Reading Notes / Chapter Summary

Pentecostal Spirituality: A passion for the kingdom
By Dr. Steven Land

Mark Beaird
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Chapter 1

Pentecostal Spirituality as Theology: A Theoretical Introduction

Dr. Land begins by emphasizing the relationship between theology and spirituality in the Pentecostal tradition with a particular emphasis on the role of prayer in the theological task. Initially he emphasizes the Pentecostal distinctives represented in the five theological motifs of the “full gospel.” The main distinctive of the five theological motifs of the full gospels is its apocalyptic affections which are given by the Father through the Son in the Spirit and are returned by the believer in the Spirit through Christ to the Father. Justification, sanctification, healing and spirit baptism are accomplished in Christ through the Holy Spirit and are part of the eschatological trinitarian telos that is the consummation of the kingdom of God. The most distinctive motif for Pentecostals is the baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues. This empowerment is central to the fulfillment of the Great Commission as well as being a sign that the end times are here. For Pentecostals, there is an urgency and passion for the kingdom in light of the soon return of Christ as evidenced by this last days outpouring of His Spirit.

This outpouring of the spirit gives Pentecostals a unique understanding of “worship” in their understanding of spirituality. In fact, Pentecostal theology has always been brought to life in worship. This worship is focused on the living presence of God with us, which is the Spirit. Pentecostals find expression as the body of Christ through the indwelling of the Spirit, and this is
expressed corporately in the worship of the church. This worship is full of passion and is expressed through singing, testifying, crying out to God in praise and lament, preaching of the Word and response to the message.

Since Pentecostal spirituality is all about knowing God, we realize that it is impossible to know God without prayer. Prayer expresses our belief and our theology. This makes our theology more real and relative. Pentecostal theology demands an experiential validation that is expressed in prayer that is the ‘actualization of our eschatological reality that is possible here and there.’

Further, he asserts the importance of the Wesleyan, holiness, and 19th century revivalist-restorationist roots of the Pentecostal movement. The 18th century Wesleyan movement brought an emphasis on the second crisis experience (sanctification) preceded and followed by development, beginning with regeneration and maintained in moment-by-moment abiding in Christ. The heart of this experience was a wholehearted love for God and others which was displayed in the life of the believer through holiness of life.

Wesley’s emphasis spawned the 19th century Holiness Revivals that taught that the overcoming of sin was provided for by the victory of Christ at Calvary. This experience was subsequent to salvation and was a definitive work of Christ in the believer. There was also a focus on healing in these revivals as well as an increase in emotional response to liberation from sin brought by the Spirit. The Holiness revivals satisfied the longing of the believers for a real experience with God.

From the Holiness Revivals sprang the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those whom had sought a more righteous life. This heritage developed into the Pentecostal
emphasis on the ‘fivefold’ or ‘full’ gospel of justification, sanctification, Spirit Baptism, divine healing and premillennial return of Jesus.

The kingdom of God is already being experienced by the body of Christ through the manifestation of the works and gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, the kingdom of God has not yet been consummated in all fullness. The church has already experienced the power and presence of God in part through healing, forgiveness and comfort, but not yet in its fullness when there will be no sickness, we will be perfected, and every tear of sorrow will be dried. This is significant in Pentecostal spirituality because it shows that the signs, gifts and wonders of the “Apostolic Age” had not ceased and were available to all believers through the Holy Spirit. This created an expectancy within the Pentecostal church and fueled its fervor after the outpouring of the Spirit was manifested in signs, gifts, wonders and tongues. This also gave Pentecostals an eschatological focus on the soon coming consummation of the kingdom when Christ would return as triumphant God.

In summation, Land offers his definition of spirituality as “the integration of beliefs and practices in the affections which are themselves evoked and expressed by those beliefs and practices.”

Chapter 2

Pentecostal Spirituality as Apocalyptic Vision: A Narrative Praxis Analysis

Here the author uses the story of the Pentecostal community in their beliefs, songs, testimonies, and early eyewitness accounts to further understand Pentecostal spirituality. The apocalyptic
nature of the spirituality is examined in order to show the relation of revelation, history, and the kingdom of God.

The “good” apocalyptic deals with the believer seeing their part historically in the larger story of God. This apocalyptic presents God in an eschatological trinitarian process that involves the entire cosmos as well as the individual believer. God is at work in history moving all things toward the consummation of the kingdom through communion with the entire body of Christ and individual believers. The “bad” apocalyptic moves away from process and relationship to a prophetic fatalism that is more akin to a ship out of control headed toward an iceberg (Titanic eschatology). The only role for these believers was in spreading the gospel to all nations in order to hasten the end.

The “biblical drama” that unfolds in Scripture shows humankind participating in God’s history. For Pentecostals, Scripture is not just to be read and studied but lived out in a daily walking with God. His redemption story as unfolded in Scripture is likewise unfolded in our daily lives through participation in the eschatological trinitarian process. This forms the written word in us through the bringing together of knowledge and experience.

When this knowledge and experience is brought together it is easy to see how that our journey is enriched. Our journey which takes us toward God also becomes a journey with God and ultimately a journey into God—leading us further, deeper, and higher in our understanding of God.

In examining the “threelfold Pentecostal experience,” Land offers the following meaning. For Pentecostals, justification is an experience of renewal and a transformation from darkness to light. This transformation is not only a one-time event, but a daily affirmation and testifying to
forgiveness, new birth, regeneration, adoption and participation in a new world. This is the beginning for the justified person, who is on a journey with God that leads to righteousness and victory over the flesh. Through the power of the Holy Spirit the justified is able to resist the devil, flee temptation, and is separated from the world by walking in the light. The justified now has spiritual rest because he or she has been delivered from the restlessness of the world and no longer goes on living a life of sin.

Initial sanctification for the Pentecostal begins at justification, but this is not all. An entire work of sanctification is to be desired and sought. This sanctification as a second definite work of grace, is a radical change in the believer in which the self is perfected in love from God by Christ through the Holy Spirit. The will and desires are fixed upon Christ which is evidenced by a wholehearted love for God and neighbor, and an intensification of abiding joy, thanksgiving and prayerfulness. This sanctification is made possible through the blood of Christ shed at Calvary and is brought by the Holy Spirit. Sanctification brings holiness of heart and life and brings about a taking on of the nature of Christ which sets the human will firmly upon the righteousness and will of God. Early Pentecostals, as well as many traditional Pentecostals today, believe sanctification must precede Spirit baptism.

Spirit Baptism is a third, distinct experience that takes place subsequent to sanctification that empowers the believer for service, spiritual battle and witness. The evidences of Spirit baptism are divine love, fruits of the Spirit and mortification of the flesh. Outward manifestations include the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance, gifts of the Spirit, and signs and wonders.

Through the Spirit, the Pentecostal believer is able to travel backwards and forwards in
salvation history to experience and participate in the events that have been and are yet to be. This fusion of space and time creates a sense of role in God’s history and expectancy of the future consummated kingdom. The Spirit works to overcome human limitations to create within the church a sense of kingdom residency that separates us from the world and the things of the flesh. This is further manifested in the fusion of worship and witness in the Spirit that integrates our relational knowledge of God with our relational mission from God. Our being is also impacted by the fusion of Spirit and Word. The Word is made alive to us through the Spirit who inspired it to teach, guide and transform us by forming Christ in us through the Word. The believer is thus fused to the Father in Christ through the Spirit.

Within Pentecostal spirituality there exists a fission between the things of God (righteousness, the church, light) and the things of Satan (sin, the world, darkness). A distinct line is drawn between the church and the world by the witness of the believers. This line is further defined by right doctrine with an emphasis in the order of authority flowing from Spirit to Scripture to church. The world is invited to cross this line to join the church, but there can be no such crossing over for those who remain in communion with God. This fission is best summed up in John 15 where Jesus tells the disciples that they do not belong to the world but that He has chosen them out of it.

Another type of fission exists that gives priority to certain items over others. In this there is a proper understanding of order without an exclusive segregation of items. Some examples would be revelation and reason, head and heart, and Scripture and creeds. In each case the first item would take precedence over the second, with the second serving to confirm or affirm the first.
Preaching, witnessing, testifying, teaching, fellowship, shouting, singing and sharing are the vessels that have carried Pentecostal theology for nearly one hundred years. We are an oral-narrative people; therefore, speaking in “tongues” carries great significance for our spirituality. It is a sign of the presence and power of God, a sign of the gifts of the Spirit, and most importantly for most Pentecostals, a sign of Spirit Baptism. It is both personal as an eschatological prayer language and corporate serving as prophecy when interpreted. It is an “already” speaking of a language “not yet” realized that will be spoken out of hearts aflame with the presence of the Spirit in a time when God will be all in all. It is a manifestation of the Spirit that cannot be claimed or controlled by institutions, bureaucracies or human reason, and thus represents a full surrender of the human spirit to the Holy Spirit.

The presence of the Spirit in the life of the Pentecostal individual and corporate body was not only expressed with oral-narrative but also with a physical narrative as the believers acted out their faith in ordinances seen as submission to the commands of Jesus Christ. Water baptism, the Lord’s Supper and foot washing were all a means of grace in that they represented walking in the light, public witness, remembrance and following of Christ in public solidarity. These ordinances were instituted by Jesus Christ and were physical participation by the believers in the biblical drama through the Spirit. Thus the physical body was outwardly submitted to the authority and power of the Spirit.

Pentecostals view salvation history as a process, a journey with God, marked by crisis experiences that allow a radical transformation and working from the Father through Christ by the Spirit. This journey consists of three distinct crisis experiences of justification (regeneration, new birth), sanctification and Spirit Baptism. This order parallels the unfolding of the biblical
drama as well as the church’s history and the journey of the individual believer. Each of these crisis experiences marks a point at which God does something decisive, and every step moves toward the eschatological telos of the consummation of the kingdom of God and a time when God will be all in all.

Chapter 3

Pentecostal Spirituality as Missionary Fellowship: An Effective Integration

This chapter is a revealing look at how “Christian affections integrate and undergird Pentecostal beliefs and practices.” Right beliefs, practices, and affections and how they relate are a part of faith development within the Pentecostal community will also be examined.

The primary mode of formation and expression of the affections is prayer. This is prayer that is offered in the context of missionary fellowship. This prayer shapes the heart (which is the whole of the affections) of the believer in preparation for witness and participation in worship. It brings together our remembrance of what God has done, our acknowledgment of what He is doing, and anticipation of what He is going to do, usually in the form of testimony, both corporate and individual. Prayer is a practical application of the communion of the Trinity in the life of the body of the believer in that it is offered in the Spirit through Jesus Christ to the Father. Thus the affections are informed by the practice of the communion of the church with God and of the communion within the Trinity in the act of prayer.

Pentecostal consciousness can best be understood as being objective, relational and dispositional. In being objective, the affections focus upon an object who is also the subject – God. Not only is He the subject of human affections, but He is also the source and the ultimate
goal. The Pentecostal affections are also relational in that for their proper genesis and ongoing expression they require a relationship with God, the world and the church. These relationships must be motivated by, grounded upon and acted out in love. This love comes from God and is sustained with a moment-by-moment walking in the Spirit. Finally, affections are dispositional. This means that affections are more than mere feelings or reactions to situations. They are a part of the disposition, the make-up, of Pentecostals. They are abiding characteristics given by the Spirit that compel us to act out that missionary fellowship into which we have been brought.

The three affections mentioned by Dr. Land are gratitude, compassion and courage. Gratitude has its source in God’s righteousness and results in faith that gives us victory over the world. Compassion has its source in the divine love of God for all mankind and propels the believer toward holiness of living and love of God and neighbor. Courage comes from the power of God at work in us and gives us a reassuring hope of the kingdom of God that is already inbreaking but not yet fulfilled.

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The oral expression of what God has done, is doing and will do through testimony within the community helps to form the witness of the believer. The testimony teaches and disciplines as it remembers, acknowledges and anticipates God’s faithfulness, love and mercy in preparation for living the testimony before others. This shared reality of relationship and communion with God and believer in the Spirit leads to the outlet of fellowship through evangelism.

Pentecostals understand that praying in the Spirit is one means by which the Spirit forms us in the image of Christ. Prayer in the Spirit mortifies the flesh and works to sanctify the believer, develop the fruits of the Spirit, and provide a present experience of the future consummated kingdom of God. It is participation in communion with God through the Spirit involving the whole of the personality and shaping of the affections.
The three modes of prayer include prayer with words understood, prayer without words, and prayer with words that are not understood. Prayer in the vernacular is the most common prayer, particularly in corporate worship, and is marked by gratitude, adoration, supplication and confession. Prayer without words is marked by sighs, groans and laughter and is an outward expression of the deepest inner joys and pains of the believer in passionate intercourse with God. The most specifically Pentecostal form of prayer is the prayer in tongues. For Pentecostals this is the most edifying and powerful form of prayer because it comes at a point of complete emptiness of self and openness to the Holy Spirit. Often this prayer is given with interpretation for the purpose of edification, revelation or instruction to the entire body.

Praying in the Spirit is often manifested corporately with all three modes of prayer being offered up in concert worship before God in response to the presence of the Spirit. This is often the moment of greatest unity and singleness of intent within the community of believers.

The passion for the kingdom gives the affections purpose. Gratitude, compassion and courage have no meaning as aimless emotions, but in the context of a community on its way to the consummated kingdom, the affections become indispensable for participation in the reign of God. They require communion with the Holy Spirit to develop the righteousness, peace and joy that will soon be fully realized in the kingdom, but are now necessary for missionary fellowship.

Outside of the community there can be no kingdom because there can be no communion. The kingdom is the fulfillment of communion between believers and between God and the church. Within the setting of the community we see in part the kingdom that will be seen in fullness and we submit ourselves to the forming of the Holy Spirit. This engrafts us into the ongoing story of the people of God who are seeking Him in love and longing for God to be all in
In this community, longing for the kingdom, we are made righteous by the Spirit. We walk in a dynamic relationship with the Spirit and with the community. Through these relationships and through worship, the affections are formed in love. All of this points to the perfection of affections, righteousness, love and unity in the kingdom of God.

Chapter 4

Pentecostal Spirituality as Trinitarian Transformation: A Theological Re-vision

In his final chapter, Land offers a trinitarian re-visioning of Pentecostal Spirituality, based on his belief that a passion for the kingdom of God is ultimately a passion for God. He also notes certain internal issues and external criticisms of the Pentecostal movement.

What sets the Pentecostal affections apart is their anticipation of the establishment of the kingdom of God. Pentecostals have traditionally proclaimed that Jesus is coming soon and indeed have lived in expectation of His arrival. This apocalyptic expectation intensifies the affection by giving them a telos that is near. For Pentecostals the kingdom is not only near, but is made real by the inbreaking of the kingdom through prayer, healing, visions, tongues, corporate worship and various other signs and wonders. Thus the living reality of God already with us but not yet all in all intensifies and qualifies the affections.

Here Land compares and contrast the eschatology of Fundamentalists and of Pentecostals indicating how Pentecostals avoid being fragmented and speculative. Although the eschatological understandings of Pentecostals and Fundamentalists differed initially in theory, Pentecostals have become increasingly influenced by the dispensational nature of Fundamental
eschatology. This has led to a Pentecostal dispensationalism involving three overlapping interrelated ages of the Father, Son and Spirit. The expectation of the coming kingdom devolved into a prolific posturing on the persons and events of prophecy and the apocalyptic fervor began to wane.

Fragmentation was to be avoided in favor of the unity of the community in communion with God and other believers in a living, practical Christianity. This emphasis was lost, however, in the face of doctrinal disagreements over the number of crucial salvation experiences, the name and nature of God, and the unity of all peoples and races throughout the body of Christ. Speculation was also to be avoided in favor of expectancy of the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. However, as the apocalyptic fervor waned during the second generation of Pentecost, Fundamentalist speculation of end time events and persons in biblical prophecy increased.

Land transitions in his re-visioning, by asserting that Pentecostal theology conceives the relationship between God and creation to be a living dynamic, requiring discerning discursive reflection that is gifted by and attuned to the things of the Spirit. To clarify, he offers five interrelated loci for a new correlation and expanded view of transformation.

Land offers a revision of five relational areas. He lists them as God, history, salvation, the church, and the mission. He begins with God. God is the eschatological trinitarian presence. There is one presence eternally existing in three persons. Each is distinguished by the appropriation of certain works, yet each person fully participates in the life of the others. There unity is displayed in community. Pentecostal spirituality can be re-visioned today through a renewed emphasis on the doctrines of appropriation and perichoresis in the Trinity. Humanity is created in the image of God for communion and is moved by Him toward full participation in the
divine life.

Second is History. History is eschatological trinitarian process. History is in God and God in turn works in history for the good of those called according to his purpose. Ultimately, history is working toward a telos that is to God. Salvation history displays the trinitarian community of God by progressing from the Father through the Son in the Spirit and is missionary in nature. Therefore, to be a Spirit-filled Christian is to become a part of the teleological process of suffering, healing, hope and victory which presses toward the kingdom in God.

Third is Salvation. Salvation is eschatological trinitarian passion. Dr. Land’s re-visioning of salvation is a dynamic partaking in the divine life. It creates within the believer a passion for the kingdom. This passion is realized in part and hoped for in full within the context of missionary community that is being moved forward toward the consummation of history by God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Salvation is not an accomplished work but a passion toward God that consists of crisis experiences that work to perfect the believer in love. It begins with being declared righteous and belonging to community, then being identified with Christ in the sanctifying work and ultimately to being empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish the missionary purpose of God in the world.

Fourthly, there is the Church. The church is eschatological trinitarian fellowship. The church operates in fellowship as a communion in and with God. The church exists in unity and diversity as one and many in God. It displays sovereignly distributed gifts of the Holy Spirit and fruit from the Spirit is cultivated and given expression in the church which is the body of Christ. The church is begotten of God and is used by the Holy Spirit as he moves all things toward their
end. The church is holy just as God is holy and has been set apart for divine union with one another and with God. The church is eschatological trinitarian fellowship because it lives from God through Christ in the Spirit, and in the Spirit exalts Christ to the glory of the Father.

Lastly there is the Mission. The mission of the church is eschatological trinitarian transformation. The church is to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. We are to show a radically alternative way of life through the sanctification of the individual believer and the corporate body. We are to display unity through sanctified hearts for the last-days mission in the power of the Spirit. The message that we should live is one of liberation of the captive and the oppressed. This lived message is love and power from God through Christ and in the Holy Spirit which leads to joy and peace. It is more than an existential ideal, rather it is a lived reality that offers a tangible as well as spiritual overcoming of sin.

Noting the divisions in Pentecostalism and how they evolved, Land goes on to state that although there have been many doctrinal, social and racial divisions within Pentecostalism since its “rebirth” at the turn of the 20th century, three main issues have dominated these schisms. These issues are sanctification, the person of God, and the practices of the movement.

In regard to sanctification, the movement began with a fivefold gospel that had a distinctive belief in a second definitive work of grace. With the emergence of the Finished Work view, this belief was left out. To many, sanctification became more of a gradual change rather than radical transformation. Much ambiguity came to cloud the issue of holiness, and this lead to many divisions over its teaching. As for the person of God, many began to see to great an emphasis placed within Pentecostalism on the Holy Spirit. These people reacted with the New Issue or Jesus Only movement. While warning Pentecostals against tritheism, they have undone
the logic of progressive salvation history and espoused a modalistic view of God. Still, others have divided themselves by focusing on the practices of Pentecostalism. The “New Order of the Latter Rain” and the “Kingdom Now” movements have shown the respective extremes of pessimism and optimism that should find their proper integration in acceptance of the tension of scripture.

What Pentecostalism needs today is a unification in polity of the unified passion that we already share. If we take the example of the “heart” of the movement in the first ten years, we see a devotion to the mission of the church without division along social, economic, national or racial lines. However, as the church has grown up we have compromised the unity of the Spirit by dividing over these as well as, in many cases, petty theological differences. White North American Pentecostals have taken a false claim to the “turf” of Pentecost which is not theirs, or any human group’s for that matter, to claim. What is needed is for an international ecumenical body to provide among Pentecostals a forum for dialog, a unified missionary effort and a shared praxis of witness, testimony, fellowship and searching of the Scriptures leading to the realization of a unified identity in the Spirit.