yung, *Biblical Interpretation*, 34
dialectic when he points out that “understanding is participation with the text.”

Accordingly, Kim writes, “The view of the participatory reader is possible because God is not known only through the Bible. God is known through us too, and vice versa.”

Second, Kim recognizes that readers read from a theological lens or make choices concerning their theological view of the text. This second element “has to do with a viewing angle among many choices of theological interpretation.” Accepting that every reader makes interpretive choices, predominantly from their theological view of the text, is crucial.

Third, Kim points to the Bible as the written text. The Bible has a double character: historical writing and sacred text. As a historical writing, it holds records of ancient cultures and religious experiences. Therefore, it calls for the need for critical textual methods. As a sacred text, the Bible is Scripture, and it affects its readers’ faith and praxis. Affirming the Bible’s double character enables readers to make proper choices concerning textual methods.

Using Kim’s critical contextual biblical interpretation as one of the dialogue partners of this study is apt because his theory combines both critical and contextual approaches to the interpretative process. It also recognizes that understanding divine revelation comes with the dialectic of two horizons: the text’s and the reader’s horizons. This theory offers Asian Pentecostals the opportunity to interpret biblical texts from a critical textual angle and in conversation with their reading lens and their life contexts.

Context

Finally, the word “context,” which is often used in this article, is defined as the complex combination of experience (either personal, communal, or contemporary-collective), culture (a system of inherited conceptions), social location, and social change.

Stephen Bevans explains that all theologies are contextual since they are products of their authors’ contexts; the Bible itself is a collection of books written in/for particular contexts.

The two contexts of the Bible assumed in this article are cultural-historical and literary contexts. Cultural-historical context refers to “the placement of a text against the

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cultural and historical background of its author and its first readers.”

This introduces a discussion on the relationship of a word, phrase, sentence, or passage in the larger biblical literature that contributes to the meaning of a text. It can also be generally defined as information that elucidates the contextual meaning of a text.

### Delineating Assumptions

Using the three questions Kim asked in his three-element-interpretative process, this article delineates the following assumptions.

#### Why Do We Read?

The first assumption is that readers (whether real or implied) are situated in a cultural and theological context. They come to the text with their theological lenses and read it for a reason. Some read for reflection, some read to teach, while others read to answer questions. Kim writes, “To critically, faithfully engage the ancient readers, we must know who we are as real readers.”

Hence, readers should know their history, culture, theological affirmation, and life contexts because these influence the critical contextual interpretative process.

As such, the reader of this study is an Asian Pentecostal, specifically Filipino Pentecostal. Filipino Pentecostal theological identity, as argued in a journal article entitled “Bridging the Distance: A Microcosm of Filipino Classical Pentecostal Identity,” is a spiral construct of the Filipino Christian consciousness with the classical Pentecostal theology of Spirit empowerment. Moreover, the Filipino Pentecostal identity amalgamates many socio-religious factors: indigenous religious consciousness, Hispanic Roman Catholicism, Western Protestantism, and North American classical Pentecostalism. A Filipino Pentecostal reads the Bible to know God and to draw closer to him; in the process, the reader receives a restoration of identity, hope, dignity, and empowerment for participation in the ongoing story.

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27 For a comprehensive discussion on the construct of a Filipino Pentecostal theological identity, see Lora Angeline Embudo Timenia, “Bridging the Distance: A Microcosm of Filipino Classical Pentecostal Identity,” *Pentecostal Education* 7:1 (Spring 2022), 111–30.

28 A proposed Filipino Pentecostal gospel was presented in the paper, “Bridging the Distance.” In said proposal, the Bible becomes the means for Filipino Pentecostals to genuinely know God, his work in the world, and his participatory purposes for his people. Timenia, “Bridging the Distance,” 125–28.
What Do We Read?

Second, this article assumes the double nature of the Bible as both historical writing and sacred text. As historical literature, the Bible includes genres written during different historical and cultural milieus. Although many scholars have argued that it is impossible to reconstruct de facto histories surrounding biblical texts, the truth remains that information and themes passed on and later transcribed are based on actual events, people, or situations. Hence, efforts should be made to understand biblical texts in their historical moorings.

Craig Keener points out that there is a concreteness to the settings in biblical writings, and these settings explain “the particularities in the shape of such writings.”

For example, there was an apostle named Paul who wrote an occasional letter to the Christian community in Rome. Moreover, there was a historical Jesus whose life, message, and ministry were witnessed and passed on by devout followers.

The Bible, though, is not just historical literature. It is also a sacred text. Jürgen Habermas defined the Bible evocatively as “the linguistification of the sacred.” In most of Asia, there is no struggle to accept such linguistification. The Christian Scripture is one of the many scriptures in Asia. In explaining this “Scripture among scriptures” purview, Havilah Dharamraj outlines the features of Scripture as follows: “(1) Authoritative oral or written text; (2) often believed to be of divine origin and, therefore, considered sacred and powerful; (3) canonical and normative for a certain community of faith; (4) appropriated and perpetuated as teaching to the point that it becomes an ‘obligatory touchstone for religious thinking’.” In Asia, these scriptures could come in the form of the Hindu Vēdas, Islam’s Qur’an, China’s Confucian classics, or perhaps Sikhism’s Gūrū Grānth. For Christians, Scripture is known as the Holy Bible. It is authoritative because it is God’s revelation mediated by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16). It stands out among other scriptures because it is uniquely relational, especially in the form of Jesus, who is not just God incarnate and the “Word made flesh” but also the fullness of divine revelation.

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How Do We Read?

Lastly, this article assumes that in the interpretative process, meaning is mediated by the Holy Spirit in both the text and the reader. Kim affirms the double character of the Bible as sacred text and historical writing. However, like other reader-oriented interpreters, Kim attributes meaning to the reader; for him, the reader decides the final meaning of the text.32

Contra Kim, this study prefers Keener’s position in Spirit Hermeneutics, whereby meaning is generated by the Holy Spirit both in the text and in the reader.33 Keener writes:

The Spirit already generated meaning through the inspired human agents writing in their language and setting. The Spirit’s role of illumination thus focuses on the text’s perlocution, i.e., “the successful conclusion of the speech act:” normally understanding and response. . . . Perlocution is what identifies the expected response to a speech act. If the illocution is a command, the perlocution would be obedience . . . the Holy Spirit is largely involved at the perlocutionary level as we are enabled to understand the truthfulness of the text, recognize what it requires from us and then actually take the appropriate steps to actualize the intentions that the Holy Spirit initially delivered to the human instrument.34

On the one hand, there is meaning as intended by the Holy Spirit in the first context. On the other hand, there is contemporary meaningfulness that the same Holy Spirit mediates to readers in their respective contexts. When conversing in dialectical conversation, these two contextual horizons (text and reader) can produce a critical contextual biblical interpretation that is both faithful to the first context and relevant to the current reader’s context.35

Spirit-mediated interpretation is contextual (especially as biblical messages continue to be interpreted globally), but not to the extent of disregarding what the text originally meant to communicate. Keener explains, “Part of our transcultural goal should be listening honestly to the texts. The more effectively we hear texts in their first contexts, the greater our confidence to recontextualize the principles for other settings. The greater our shared basis for dialoguing about what the texts say to us today.”36

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32 Yung, Biblical Interpretation, xiv–1.
33 Keener, Spirit Hermeneutics, 12.
34 Keener, Spirit Hermeneutics, 12.
35 Oliverio notes that Keener’s dialectic of two horizons attends to the “critical both-and” in hermeneutical theory; it is a kind of hermeneutical realism that does not subsume either categories. L. William Jr. Oliverio, Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Late Modern World: Essays on the Condition of Our Interpretation (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022), 226.
36 Keener, Spirit Hermeneutics, 69.
Keener correctly states that the Bible comes to readers already contextualized and offers exemplars for ongoing critical contextual interpretations.

**A Proposed Asian Pentecostal Quadrilectic**

Having already clarified concepts and assumptions, it is right to discuss the proposed elements that make up an Asian Pentecostal hermeneutic. Unlike the *triadic* Pentecostal hermeneutics,37 like Kenneth Archer’s Spirit-Scripture-Community,38 or Amos Yong’s Spirit-Word-Community,39 this hermeneutic offers a *quadrilectic*, or a dialectic of four elements, Spirit-Scripture-Tradition-Context, in the interpretative process.

This study proposes that in the process of critical contextual biblical interpretation, the Asian (Filipino) Pentecostal hermeneut submits to the mediation of the Holy Spirit both in the text and in the reader’s context by holding in dialectical tension the historical-literary meaning of Scripture, Pentecostal tradition’s theology of Spirit empowerment, and the reader’s socio-religious history and cultural context.

Theoretically, this *quadrilectic* is like Archer’s and Yong’s *triad* in that all three consider Scripture and the Holy Spirit essential in the interpretative process. Yet it differs from the two because the word “community” is articulated as “tradition” (Pentecostal Christianity) and “context” (Asian/Filipino) to delineate the role and contribution of a reader’s theological affirmation and cultural/ethnic lens in the interpretative process. This delineation is conducive to a multicultural and polyvocal continent like Asia. Asian (Indian) Pentecostal, Roji Thomas George comments:

> Despite the best intention of such [*triadic*] interpretive exercises, they only recognize voices emerging from many corners without acknowledging the visible marks of their unique accents, styles, and valid cultural expressions of the Spirit illuminated biblical insights. Merely lived experience of fissured migrant identity, sociocultural vulnerability, oppression, etc., as spaces of constructing contextual Pentecostal hermeneutics will be shallow and not beneficial to the native Pentecostals’ theological reflection. Such a weakness is enormously experienced in a pluralistic context like India, where cultural discourses are soaked in religious and secular literary traditions. Without such an incarnation of Pentecostal

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37 A concise discussion on contextual Pentecostal hermeneutics can be read in Oliverio, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Late Modern World*, 52–53.


hymenoeutical practice in the native tongue and color, it will be estranged from developing a robust local shape and appearance.  

Indeed, there must be a critical dialectic with the reader’s sociocultural context for Pentecostal hermeneutics to serve Asian constituents better. I suggest that a hermeneut clarifies which element of context is being dialogued with to avoid abstractions. In this study, for instance, the context dialogued with is the experience of Pentecostal outpouring (Spirit baptism) in the backdrop of a Filipino Christian’s socio-religious history and culture.  

Including the reader’s context in the hermeneutical process is a recognition of what Oliverio calls a “hermeneutical turn” or the reader’s “traditioned and enculturated second nature” in interpreting the text. Whether aware or not, human interpretations are contextual. A reader’s religious experience, theological tradition, culture, and social location will, amid efforts of objectivity, affect interpretative choices. On a positive note, it also has the potential to facilitate the negotiation of meaning and meaningfulness.

Asian scholars have successfully pointed out that the Asian lens can be beneficial in interpreting biblical texts because the Bible is a product of West Asia and share many cultural and societal values with most of the continent. For example, one of the texts that causes significant discomfort among Asian Christians is Matthew 10:37, when Jesus said, “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.” The call to follow Jesus amid parental disagreement, as laid out in this verse, is a high price to pay for Asians. The virtue of filial piety in Taoism or Confucianism demands that children continue the tradition of ancestral worship. Rejecting ancestral worship due to Christian conversion may result in being kicked out of the family or being shamefully labeled as “unfilial.” In the Filipino context, dishonoring parents may result in one being labeled as “walang utang na loob” (ungrateful) or “walang hiya” (shameless).

So, an Asian Christian who follows Jesus in the face of being labeled unfilial, ungrateful, or shameless understands what it means to “count the cost.” This interpretation is a prime example of how shared cultural values (or experiences) enrich exegetical processes and connect the current reader to the struggles of Jesus’ followers in the first century. Hence, the quadrilectic proposed with its Spirit-Scripture-Tradition-Context offers opportunities for developing not just a Pentecostal hermeneutic but also

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41 For a microcosm of a Filipino Pentecostal’s socioreligious history and culture, see Timenia, “Bridging the Distance,” 111–30.

42 Oliverio, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics in the Late Modern World*, 226.

an Asian Pentecostal hermeneutic that takes into consideration the reader’s socio-religious and cultural milieu.

**Spirit-mediated Interpretative Process**

The proposed interpretative system is an adaptation of Kim’s three-element-interpretative process but modified based on Keener’s Spirit hermeneutics. The table below illustrates the process as follows:

**Table 2. Spirit-mediated Interpretation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WE (Contextual/relational choice)</th>
<th>Are READING (Theological/hermeneutical choice)</th>
<th>The TEXT (Analytical/textual choice)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian (Filipino) Pentecostal</td>
<td>Pneumatological Lens</td>
<td>Dialectical-Contextual Exegesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Context:** Filipino Pentecostal identity is a construct of the Filipino religious consciousness with the Pentecostal experience of Spirit empowerment.

1. The Holy Spirit generates meaning in the original text through inspiration, inscripturation, and traditioning.
2. The Holy Spirit mediates meaning to the reader through illumination, experience, and perlocution.

1. First context: historical-literary criticism of the text to determine its nearest original meaning.
2. Second context: sociocultural exegesis to draw out elements from the reader’s context that can bridge the first context to the second context.
3. Dialectical analysis: dialogue between the text’s contextual meaning and the reader’s cultural exegesis to arrive at contemporary contextual meaningfulness.

The table above outlines the interpretative process of this proposed Asian Pentecostal hermeneutic. The Asian context in this study is Filipino, and the Pentecostal tradition is
narrowed down to classical Pentecostalism. The theological view of Scripture highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation (ala Keener’s Spirit hermeneutics). At the same time, the analytical process is a dialectical-contextual exegesis of both the text and the reader’s context.

**WE (the Reader)**

First, for this article, the reader is identified as a Filipino Pentecostal. A fuller description of the Filipino Pentecostal theological identity is available in the *Pentecostal Education Journal*, entitled “Bridging the Distance: A Microcosm of Filipino Classical Pentecostal Identity.” Due to space constraints, the current author describes the reader’s socio-religious background as an amalgamation of indigenous religious consciousness, Hispanic Catholicism, Western Protestantism, and classical Pentecostalism. The reader affirms a personal experience of Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues, prophecy, and manifestation of signs and wonders. Overall, the current reader identifies with both the Filipino identity (with its colonial history) and Pentecostal spirituality (with its affirmation of Spirit empowerment).

**Are READING (Theological Lens)**

Second, the theological lens used to view the text is a pneumatological one. Keener is affirmed here in his recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit in the interpretative process in both the first context (the ancient sacred text) and the second context (the modern reader). The Holy Spirit generates meaning in the text through inspiration (the Spirit synergistically enabled human communicators), inscripturation (the Spirit guided the production of the written form), and traditioning (the Spirit superintended the preservation and transmission of the text from generation to generation).

The Holy Spirit also mediates meaningfulness to contemporary readers of the ancient sacred text through exegesis (the Spirit guides the reader’s cognitive functions in studying a text), illumination (the Spirit enlightens human understanding), experience (the Spirit facilitates pneumatic actualities like charismatic revelation or prophecy), and perlocution (the Spirit guides readers into appropriate response or application of the message).

**The TEXT (Analytical Process)**

Finally, the analytical procedure to be used in interpreting the text is a proposed process of dialectical-contextual exegesis. The process begins with historical-literary criticism,
where the text’s historical and literary contexts are reconstructed as best as possible. Keener explains:

> Of course, we cannot perfectly reconstruct the original meaning. We have access neither to everything the authors thought nor to the full original contexts that they assumed their ideal audiences shared, the information needed to fill lacunae in secondary communication. But whatever else a biblical text might mean, it usually means at least what it meant to the inspired author, who understood his own language, idioms, and cultural allusions better than we do. Offering historical reconstructions as responsibly as possible (given the limits of evidence and our own horizons) is a reasonable objective that need not be discounted simply because it cannot be perfectly achieved.46

Although historical-literary reconstruction cannot be perfectly achieved, it does not mean one should not try. As previously explained, the text is both historical writing (written in an original historical and cultural milieu) and sacred text. Efforts should be made to exegete what it was meant to say or mean in its original context. This endeavor protects readers from misinterpreting the meaning of the text.

After historical-literary criticism, the reader proceeds to cultural exegesis; that is, they must draw out elements in their culture that can serve as bridges between the first and the readers’ contexts. Readers can use some elements of culture like language, norms, values, symbols, and artifacts to facilitate dialectical communication of meaning and help express the Spirit-mediated meaning of the text in “a robust local shape and appearance.”47 For example, in the recent offering of the Langham Global Library, Filipino theologians interpreted the Lord’s Prayer by first translating it as “Ama Namin” (the Filipino translation of “Our Father”). Entitling it “Ama Namin (Our Father)” instead of “The Lord’s Prayer” highlights the role of both the native tongue and Asian family values in facilitating the meaning of a text to a local context.48

One should also note that both horizons can potentially help exegete the other in this dialectic of two contexts. This does not mean that the reader’s context determines the meaning of the text. It only means that the text can help enlighten readers of their culture (whether good or bad). At the same time, elements in the reader’s culture can also help clarify what the author/speaker was trying to communicate (as seen in the example above about how Asians interpret the cost of following Jesus).

Throughout the interpretative process, one must endeavor to hold the proposed quadrilectic elements of Spirit, Scripture, tradition, and context in dialectical tension.

46 Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 141.
47 George, “Interpretive Communities of the Spirit in Multicultural Context,” 92.
Such a hermeneutic is to interpret meaning bearing into account both horizons of text and reader in submission to the mediation of the Holy Spirit.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the proposed Asian Pentecostal hermeneutics offers a system of interpretation that takes into consideration the role of the Holy Spirit, the historical-literary context of Scripture, the theological spirituality of Pentecostal tradition, and the reader’s context (which includes religious experience, culture, social location, and social change). The quadrilectic of Spirit-Scripture-Tradition-Context allows for a dialectical analysis of two horizons—text and reader. In this manner, meaning is mediated by the Holy Spirit as the two horizons dialectically interact to arrive at the text’s original meaning and its contemporary meaningfulness.

The process adapts critical contextual biblical interpretation after all concepts and assumptions are clarified. Illustrated as WE are READING the TEXT, the reader is identified (at least for this article) as a Filipino Pentecostal, reading a pneumatological view of Scripture and interpretation and using a proposed dialectical-contextual exegesis.

**Recommendation**

As a recommendation for further study, an Asian Pentecostal hermeneut can use the hypothesis of an Asian Pentecostal hermeneutic with its quadrilectic of Spirit-Scripture-Tradition-Context. A case study using such a proposal may demonstrate its feasibility and contribute to the growing body of global Pentecostal hermeneutical studies.

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