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ON DIVINE PRESENCE AND DIVINE AGENCY: TOWARD A FOUNDATIONAL PNEUMATOLOGY[1]

Amos Yong

Who or what is the Holy Spirit? What is the Holy Spirit doing today? In what directions is the Holy Spirit leading? How is the Holy Spirit to be discerned? These are the kinds of questions that Christians the world over are intrigued by and are asking today. Resolutions to these questions are relatively easier to formulate within the confines of the Church. The questions are oftentimes dismissed, and otherwise not even seriously considered when relocated to the arena of the world at large. Or, even if they are posed in this latter context, the answers are much more elusive. To articulate and respond to these questions about who the Holy Spirit is relative to the world as a whole and what the Spirit is doing in the world is to plunge into the subject matter of foundational pneumatology.

This paper probes three lines of questioning. 1) What is a foundational pneumatology? 2) Why is this an important theological undertaking? 3) Why should Pentecostals and Charismatics be interested in this project?

1. What is a "Foundational Pneumatology"?

One of the most ambitious efforts thus far to develop a "foundational pneumatology" is Donald Gelpi in his book, *The Divine Mother: A*

[1] This paper was originally presented at the 28th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies held at Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri, 13-15 March 1999. I am grateful to the audience for their sympathetic encouragement. I also benefited greatly from the response of Prof. Koo Dung Yun of Bethany College, and have made several revisions and additions here in the attempt to take his questions and concerns into account.

Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit.[2] In order to briefly outline the task of foundational pneumatology and its inherent difficulties, two comments about Gelpi's book and work are in order. The first is his commitment to a non-foundationalistic epistemology. This derives in part from his overall project of developing an inculturated theology in dialogue with the North American philosophic tradition stretching from Edwards and Emerson through Brownson, Abbott, and Santayana, to Peirce, Royce, James and Dewey.[3] Under the tutelage especially of the pragmatism of C. S. Peirce and his successors, Gelpi came to question the transcendentalism and *a priori* methodologies of neo-Thomists such as Rahner and Lonergan that he imbibed in his Jesuit training, and moved in the direction of a fallibilistic epistemology and empirical theology. Both moves are to be applauded. My own foundational pneumatology follows Gelpi in eschewing the strong Cartesian foundationalism that bases all beliefs ultimately on self-evident intuitions. It proceeds instead from what Peirce called a "contrite fallibilism" wherein all knowledge is provisional, relative to the questions posed by the community of inquirers, and subject to the ongoing process of conversation and discovery.[4]

The *foundational* element in Gelpi's pneumatology, however, is primarily methodological rather than epistemological. Gelpi himself builds on the work of Lonergan who argued for foundations as one of eight functional specialties intrinsic to theological method.[5] The details of Lonergan's work need not detain us here; what is of import for him and Gelpi is the role of conversion in providing theology with foundations. Conversion, whether limited to intellectual, moral, and religious dimensions (Lonergan), or taken to include affective and socio-political dimensions as well (Gelpi), both enlarges the horizons of one's ability to comprehend and integrate theological data, and produces the needed transformation of soul such that one takes responsibility for one's

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[2] D. Gelpi, *The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).

[3] Cf. Gelpi, *Inculturating North American Theology: An Experiment in Foundational Method* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

[4] Elsewhere, I discuss at length the value of Peirce's method of inquiry for theology: "The Demise of Foundationalism and the Retention of Truth: What Evangelicals Can Learn from C. S. Peirce," *Christian Scholar's Review* 29:3 (2000), forthcoming.

[5] B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (1972; reprint, Minneapolis: Winston & Seabury, 1979).

theologizing relative to oneself and one's religious community. In this way, conversion supplies the foundation or indispensable pathway through which theology must eventually proceed. It functions methodologically, in Lonergan's terms, as the "horizon within which the meaning of doctrines can be apprehended."[6] In its most basic form, for example, the idea of conversion suggests that one cannot theologize truthfully if one has never been disposed in any way to God to begin with.

Gelpi has, however, attempted to take Lonergan's notion of foundation even further in seeing conversion as a subset of the category of experience. His own appropriation of the North American philosophical tradition has allowed him to see the value in formulating a theory of experience which is potentially universal in scope, and applicable not only to human beings but also to God.[7] The capability of such a theory to account for the experience of conversion generally and Christian conversion more specifically lies at the center of Gelpi's foundational pneumatology. "Foundational" is thus employed in Gelpi's pneumatology as suggestive of a fundamental category of reality, including God, as descriptive of human experience, and as both prescriptive and normative for the ways in which Christians (and others) have experienced and should experience God. Yet more importantly, following Lonergan, Gelpi still holds that what is foundational here is primarily methodological and related to experiences that allow for specific kinds of theological reflection—in this case, pneumatology. Because Gelpi defines foundational theology itself as the attempt to "formulate a normative account of the conversion experience which ought to lie at the basis of a religious tradition," it is not surprising that he sees the task of foundational pneumatology as that of formulating a normative account of the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit.[8]

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[6] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 131.

[7] Gelpi, *The Divine Mother*, pp. 82-102.

[8] Gelpi, *The Divine Mother*, p. 241. This bears out in the objectives that Gelpi itemizes for his version of foundational pneumatology: 1) to synthesize the experience of the Spirit with the biblical witness to the Spirit's presence and agency in the apostolic Church; 2) to explore the practical consequences and moral demands of Spirit-inspired living; 3) to comprehend the relationship between the second and third persons of the Trinity; 4) to probe into the soteriological implications of the charismatic work of the Spirit in the contemporary world; 5) to provide both prophetic challenge and words of wisdom for individuals, churches and society; and 6) to connect affectivity and cognitivity in the Christian life of faith (*The Divine Mother*, pp. 7-9).

While I am sympathetic to Gelpi's efforts and see them as a stimulus to my own reflection as a theologian, I wish to raise one specific complex of questions and suggest one direction in which to further develop his idea of foundational pneumatology. The former concerns the methodological dependence of Gelpi's pneumatology on the functional role of conversion experiences. More specifically, I query the propriety of insisting, as Gelpi does, on Christian conversion as a prerequisite for pneumatological understanding. This might raise the suspicions of those who are convinced that the Holy Spirit is the property only of Christians and that non-Christians cannot possibly reflect on an object (the Holy Spirit) who they either have never experienced or, even if they have, do not recognize by that name. Yet ponder for a moment a fact Gelpi himself admits—that conversion is the process that shapes the reflective capacities of *all* human beings, not only Christians and certainly not only Christian theologians. He agrees, following Lonergan's delineation of theological method, that anyone including those yet to experience Christian conversion can participate in research, interpretation, history and dialectics (the first four functional specialties). However, Gelpi then goes on to insist that only those who have experienced some level of Christian conversion (foundations, the fifth specialty) can adequately undertake the task of doing Christian theology.

That this is insufficiently dialectical should be clearly evident. Does not engagement in the process of research, interpretation, history and dialectics itself inform the kinds of conversion that one experiences? Do not conversion experiences at all the levels Gelpi identifies, however inchoate, inform the kinds of activities connected with movement through the first four specialties? Gelpi himself is well aware that one cannot arbitrarily divide conversion experiences from dynamic life processes, and that certain types of conversions both accompany and enable engagement with theological methodology. Conversion therefore extends through the entire process, and is intrinsic to it. But because Gelpi (and Lonergan) connects "foundations" so closely to Christian conversion, he forfeits appeal to the breadth of human conversion experiences which are complex and always in *via*. Instead, his methodologically constructed foundation turns out to be a rather limiting platform. By tying the idea of foundations to the experience of Christian conversion so explicitly, the kind of foundational pneumatology that emerges seems to be restricted to the Christian experience only, and is therefore somewhat incapacitated outside of that environment.

I suggest that a better strategy for foundational pneumatology would be to focus on the entirety of the epistemological and experiential

spectrum of the human being-in-the-world rather than on the methodological or functional role of specific experiences, including that of Christian conversion. I think Gelpi has been extremely helpful in constructing a theory of experience that accounts not only for how human beings encounter and engage the world but also for how humans relate to God and vice-versa. While there is neither time nor space for an extended discussion of this notion, at the very least, experience as understood by Gelpi is what defines human and sentient beings.[9] People do not have experiences; rather, experiences are what people consist of. Used in this paper in its broadest sense, experience refers to the complex integration of perception, mentality, affectivity, and volitionality involved in the human being-in-the-world. From this, what I wish to capitalize on is the fact that as a metaphysical construct, Gelpi's theory of experience is universally extensive to the human situation.

I wish to build on this toward a foundational pneumatology. If in fact Gelpi's metaphysics of experience is valid—and, for the record, I believe it to be essentially on the right track—the very idea of foundations connected to experience would resist its restriction to that of Christian conversion. Of course, certain aspects of Christian pneumatology undoubtedly makes no sense apart from the experience of Christian conversion. That Gelpi seeks to clarify the normative elements of the *Christian* experience of the Holy Spirit, I wholeheartedly endorse. But are Christian experiences of the Holy Spirit exhaustive? As a Catholic theologian, Gelpi clearly recognizes that even non-Christians experience the Spirit. But what is (or should be) decisive for him is that the notion of foundation as he develops it itself requires an emphasis on the idea that the pneumatological categories to be developed are potentially universal in scope and application since they are derivative from such universal experiences in actuality. I recognize that there is a key step missing in the above equation—that of connecting the experiences of the Holy Spirit with that of human experiences in general—and promise to make this

[9] For the details, see Gelpi, *The Divine Mother*, pp. 17-44. Since Gelpi draws from Alfred North Whitehead's cosmological categories, those who are convinced Whiteheadians will hold that experience applies equally to non-sentient realities. Gelpi himself is non-committal about that specific thesis, preferring to focus his reflection more extensively on human experience. He notes the ambiguities surrounding the term in a later work, *The Turn to Experience in Contemporary Theology* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1994), pp. 2-3, and therefore rightly cautions us to be weary about how it is used theologically.

connection explicit in the following section. For the moment, however, it seems undeniable that Gelpi's doctrine of experience would itself extend the scope of the foundations for pneumatological reflection far beyond that derived by Christian conversion. Perhaps I am quibbling about what appears to me to be Gelpi's arbitrary and restrictive use of "foundational" in his pneumatology. I am simply pleading for the recognition that Gelpi's idea of foundations, connected intrinsically as it is with his theory of experience, requires such a wider framework.

Acknowledgment of this wider framework also flows in part from recognizing the public nature of truth. Here, I draw from David Tracy's distinction between what he calls fundamental, systematic and practical theologies and their publics. For Tracy, fundamental theology is more philosophic in nature, is addressed principally but not exhaustively to the academy, and seeks to engage all who are willing to entertain the topic. Systematic theology is more confessional in nature, is addressed primarily but not exclusively to the Church, and seeks to render Christian symbols and doctrines plausible to those within the Christian tradition. Practical theology is oriented toward liberative and transformative praxis, and is addressed primarily to those engaged in correlating theological reflection with the doing of the work of the Kingdom of God in the world. Each is clearly distinct from the other, yet none can ultimately be disconnected from the other two because of their inherent interrelatedness.[10]

What is foundational about the pneumatology being developed here charts a path forward from the crossroad where Gelpi's pneumatology and Tracy's fundamental theology meet. It seeks to build on Gelpi's understanding of experience, but undertakes to articulate such within the largest framework possible. The public it is addressed to is surely academic. However, the experiences it attempts to comprehend are by no means limited to academics, or even Christians, but are rather the property of all human beings. The public for a foundational pneumatology is therefore the universal *humanum*, and properly includes any and all who are interested in the subject matter. Correlatively, the truth of the matter in foundational pneumatology cannot be parochial by virtue of the universal experiences of the Spirit (a point to be argued for in the next section) and the universal scope of the public to which it is addressed. What is true of the Holy Spirit in a foundational pneumatology

[10] Cf. D. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), pp. 54-82.

cannot be true only for Christians, but has to be both relevant and compelling for all.

This is what lies behind Tracy's insistence that fundamental theology—or foundational pneumatology, what is attempted here—is inherently universal or universalizing in character. As a rationality that implicitly presupposes a universal experience and explicitly strives to engage a universal audience, it cannot avoid philosophic and metaphysical abstractions.[11] Such a rationality, however, would be tempered by a fallibilistic epistemology even while it emerges from the ongoing dialectical conversation between self- and what David Krieger calls "other-rationality."[12] This extension of Gelpi's notion of foundationalism allows a stronger theory of truth to be emphasized, one that is not relativized by cultural-linguistic worlds or perspectives. This is especially urgent given the claims and counterclaims of truth in the world of religions and in light of our postmodern situation.

What informs the foundationalism envisioned here is thus not so much conversion, even in its expanded sense, as it is a "pneumatological imagination"—a way of seeing God, self, and world that is inspired by the (Pentecostal and charismatic) experience of the Spirit.[13] It needs to be

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[11] Cf. Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, esp. pp. 56-64; cf. also pp. 85 and 89, ns. 31 and 47.

[12] Krieger, *The New Universalism: Foundations for a Global Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991) argues for the potential meaningfulness and truthfulness of theological truth claims across cultural-religious lines by means of a universal method of argumentation and a universal hermeneutics. He draws from Panikkar's diatopical hermeneutics, Karl-Otto Apel's ethics of discourse, Habermas's communicative action, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, and even Gandhi's pragmatics of non-violence, all in an effort to construct a theory of intercultural communication. The key for Krieger, however, is Wittgenstein's later notion of finding our own reasonableness via the confluence of *other-rationality*—a notion embedded in the windows of language games open toward a universal horizon, thus allowing and in fact actually inviting correction in order to maintain rationality. Gelpi would want to insist that rationality and experience not be understood dualistically, and I would concur. I do, however, think that Gelpi's own emphasis on a broad construct of experience at times overwhelms the process and activity of cognition. A viable foundational pneumatology should be able to preserve both elements.

[13] The term "imagination" has proliferated in recent literature. It is also prevalent among biblical scholars and theologians, as evidenced by the appearance of the "apocalyptic imagination" (J. J. Collins), the "sacramental imagination" (M. C.

clearly acknowledged up front that the foundational categories presented here derive from the dialectical interplay between the personal (including my own) experience of the Holy Spirit and reflection on this experience from within the broader Pentecostal-charismatic community of faith. I therefore propose the metaphor of 'shifting foundations" to underscore the dialectic of Scripture and experience, of thought and praxis, of theology and doxology, of reason and narrative, of object and subject, of *a priori* rationality and *a posteriori* empiricism, of the self and its socio-historic location in community, in all knowledge.[14] These are all elements that combine to inform the pneumatological imagination. As a methodological construct, however, the pneumatological imagination in turn both envisions the foundational categories and is shaped by them. I suggest, on the one hand, that a theology of the Holy Spirit emerges out of our experience of God's presence and activity in the world even while, on the other hand, it enables us to experience that presence and activity in more precise, intense, and true ways. Further, the flexibility and cogency of the foundational pneumatology for identifying the most basic features of the Holy Spirit as related to the world enable us to comprehend not only divine and human experience and reality but also that of the demonic and of nature.[15]

This brief sketch raises many more questions than it provides answers. The discussion in the following section should further clarify what is involved in a foundational pneumatology by elaborating on its rationality. The final section of this paper will then elucidate in outline the epistemological issues related to foundational pneumatology even as it provides more specific Pentecostal and charismatic reasons for those within that tradition to seriously consider this theological project.

Hilkert), and the "prophetic imagination" (W. Brueggemann), among others. I will expand on my own use of this concept later in section three.

[14] On this matter, see W. Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[15] The concept of the demonic is a corollary to a fully biblical pneumatology as well as central to any *weltanschauung* oriented toward *pneuma*. Equally important at this juncture in world history for Christian systematic theology is a theology of nature. A foundational pneumatology, I am confident, will provide resources for revisioning both of these theological loci within a trinitarian framework.

2. Why "Foundational Pneumatology" Is an Important Theological Task?

The import of foundational pneumatology can be assessed in a number of ways. Here, I do so in light of philosophical, theological, and practical considerations. The former two are intrinsically related, and I will comment on them more extensively before a more concise remark about the latter.

Succinctly stated, a foundational pneumatology is concerned about the coherence of pneumatological statements as truth claims. Unpacking this statement itself reveals a number of inter-locking notions. I comment briefly on three—that related to pneumatology (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit), that related to epistemology (foundations), and that related to the public (audience) of theological reflection and debate (truth claims)—to identify some philosophical and theological reasons and motivations for this project.

The "object" of a foundational pneumatology is to provide theological reflection on the Holy Spirit. At the most basic level, the Holy Spirit symbolizes the presence and agency of God in the world. To say anything about the Holy Spirit is to venture an opinion about this presence and agency. This presupposes, however, that one has epistemological justification for such statements. It assumes that one has adequate "foundations" that secure the meaningfulness of such assertions. Worse, in today's intellectual climate which despises the kind of Cartesian foundationalism undergirding the modern project, as theological discourse, it makes claims not only to meaningfulness but also to universal truthfulness. It suggests that divinity is present and active not only in the world that Christians inhabit, but also on the cosmic or universal level. Such scandalous and appalling (for some postmoderns) discourse proceeds here from a cautious optimism regarding the possibility of a universal rationality and grammar.[16] It believes itself capable of making meaningful *and* truthful statements about the Holy Spirit—God's way of being in and transforming the world—that have application to the widest possible audience. At the very least, a

[16] What kind of optimism is this? It is not premodern insofar as the premoderns never even thought to question this possibility. It is not modern insofar as the moderns reveled in an unbridled sense of evolutionary sanguinity. It is not postmodern insofar as the postmoderns have already decided that such an attitude is meaningless and implausible. Better to label this a "chastised optimism" that is painfully aware of the postmodern critique.

foundational pneumatology should engage any public, regardless of cultural-linguistic-religious background, interested in reflecting on and discussing the notion of divine presence and agency.

Clearly, a pneumatological imagination derived from the Pentecostal-charismatic experience would have little difficulty in granting that the Holy Spirit is indicative of divine presence and agency in the world.[17] It is not far-fetched to conclude from this that a pneumatological imagination—especially that cultivated within the Pentecostal-charismatic community—is uniquely suited to undertake the task of developing a foundational pneumatology. Indeed, it is not an insignificant fact that the one responsible for sensitizing the theological world to the need for such a project, Donald Gelpi, is himself a participant in the Catholic charismatic renewal. Those whose imaginations have not been pneumatologically nurtured may find it difficult to engage in such a task. Now one could respond by pointing to the parochialism of building on such a foundation. On the other hand—the better strategy, I suggest—one can take this as a challenge to connect the theological articulation of our experience with the experiences of others vastly different from ourselves so as to both render its truths universally comprehensible and invite others toward deeper and more specifically understood experiences of the Spirit.

Reserving for later a more comprehensive explication of the pneumatological imagination vis-à-vis the Pentecostal-charismatic experience, the notion of God being present to and active in the world is surely problematic even if we were to attempt to remain purely on the theological level (as if such were in fact possible). There is no unanimity among Christian theologians about these things.[18] The complexity and precariousness of the conversation multiplies exponentially the moment other publics are introduced into the dialogue. This is clearly evident, for example, in the theological engagement with modern science and with the other religions. These conversation partners bring contrasting methodologies and discourses to the table and pose different problems. Modern science, for example, demands of theology a vision of God as

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[17] Pentecostal scholar, Gordon Fee, in a monumental work on a biblical pneumatology, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) clearly understands that the Holy Spirit is "God's way of being present, powerfully present, in our lives and communities as we await the consummation of the kingdom of God."

[18] Cf. O. C. Thomas, ed., *God's Activity in the World: The Contemporary Problem* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983).

agent that is consonant with the world as we know it.[19] Any theological claims made in such discussions need to be empirically verifiable or falsifiable, at least in principle. A foundational pneumatology contributes to such a conversation by elaborating on the kind of God and the kind of world that allows for a relationship of (mutual) presence and (at least asymmetrical, from the divine to the world) agency. Such a pneumatology seeks and allows for theological claims consistent with the findings and ongoing inquiry of the natural sciences. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that apart from a robust trinitarian pneumatology in the foundationalistic sense that I am urging here, it is inconceivable that a coherent theological response can be given to the questions raised by the religion-science dialogue.

Different issues and problems attend to pneumatology in the context of the interreligious dialogue. Both world and indigenous religious traditions present contrasting visions of God or ultimate reality that are, at many places, contradictory.[20] Undoubtedly, diverse models of the God-world relationship flow from these diverse theological and philosophical convictions. The Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination, the emanation of the 10,000 things from Yin and Yang which in turn derive from the Great Ultimate of Neo-Confucianism, and the contraction theory (*tsimtsum*) of Cabalist Judaism by which the "divine sparks" (*sefirot*) are released provide but three of the numerous religious visions available to those who ponder this matter. From these starting points, contrasting notions of religious experience follow, whether that be the Buddhist claim that enlightenment is the realization that *nirvana* (the religious ultimate) is *samsara* (the wheel of existence) and vice-versa, or the Neo-Confucian vision of balancing the Yin and Yang in order to flow with the Tao, or the Jewish experience of the *Shekhinah* (the final *sefirot*) whereby God is both present and hidden at the same time. In contrast, *one* way in which the Christian tradition has attempted to understand the God-world relationship is expressed in the doctrine of God creating all things by Word and Spirit (Irenaeus's "two hands of the father") *ex nihilo*. As a

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[19] See, e.g., R. J. Russell, N. Murphy, and A. R. Peacocke, eds., *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory, and Berkeley: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1995).

[20] In the following discussion, I use the word *God* in a sense inclusive of the signifier *ultimate reality* more common to the interreligious dialogue. *God* is much less problematic for readers of this journal so long as the polyvalence of the term across religious lines is recognized.

corollary, Christians experience God by way of the incarnation of the Logos in the historical Jesus of Nazareth, and by way of encountering the Holy Spirit in the various dimensions of life.

My conviction is that a foundational pneumatology provides one possible avenue by which to explore and discuss these differences. A pneumatological starting point furnishes the broadest of contexts for the interreligious encounter, both by beginning with the doctrine of creation (of the cosmos and of the *humanum*), and by supplying conceptual and linguistic resources by which to inquire into the divine presence and agency in the world. As the Catholic charismatic theologian, Ralph Del Colle, suggests in his own argument for the viability of Spirit-Christology, such a move allows the interreligious dialogue "to be focused at the point of inquiry where the dialogue will be most fruitful."[21] What this does is highlight the themes common to the human religious quest even as it provides the kind of latitude for the emergence of comparative categories to facilitate further dialogue. In the process, theological nuances are established, problematic contrasts are located at the right places and in their proper respects, and genuine harmonies and differences between religious traditions are defined with greater clarity. This is part of the process by which competing claims to truth are adjudicated on this side of eternity. This is not only because a foundational pneumatology is motivated by the idea that God is the "object" of religious encounter regardless of one's traditional affiliation, but also because it trades on the most general or abstract categories drawn from our common human experience as mediated by the Spirit as divine presence and agent.

From this, it is clear that foundational pneumatology is *not* content with only systematic coherence or with ensuring that the biblical data be packaged so as to provide a meaningful symbolic world and fluid narrative. A foundational pneumatology recognizes the differences and connections between meaning and truth, between systematic coherence and referential correspondence. Any system whose internal parts relate consistently to each other is meaningful on its own terms. In Wittgensteinian terms, the Christian and Buddhist symbol systems, just to name two, are sub-species of the religious language game and their

[21] R. Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 213. I develop this idea further in my article, "The Turn to Pneumatology in Christian Theology of Religions: Conduit or Detour?," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35:3-4 (1998): 437-54.

"truths" are operative *only* within their respective frameworks and are meaningless without. In this connection, "systematic pneumatology" is important precisely because it orders the diversity of symbols of the Holy Spirit both within the biblical revelation and the historical Christian tradition into a coherent whole. "Truth" in systematic pneumatology, however, is thus relativized only to Christians and those within the Christian tradition because it is unable on its own terms to adequately engage the question of whether or not there is a correspondence between its symbolic signifiers and reality "outside" the system.

Against this reductionism of the notion of truth to systemic coherence, however, biblical theism makes public claims to truth that resists regionality and ethnocentricity and strives toward universalism. To complete theological reflection on pneumatology therefore requires that the "system" (and all its parts) be tested against reality, and, as a religious and doctrinal system, against competing systems which also claim to interpret such reality correctly. To take this step is to move from truth as coherence to truth as correspondence, from systematic to foundational pneumatology. It is to extend reflection on divine presence and agency from its confines within the *ecclesia* to engagement with the world.[22]

This is the apologetic function of foundational pneumatology that is open to the world. Such openness entails vulnerability to criticism and correction. It is, in this sense, truly a "pneumatology of quest."[23] At the same time, foundational pneumatology is also, by its very nature, committed to truth in its strongest sense (truth as correspondence between sign and thing signified).[24] This commitment obliges defense against all

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[22] I have previously argued that systematic theology remains incomplete if it does not engage in foundational theology (or fundamental theology in Tracy's sense): "Whither Systematic Theology? A Systematician Chimes in on a Scandalous Conversation," *Pneuma* 20:1 (Spring 1998), pp. 85-93.

[23] This is analogous to what is taking place under the rubric of "humility theology" in the science-religion dialogues, e.g., J. M. Templeton, *The Humble Approach: Scientists Discover God*, 2nd, rev. ed. (New York: Continuum, 1995). The emphasis in my "pneumatology of quest" and in "humility theology" is on the fallible nature of all human knowledge since "now we see through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor 13:12, KJV).

[24] It should be clear that I am a committed metaphysical realist who endorses the thesis that things exist apart from any human mentality. At the same time, I would not go so far as to deny the claim of the theistic idealist that things are what they are ultimately because of God's thinking them. The latter claim, however, is a speculative metaphysical thesis located firmly in the arena of

potential critics and alternatives. In its aspiration to be globally accountable and applicable, it makes itself contextually particular to each religious-cultural-linguistic tradition. The result is a pneumatology that is universal, abstract and metaphysical on the one hand, and local, particular and concrete on the other. A successful foundational pneumatology must be able to bring the broad scope of systematic pneumatology into dialogue with any and all interested in the subject matter. In this sense, a foundational theology of the Holy Spirit, while non-dogmatic, is contextual and missionary. It is thus a relevant pneumatology, unrestricted in terms of the scope of its audience even as it is universal in intent with regard to its applications and claims.

This leads to a consideration of the practical rationale for foundational pneumatology, some of which should have been evident in the preceding discussion. It should be clear that because foundational pneumatology is motivated by the conviction that divine presence and agency are universal in scope, a fully developed version demands that attention be given to discerning the ways such presence and activity are mediated by the Holy Spirit. As a corollary, a foundational pneumatology requires a theology of discernment in its widest and most robust sense since the Holy Spirit is not the only spiritual reality present and active in the world. A theology of *spirit* is thus in order, one that is metaphysically and theologically sophisticated enough to account for the diversity of spirits in the world—from human to cultural-religious, socio-structural, cosmic, and demonic, just to name a few—even while it provides some means by which to discern divine presence and activity in, through, and against them. A foundational pneumatology is eminently equipped for these tasks (theology of spirit and theology of discernment) given its nature and scope.

The brevity of these comments prevents a comprehensive argument for the importance and necessity of foundational pneumatology for contemporary theology. Enough has been said, however, regarding the philosophical, theological and practical merits of such a project. Yet Pentecostals and Charismatics may not be convinced. Some further words are therefore in order toward that end.

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philosophical theology. The former is a far less controversial claim insofar as empirical warrants are concerned.

3. Why Should Pentecostals and Charismatics Develop a "Foundational Pneumatology"?

Rather than providing additional reasons for engaging in foundational pneumatology that are materially different from those delineated above, I want instead to strengthen the three-fold cord by further developing the rationale argued so far. I suggest that the philosophical, theological and practical reasons for Pentecostals and Charismatics (henceforth PCs) to engage in foundational pneumatology are actually intensified within the PC world and context. Again, I begin by discussing the former two together.

Those familiar with the Pentecostal-Charismatic (henceforth PC) movement are aware of its global significance.[25] Global presence requires global response and responsibility. PCs are still learning the ropes of ecumenical dialogue with other Christians. In this context, there is mutual understanding that takes place, as well as the development of a critical PC apologetics vis-à-vis historical and contemporary Christian theology. There is, however, a much larger theological public than that found among Christians, if theology is defined as critical thinking about God or things ultimate. To engage seriously, meaningfully, and truthfully in these broader conversations, however, requires that PCs further develop their conceptual and linguistic apparatus.

As with any dialogue, understanding and apologetics are mutually informing and supporting objectives. Neither can take place without the other, and both are transformative for earnest dialogue participants. This is, in part, because new languages and perspectives are brought to bear in the process of reflection, conversation and argument. This is part and parcel of relating one's own theological tradition and religious experiences to other audiences. The PC experience of the Holy Spirit, for example, begs for comparative analysis. Many PCs believe there is an intrinsic connection between this experience and the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. The anthropologist Cyril Williams has called PC glossolalia a "mysticism of sound" that is phenomenologically similar, in its global forms, to shamanistic language, the repetitive Sufi *dhikr*, spontaneous Cabalist utterances, certain forms of Hindu mantras and Tibetan tantrism. He concludes by calling for a multi-disciplinary

[25] Cf. K. Poewe, ed., *Charismatic Christianity as Global Culture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), and the collection of essays edited by M. Dempster, et al., *The Globalization of Pentecostalism* (Oxford: Regnum, forthcoming).

approach to the experience of glossolalia in its affective, cognitional, somatic, and other dimensions.[26] Such approaches to the entire phenomena of PC experience are still needed; that they should be conducted in a global, comparative context should go without saying. These kinds of investigations will surely be a catalyst for creative PC theology even while serving apologetic ends since they would require that PCs develop a coherent account of their experience related to commonalities and differences—both theologically and phenomenologically—with those of other traditions and defend its plausibility against any and all parties interested in the subject matter.

The success of such endeavors, besides the number of converts to Christianity or the transformation of PC soul and tradition for the better, hinges in large part on the ability of PCs to communicate their experiences in the concepts and languages of another. For PCs, this raises in its sharpest form, epistemological and philosophical questions. This arena of intellectual inquiry is one in which PCs have traditionally been weakest. My dialogue with Peirce, Gelpi, and others doing theology in conversation with the philosophic tradition may be a "turn-off" to some Pentecostals and Charismatics who would be inclined to take scriptural texts like Col 2:8 (Paul's warning against "deceptive philosophy) literally. A further complaint, articulated clearly by Henry Lederle, might be that Gelpi (and those doing philosophical theology) "employs such a wide range of philosophical approaches that he undercuts basic communication with most of those interested in a theology of the charismatic renewal."[27]

One's weaknesses are best handled, however, not by ignoring them but by addressing them. As PC scholarship has grown in sophistication, there is a greater openness today than in the 1970s and 80s to seeing both the value and the need of rethinking not only theological but also philosophical categories for our experience of the Spirit. In fact, I am ready to argue that our pneumatological imagination, if severely criticized and applied, would result eventually in a revisioning of the primary philosophical and metaphysical categories themselves. At any rate, foundational theologies, targeted as they are to the widest possible public, cannot escape the philosophical elements that are concerned with

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[26] C. Williams, *Tongues of the Spirit: A Study of Pentecostal Glossolalia and Related Phenomena* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981), pp. 192-212.

[27] H. Lederle, *Treasures Old and New: Interpretations of "Spirit-Baptism" in the Charismatic Renewal Movement* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), p. 117.

methodological and presuppositional issues. I am inclined to believe that many PCs are ready to enter not only into these kinds of philosophical conversations but also into others such as the interreligious dialogue and the dialogue between science and religion/theology that have far-reaching implications in our global context.[28] This matter is especially urgent given the PC proclivity for personal testimony and witness. To present one's beliefs and practices to this larger public requires an argument for their truth. This in turn demands an enlargement of PC horizons of discourse.

There is, however, at least one other important philosophic-theological reason for PCs to engage in foundational pneumatology. PCs are among the most convinced of Christians regarding the presence and activity of divinity (through the Holy Spirit) in the world. However, to claim that the Holy Spirit reproves the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11) without providing some explanation of how that happens is theologically vacuous. Aside from existential confirmations, translating this biblical truth into more general philosophic categories is *one* way to buttress its claims for the non-Christian public. To provide a plausible account for the Spirit's agency in the world in these matters is also to further legitimate the pneumatological vision that PCs claim to guide their experience and their being-in-the-world.

The close, and complex, relation between praxis and cognition is nowhere more evident than in PC orientation to the spirit world. PCs talk much about discernment in general and about the discernment of spirits in particular, and rightly so. The nature of PC phenomena and the diversity of spiritual manifestations require this. Yet, the pneumatological orientation among PCs has not led to the kind of reflection on a theology of spiritual discernment that differs substantively from that produced by non-PC Christians. In their concern to be biblical, PCs have failed to translate the norms of discernment given in Scripture into comparative categories that undergird all effective discernment. In their spiritual zeal, PCs have been rightly accused of a dangerous subjectivity regarding this

[28] My own work to date has focused on encouraging PCs to engage constructively—dialogically, evangelistically, and prophetically—in the interreligious dialogue; see my "'Not Knowing Where the Spirit Blows…': On Envisioning a Pentecostal-Charismatic Theology of Religions," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (1999), pp. 81-112, and *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions*, JPTSup 20 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). In the latter work, I also attempt a revisioning of metaphysical categories along pneumatological lines.

matter.[29] The intent of these general criticisms is to spur PC thinking on this issue. PC praxis, as much as belief, is dependent on our engaging the task of foundational pneumatology.

Before concluding, it is imperative that something further be said about the pneumatological imagination alluded to earlier that undergirds the project of foundational pneumatology pursued here. The underlying issue is the relation between PC theology and epistemology, or, alternatively, between specific and natural revelation, Scripture and experience, faith and reason, etc. In arguing for the necessity of translating the PC imagination-experience into more neutral categories amenable to a wider theological conversation, would that mean that the former experience has been forced into a foreign philosophical framework? If so, does the interpretive framework skew the explication of the experience so that its particularity is compromised? On the other hand, if it is said that the foundational pneumatology and its categories arise from the PC imaginative-experiential background, then the resulting foundational pneumatology runs the risk of being an imperialistic PC (Christian) imposition on other dialogue partners willing to be seated at the discussion table.

As previously indicated, I resist the dualism implied by these lines of reasoning. I do concede that the pneumatological imagination I am proposing arises out of a specific cluster of PC experiences—engagements of the Holy Spirit in the world. What I deny is that this imagination is insulated from outside criticism, whether such be biblically derived by those internal to the Christian tradition or whether they eventuate from secularists, non-Christians, or members of other faiths. A dialectical process is at work here, as there undoubtedly is in all questions of this sort. Experience and interpretation are mutually informing and

[29] There are manuals aplenty on discernment produced for popular consumption. More critical material include W. Hollenweger's *Interkulturelle Theologie* vol. 3, *Geist und Materie* (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1988), and S. E. Parker's *Led by the Spirit: Toward a Practical Theology of Pentecostal Discernment and Decision-Making*, JPTSup 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). Hollenweger, of course, has long been encouraging us PCs to think critically for ourselves, while Parker's focus is more on what is identified in the subtitle to his book than the kind of broad theology of discernment I have in mind. My own preliminary reflections on this topic are sketched in *Discerning the Spirit(s)*, ch. 7, while a more developed Pentecostal theology of discernment will appear in my "Spiritual Discernment: A Biblical-Theological Reconsideration," in *The Spirit and Spirituality*, eds. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies (Irvine, CA: Regnum International, forthcoming).

correcting elements in any community of knowers.[30] Further, what I am proposing here is put forward tentatively for reflection, discussion, and criticism. The theoretical and conceptual apparatus will always fall short of the richness of experience. The foundational pneumatology is both provisional and vulnerable to criticism, amplification, and adjustment. Our pneumatological imagination is being constantly challenged, enlarged, transformed, or exposed through our faithful attention to the Scriptures, participation in rituals of the Spirit, engagement in dialogue with the "other," and obedience to the presence and agency of the divine Spirit in the world. I do, however, think that any foundational categories generated from our interpretation of the PC experience would be correct in their general features in large part because these would be pneumatological features that are intrinsic to human processes of engaging divine presence and agency in the world. There is a hermeneutical spiral in this process whereby the Spirit illuminates our experiences that in turn reveal to us more about who the Spirit is. As Killian McDonnell puts it, just as we cannot really reflect about reflection since that would be "using thinking in attempting to discover what the 'object' of thinking is, so in much the same way we must use the Spirit to understand the Spirit…because the Spirit is the universal comprehensive horizon within which any and all theological reflection is possible."[31]

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[30] I am not alone among Pentecostals and charismatics on this point. The same or similar epistemological thesis has been argued by others with regard to the hermeneutical issue, e.g., W. Menzies, "Synoptic Theology: An Essay on Pentecostal Hermeneutics," *Paraclete* 13:1 (1979), pp. 14-21; W. R. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991); R. Stronstad, "Pentecostal Experience and Hermeneutics," *Paraclete* 26:1 (1992), pp. 14-30; S. A. Ellington, "Pentecostalism and the Authority of Scripture," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 9 (1996), pp. 16-38; J. Shuman, "Toward a Cultural-Linguistic Account of the Pentecostal Doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit," *Pneuma* 19 (1997), pp. 207-23; cf. also the earlier observations of W. Hollenweger, "*Creatur Spiritus*: The Challenge of Pentecostal Experience to Pentecostal Theology," *Theology* 81 (1978), pp. 32-40. I think it a crucial task, especially for Pentecostals and Charismatics, to extend the activity of interpretation to cover not only human engagement with texts, but with the reality of the world; cf. R. C. Neville, *Recovery of the Measure: Interpretation and Nature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), and R. C. Corrington, *The Community of Interpreters: On the Hermeneutics of Nature and the Bible in the American Philosophical Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987).

[31] K. McDonnell, "A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit?" *Theological Studies* 46 (1985), pp. 191-227 (216); cf. 1 Cor 2: 10-16.

This is not to deny that the pneumatological imagination needs to be cultivated and that the PC experience fosters such cultivation. It only asserts what has long been affirmed by the traditional doctrine of common grace: that human life and experience is dependent only on the prevenient presence and activity of God through the Holy Spirit, and that this should put us on the alert for possible experiences of the Spirit and alternative specifications of the pneumatological imagination outside of explicitly PC or even Christian contexts. Other pneumatological visions exist, both in Christian and non-Christian forms, and none can claim a monopoly on the Spirit's presence, work, and revelation.[32] I believe that dialogue on this subject will bring about convergence that recognizes genuine differences while clarifying other problems. It needs to be emphasized that the more neutral language that emerges out of any such engagement, even as it translates what is meaningful for one religious tradition to all interested parties, must be able to preserve (or retains the capability of preserving) the deepest *truthful* convictions of all traditions. Anything less than that would not be a foundational pneumatology in the sense envisioned here.

Acknowledging that the foundational pneumatology I am proposing arises from a particular pneumatological imagination requires at least one final comment relative to the issue of universality. As used here, "imagination" refers to the synthetic processes of world-making that bridge elemental perception and cognition in human experience. The imagination is what operates at the border of the finite and the infinite, and forms the possibilities for both human worldviews and for our being-

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[32] PCs have a pneumatological imagination different from that exhibited by Reformed (see, e.g., J. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, tr. M. Kohl [London: SCM, 1991] and M. Welker, *God the Spirit*, tr. J. F. Hoffmeyer [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994]), Lutheran, e.g., Lee E. Snook, *What in the World is God Doing? Re-Imagining Spirit and Power* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], or Roman Catholic theologians, e.g., Gelpi). The interreligious dialogue is beginning to yield some understanding of similar imaginations in other traditions, see, e.g., A. Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African Context* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1991) and M. E. Lodahl, *Shekhinah/Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1992). It is arguable that there is also a kind of pneumatological imagination at work in the reflections of non-Christian secularists, e.g., J. Kovel, *History and Spirit: An Inquiry into the Philosophy of Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1991).

in-the-world.[33] The anti-foundationalist critique therefore means only that classical foundationalism of the Cartesian type is dead; it does not mean that there are no foundations at all or that all knowledge sits on thin air.[34] A truly foundational pneumatology will be open to insights and correction from the many perspectives that derive from humankind's historical encounter with the divine Spirit. From the PC perspective, all that emerges out of the ongoing conversation will be subject to the biblical revelation of the personal character, nature and work of God the Spirit, even as it exposes and reveals the many ideological manipulations and sinful employments of the biblical data. The task of justifying any theological construct involves precisely the quest for the universal elements in human experience that make for meaning, knowledge and truth to be something other than social conventions or convenient fictions. As a Christian theologian, I proceed with some optimism that pneumatology, concerned as it is with explicating divine presence and agency in the world, provides the broadest framework for reflection, discussion, and debate about theological matters. The kind of universality I envision is therefore a posteriori in nature, building on the empirical findings of our engagement with the world and the convergences that emerge out of the ongoing theological dialogue.[35] It is ultimately

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[33] I have learned a great deal about this from my teacher, R. C. Neville; see his *Reconstruction of Thinking* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1981) and *The Truth of Broken Symbols* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).

[34] Other Christian philosophers have attempted to reconstruct a "weak foundationalism" of "basic beliefs" from the Scottish Commonsense philosophy of Thomas Reid. I am sympathetic to this ongoing project by Reformed epistemologists such as Alvin Plantinga and William Alston. At the same time, I am also convinced that PCs have something valuable to contribute to this conversation: see "Life in the Spirit: The Dialectic of Experience and the Pneumatological Imagination," presented at the 29th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, Northwest College, Kirkland, Washington in March 2000.

[35] Any attempt at a foundational pneumatology will inevitably be likened to Hegel's quest as found in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* and other works (mine certainly was, as remarked upon by one of my dissertation readers). Hegel's project was indeed ambitious. Although he began with his feet on the ground, what eventually happened was that empirical facts were subjected to abstract theological categories and then lost in his speculative imagination. For those trained in the American philosophic tradition, however, the 'secondness" (Peirce's term) of concrete reality can never be ignored. This commitment to an empirical approach to philosophy and theology means that any speculative

eschatological in realization, but such an orientation is not alien to the PC orientation.

4. Conclusion

This paper is therefore a call for PCs to engage in a wider conversation about the nature and work of the divine person whom they claim to know best: the Holy Spirit. It is put forth with the conviction that theology matters, and that pneumatology is an integral component, both epistemologically and thematically, of theological understanding. In pointing one way forward, however, it leaves open other methodological approaches to the topic. I am eager to engage my own ideas about foundational pneumatology with that of others, including those of my colleagues in the PC tradition. Ours should be a "pneumatology of quest"; may the quest continue….

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scheme is fallible and remains vulnerable to correction from other perspectives and viewpoints. I am prepared to argue that epistemology in general and any pneumatological imagination more particularly—certainly that underlying PC life and thought—operates on such premises, even if such is dogmatically anathematized. In Hegel, the alleged target was "spirit;" but this was revealed, ultimately, as a glorified form of Hegel himself. We ignore Hegel's failure only at our own peril.