

# A Survey of Pentecostal Hermeneutics with a Fresh Pentecostal Approach

An Essay Presented to  
2013 WAPTE Consultation, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
by Rev Eun Chul Kim, PhD  
Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio, the Philippines

## Introduction

Pentecostals are seeking Pentecostal theology. Where is Pentecostal theology to be found and formulated? To formulate Pentecostal theology, do Pentecostals have a proper hermeneutic? Since Pentecostals regard the book of Acts as a textbook of Pentecostalism, it would be natural that Pentecostal hermeneutics must follow the hermeneutics of Acts. The precondition for biblical hermeneutics, as Fee asserts, is to discern the literary genre of the book concerned.<sup>1</sup> It is generally agreed that the literary genre of Acts is historical narrative, so that it may be proper to deal with the book in terms of narrative criticism. However, the current trend is that some scholars follow the methodology in interpreting Acts, whereas others use different hermeneutics along with proving their methodologies proper. In this essay, surveying the below three hermeneutics, I will analyze and criticize these hermeneutics. Afterwards, I will present my methodology and propose a fresh Pentecostal approach.

## 1. Gordon D. Fee: A Genre Hermeneutic

Fee suggests three general principles concerning the hermeneutics of historical narrative:

1. The Word of God in Acts which may be regarded as normative for Christians is related primarily to what any given narrative was intended to teach.
2. What is incidental to the primary intent of the narrative may indeed reflect an author's theology, but it cannot have the same didactic value as what the narrative was intended to teach has. What it does argue is that what is incidental must not be primary, although it may always serve as additional support to what is unequivocally taught elsewhere.
3. Historical precedent, to have normative value, must be related to intent. That is, if it can be shown that the purpose of a given narrative is to establish precedent, then such precedent should be regarded as normative.<sup>2</sup>

With these three general observations and principles in view, Fee suggests three specific principles on the hermeneutics of historical precedents:

1. The use of historical precedent as an analogy by which to establish a norm is never valid in itself. Such a process (drawing norms from particular events) produces a *non sequitur* and is therefore irrelevant.
2. Although it may not have been the author's primary purpose, biblical narratives do have illustrative and (sometimes) "pattern" value. It should be noted, however, especially in cases where the precedent justifies a present action, that the precedent does not establish a norm for a specific action.
3. In matters of Christian experience, and even more so of Christian practice, biblical precedents may sometimes be regarded as repeatable patterns - even if they are not

---

<sup>1</sup> Fee, 124.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 126.

understood to be normative.<sup>3</sup>

Critique:

(1) Fee's general principle 1 seems to be agreeable, but it is propositional. He did not make further explanation of it. Considering his follow-ups, however, his stance for the hermeneutics of Acts does not stand firm, rather it is ambiguous or hesitant. Why is it so? Two things can be said. First, he has a prejudice against narrative without recognizing its significance. The uses of the conditional clause and classification in his arguments reflect his prejudice clearly, while trying to be fair or convincing. Second, he does not seem to regard Luke as a theologian. Probably because he is a man of Paul who has fathomed the 1 Corinthians which contains theological issues, his tendency overshadows the theological perspective of Luke.

(2) Fee's classification of a genre into two levels as primary and secondary is quite a non sequitur. We can find it clearly in that in his general and specific principles his terms such as "primary", "normative", "normative value", or "didactic value" are used in the same continuum, whereas his words "incidental", "additional", "illustrative" or "pattern value" are expressed in the same continuum. Considering the phrases "it [narrative] cannot be the same didactic value, as what the narrative was intended to teach has" and "what is incidental must not be primary", his concept of the classification appears more clearly. Who can decide which genre is primary or secondary? With what criteria? Each genre is different and distinct in its own style, with which the message is demonstrated or the passage is delineated. Every genre is equally important, and there is no superiority or inferiority over each other.

(3) His preoccupation with narrative hinders to appreciate its significance that implies historical and theological perspectives. Narrative has definitely didactic quality, so it has normative value. We have a congenial company. William Klein asserts, "Narrative often teaches more indirectly than didactic literature without becoming any less normative."<sup>4</sup> F F Bruce states, "History writing in antiquity had a didactic quality and aim."<sup>5</sup> David E. Aune affirms, "Luke-Acts provided historical definition and identity as well as theological legitimation for the author's conception of normative Christianity."<sup>6</sup> Walter Hollenweger also holds that "Acts of the Apostles is the normative record of the normative primitive church. Therefore, the apostolic experience is the normative model for all Christians."<sup>7</sup>

(4) Although Fee suggests that historical precedent can be of normative value, if precedent is to be intended in a given narrative, he only presents his ambiguity or proposition in dealing with a passage he suggested (Acts 1:15-26). So I attempt to deal with the passage. This passage shows that the church in selecting a leader seeks a divine guidance by prayer and the casting of lots. The methods (prayer and the castings of lots) in seeking God's will, which they adopted, can be adopted for Christians today. Historical precedent is surely what the author intends to teach, so it is normative.

(5) His own principle that "where the precedent justifies a present action, that precedent does not establish a norm for specific action" is not convincing. Jesus used the example of David, which was a historical precedent, to justify his disciples' action on the Sabbath, so a precedent can establish a norm for specific action. Also the Pentecostal can justify his speaking in tongues not only from the precedents in Acts but also from the teaching about spiritual gifts in Corinthians 12-14.<sup>8</sup> Thus a precedent is intended to be a norm for a present action. In fact, precedent was already established as a norm or justification for subsequent situations, for the precedent was repeated (baptism-filling and

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 124-129.

<sup>4</sup> Klein, 424.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Aune, 137.

<sup>7</sup> Hollenweger, 321.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Fee, 128-29.

speaking in tongues).

(6) His criterion of assessing a passage, whether it would be primary or secondary level, is not fair, because Fee derives the former from the passage, while taking the latter out of the passage. Obviously the former is in the passage, but the latter is not in the passage. Furthermore, what is primary to him is all about a clear description and what is secondary to him is all about an intentional or unnecessary implication.<sup>9</sup> In fact, any author of the New Testament neither divides his passage into two levels, nor intends to teach the secondary level of truth as Fee intends. What is more improper is that his mechanism of this classification produces an incorrect interpretation everywhere in the New Testament. For example, he categories the passages into three (Christian theology, Christian ethics, and Christian experience or practice) and dares to classify these three categories into three levels of primary, secondary and third respectively. With three different levels of categories, he again classifies into two levels of primary and secondary.<sup>10</sup> After all, he classifies the passages into six categories. His concept of this category and classification is a chaotic inference.

(7) Narrative is more effective than instruction or imperative for didactic purpose. For example, Christians in early church or later church do not understand well this imperative verse "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18) in Paul's letter, because he does not explain how to be filled with the Spirit and what this means. But Acts explains very well in detail how to be filled with the Spirit and what it means and even what is the consequence (Acts 2:1-4; 4:8-12; 5:31; 6:10). Without explaining the doctrine of Spirit-filling, how can the people understand it? Thus narrative in Acts is more effective than doctrine in Paul in teaching a doctrine. Narrative can be a better doctrine (teaching).

(8) Christian doctrine "Spirit baptism" in Fee's first category (primary category) is not effective without the experience, which is in his third category simply because it is precedent. Doctrine (teaching) intends to teach one to follow. Without practice the teaching is not valid. Without experience the teaching is not yet applied. Both doctrine and experience are equally important for Christian life. Christian doctrine "God is love" is not effective without the explanation and experience of God's love (Luke 15:24-32). In these two cases, doctrinal statements are not always necessary, because biblical experiences in these narratives can produce doctrines.

(9) This, it seems to me, is the great fault of the monumental work of Fee. He admits that Acts has much theology, and theology is a part of Luke's intent.<sup>11</sup> Then theology in Acts would have also the primary intent as in Paul's epistles: "In epistles, theology obviously abounds, and frequently is the primary intent."<sup>12</sup> It is obvious that he is already inconsistent and he will face a big dilemma that he should decide, according to a certain criterion, which one is superior, Paul's theology or Luke's theology. Or he must reconcile the two with equally worthy positions, as Marshall recognizes them as such.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, a conclusive remark that a number of scholars agreed or could agree is necessary to represent: the book of Acts is regarded as normative for later Christianity, for a lot of precedents or episodes, especially all of the speeches, were intended to teach. As a consequence, we can affirm that (a) one must not distinguish a genre into two levels of primary and secondary; (b) a didactic portion of the Scripture must not have precedence over historical precedent in establishing a doctrine; (c) the book of Acts does establish a normative experience for the believers today.

## 2. William W. Menzies: A Holistic Hermeneutic

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Fee, 126-27.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Fee, 125

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Marshall, Luke, 16

Menzies proposes a threefold or holistic hermeneutic for a formulation of Pentecostal theology.

1. The inductive level is that one uses scientific methodologies to know the meanings and intentions of the biblical writers. There are three kinds of inductive listening to the biblical text: (1) the declarative (God's love), (2) implicational (Trinity), and (3) descriptive (narrative).
2. The deductive level is that of biblical theology.
3. The verification level is the level of contemporary experience. This is to test the theology in real life experiences. This level is also the integration level. A synthesis of truth is discovered at the inductive level, at the deductive level and at the verification level.<sup>14</sup>

Critique:

(1) A difficulty in understanding his methodology is that Menzies' hermeneutic and theology are together involved at all three levels. It has been generally agreed that hermeneutics comes first and then theology follows, but in his arguments the two factors go together. At the inductive level, he discusses theological issues, that is, the Trinity and Pentecostal theology. At the deductive level, he talks particularly about Pneumatology in terms of comparison between Paul's and Luke's. At the verification level, he talks about practical theology involving main factors in the Christian life.

(2) Here another difficulty can be found in that while showing that the three levels are described as an orderly process, he looks at the three levels as an integration as well. In other words, while three levels of the hermeneutic consist of the exegetical (inductive), the theological (deductive), and the applicational dimensions (verification) as successive components, each level is interrelated or interwoven with a different level and at the verification level all three levels are integrated into one concept, which is called "a synthesis of truth". It would be logical if three levels operate in an orderly step to develop and formulate a doctrine, but it is difficult to understand if two levels in interrelation or continuity or three levels in integration operate in converse order, for each level is no longer valid to exist for its own purpose.

(3) The order of his three methods would be not workable. He viewed the event of Spirit baptism at Bethel Bible school as if all three levels took place in his suggested order.<sup>15</sup> However, the event happened in this way. (a) It was the inductive study of Acts that led the students to affirm that they could expect the experience of the Spirit as in chapter 2. (b) And then a lady first received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in a different language. In the following days Parham and a number of other students received the experience and spoke in tongues. (c) Afterwards Parham and his students reached the conclusion that speaking in other tongues was the biblical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Parham formulated the doctrine of "biblical evidence". In brief, the pastor and the students got involved with three levels in this way: exposition (the inductive), experience (the verification), and then doctrine (the deductive).

### **3. Howard M Ervin: A Pneumatic Epistemology**

Ervin says, "A pneumatic epistemology posits an awareness that the Scriptures are the product of an experience with the Holy Spirit which the biblical writers describe in phenomenological language."<sup>16</sup> He makes further explanation of it. "When one encounters the Holy Spirit in the same apostolic experience, with the same charismatic phenomenology accompanying it, one is then in a better

---

<sup>14</sup> Menzies, 5-13.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>16</sup> Ervin, 33.

position to come to terms with the apostolic witness in a truly existential manner."<sup>17</sup>

The reason that Ervin suggests his methodology is to solve three problems:

1. Western culture has two ways of knowing, which is considered axiomatic, one is to know through reason and the other through sensory experience. So a theology influenced by Western culture that limits itself to reason and sensory experience finds itself faced with an unresolved dichotomy between faith and reason, which has been no less unsatisfactory.
2. A destructive rationalism resulted from the hermeneutics of a historical-critical exegesis.
3. Pietism, as a logical extension of *sola fidei*, has tended to abdicate the role of reason in favor of faith in terms of the immediacy of subjective personal experience.<sup>18</sup>

How does he find out the solution? He explains that

1. Although reason and sensory experience may supply knowledge adequate for one to function within Western culture, both are inadequate to account for the new insights into the nature of reality. It is the testimony of Scripture that it is not possible to penetrate to the heart of its message apart from the Holy Spirit. The Bible spells out quite clearly the initiative of the Holy Spirit in the miracles, and so a clearly enunciated pneumatic dimension leads to the experience of miracles.<sup>19</sup>
2. A sound traditional hermeneutic has been indispensable to hermeneutical methodology, but this has been both a strength and weakness in that it placed the text at the service of rationalistic and propositional theology. What is the weakness of traditional hermeneutics? The weakness is its relative insensitivity to the pneumatic ethos mediated by the biblical text. That is caused by rationality (linguistic, literary and historical analyses) which is inadequate for the task of interpreting the words of Scripture. But if human rationality is joined in ontological union with Christ by faith and quickened by the Holy Spirit, the divine mystery is understood.<sup>20</sup>
3. A rational accountability is necessary for the mysticism by a piety grounded in *sola fidei*.<sup>21</sup>

Critique:

(1) To obtain knowledge from reason (rationalism) or sensory experience (empiricism) was a hot issue in Western philosophy, and these two concepts had been incompatible for a long time. However, Immanuel Kant accepted these two concepts and reconciled the two with the concept of idealism that without form (rationalism) content (empiricism) is vague, and without content form is empty; in other words, with rationalism empiricism is clear and with empiricism rationalism is full. Considering the impact of Kant and other philosophers of idealism upon Western culture, Ervin's concept of the dichotomy is out of date and it is incorrect to use the concept now.

(2) Ervin begins to use epistemology for his solution to the problem of dichotomy between faith and reason. But he did not mention how the concept of the dichotomy between sensory experience and reason in Western culture had been shifted into the dichotomy between faith and reason in Christian culture. He needs to explain further even briefly about the transition and relation between sensory experience and faith in terms of historical development.

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 31

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 25, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 24.

(3) The solutions for each problem are well-matched, but his main solution is the mediation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit mediates an understanding of faith and reason; the Holy Spirit mediates an integration of faith and experience; the Holy Spirit mediates an employment of traditional hermeneutics. As the name of the approach "a pneumatic epistemology" indicates clearly, the Holy Spirit mediates an understanding of the word of God, because knowledge obtained from experience and reason is not enough.

(4) In fact, Ervin's methodology is to identify the one who is qualified to interpret the word of God, and he did not tell us in detail how to interpret it. He means to say that a Spirit-filled person with proper education can interpret the word of God properly.

#### **4. Eun Chul Kim: Empirical Criticism**

Having surveyed three methodologies so far, I will present my methodology in terms of its definition, validity and exercise.

##### **1. What is empirical criticism?**

Empirical criticism is based on biblical experience by which the truth can be understood, confirmed, and demonstrated, so it seeks experience in believing the truth. Empirical criticism performs along with the principles for application. Here I introduce Principles 1 and 2:

(1) Principle 1 has three articles: (a) The experience of a text follows an understanding of the textual meaning and its expectation. (b) Experience, whether it is spiritual, physical, sensory or enlightened, changes one's life and results in a witness of the truth. (c) Experiencing a biblical truth can produce a doctrine.

(2) Principle 2 also has three articles: (a) Personal experience prior to recognizing a biblical truth must be confirmed by biblical evidence. (b) Experience, whether it is spiritual, physical, sensory or enlightened, changes one's life and results in a witness of the truth. (c) Experiencing a biblical truth can produce a doctrine.

2. Is empirical criticism a proper hermeneutic of Acts? If so, why? The questions must be raised to examine the validity of empirical criticism. We will examine it in terms of genre.

(1) The genre of Acts as historical narrative (history or narrative) indicates that the whole book is full of narratives, speeches and testimonies of what was done in the life experiences of the early church.

(2) The word "history" itself indicates the actual events of the past for the people concerned who have experienced them. The book of Acts as "a history of the early church" is full of stories of how the gospel was spread out to the world by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. History basically belongs to the witness, which, apart from it, would lose its meaning.<sup>22</sup> Luke claims to have the authority of an eyewitness for his history.<sup>23</sup>

(3) A narrative is a story of interrelated events from a given place and time, and it is to communicate to the readers or demonstrate what the characters experienced. Instead of focusing on one main character, Acts includes the lives of several early church leaders. Most of the narratives center on Peter and Paul along with some treatment of Stephen and Philip.<sup>24</sup> Particularly, Paul's three missionary (plus one) narratives are quite an amazing story which covers about a half portion of the book.

---

<sup>22</sup> Marshall, Luke, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>24</sup> Klein, 418.

(4) Speech is a characteristic in Acts. Eleven speeches, which constitute about a quarter of the book, appear fascinating because through the speeches the speakers are made known in terms of personalities and the witnesses of faith in them. Nearly all the speeches mention the resurrection of Christ through the experience the witnesses had, and several of them make it the principal theme.<sup>25</sup>

(5) Testimony is a form of empirical evidence that is obtained from a witness who makes a statement or declaration of fact. Paul's testimony of his conversion experience is mentioned three times (9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:12-18), and Peter's testimony of his vision of and ministry to a gentile house is addressed three times (10:9-16; 10:28; 11:5-10). Luke met apostles and other eye-witnesses and obtained facts and evidence about Christ, Pentecost and many other events from them. Luke himself was a man of testimony for the truth.

Therefore, all of the genre in Acts are related to the experience or empirical evidence of the people concerned, so that the hermeneutical validity of empirical criticism is good enough.

### 3. How to exercise empirical criticism?

The application of empirical criticism with principles 1 and 2 is necessary to explicate the book of Acts and formulate the theology of Acts. Howard Marshall chose just one theme of salvation as the central one and regarded other themes as secondary, but I will choose the five themes of Spirit-baptism, conversion, salvation (healing, deliverance from evil, and soul-saving), witness, and mission as the main themes with equal emphasis. The theme of Spirit baptism (or Spirit-filling) comes first here, for it happens first in the book. [For this presentation I deal with the first two themes only as a brief exercise for foretaste, using Principles 1 and 2 of empirical criticism for each theme.]

#### (1) Spirit-filling on the day of Pentecost (2:1-42)

The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and disciples first on the day of Pentecost and then upon the disciples and many believers on some other occasions. Spirit-filling is an experience available to men, which is Luke's primary concern. The act of receiving the Spirit can be described as being filled for subsequent experiences, but the verb "baptize" is not used for these.<sup>26</sup>

(a) When the disciples heard from Jesus the promise of the Father, which was the baptism in the Holy Spirit, they all joined in the room in constant prayer with the anticipation of the promise. On the day of Pentecost when they were all together in prayer at one place. The Holy Spirit came down from heaven and all were filled with the Holy Spirit (2:1-4). People in the room were given an initial endowment of the Spirit to fit them for God's service (9:17) and they were inspired to make foreign utterances (4:8, 31; 13:9). This Spirit-filling was confirmed by Peter's sermon quoting Joel's prophecy (2:17-18).

(b) When they all received Spirit baptism, their lives were totally changed and empowered to be mighty witnesses of Jesus (2:1-4, 14-21; cf. 1:8). As Peter preached that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ, people were heartbroken, and asked the apostles what they had to do. Peter's reply contained two requirements: one was a call to repent, the second was to be baptized in the name of Jesus in order to receive forgiveness. The condition of the two requirements was to receive the gift of the Spirit, which was the promise to all Jews and Gentiles living in the world (2:37-39). Afterwards he invited them to be saved from this corrupt generation and baptized the people who accepted his message, and three thousand souls were saved on that day (2:40-41).

(c) The baptized believers participated in four activities (2:42). First, they put the learning of the

---

<sup>25</sup> Harrison, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Marshall, Acts, 69

doctrine (teaching) given by the apostles as the priority, whereas the other three activities were followed probably in orderly steps. Secondly, there was fellowship, the holding of a common meal or a common religious experience. Thirdly, there was breaking of bread, that is, the Lord's Supper. Fourthly, there was prayer, probably a regular one in a certain place.<sup>27</sup> What is the doctrine given by the apostles here? As in 2:38-40, we can find that there are four doctrines: (i) repentance, which is linked with being baptized as a symbol of cleansing, (ii) baptism, which is an expression of repentance, and which is related to forgiveness. (iii) the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, empowered witness, and (iv) deliverance from the corrupt generation. What is worthy to be noted is that the gift of the Holy Spirit necessitates first two doctrines as its preparation and the last as its purpose. Luke's theology is pneumatology-oriented.

## (2) The conversion of Saul (9:1-22)

Luke's concern is basically with the salvation established by the work of Jesus as an experience available to men.<sup>28</sup> Faith in Christ as the way to salvation is closely linked with the personal experience of the believer, so that he finds that it is confirmed by experience itself.<sup>29</sup> Salvation begins at one's conversion experience. Many people experienced conversion, and particularly Saul's conversion was so dramatic.

(a) Saul emerged at Jerusalem as a persecutor of the early church and the believers were all scattered around the region, except for the apostles. Still he continued to do in other regions the mission he had just accomplished. On his way to Damascus suddenly he experienced a light from heaven at noon and heard the voice of Jesus telling him that he was persecuting him. He thought that he was attacking a group of heretical adherents, but in fact he was persecuting the one who was calling him to his service. Saul encountered the risen Jesus he never knew before. So Saul asked concerning the identity of the speaker, and now he knew who he was, because Jesus identified himself.

(b) Encountering the risen Jesus with the experience (spiritual, physical, sensory and enlightened) had quite a great impact. Immediately Saul changed his life to become, even conversely, from the enemy of the church to the defender of the truth. He was chosen as the Lord's instrument for the task of bearing his name to the world including Israel. He began to fulfill his commission with the existing Christians in Damascus and preaching to the unbelieving Jews.

(c) The messages he preached at the synagogues were summed up as teaching that Jesus was the Son of God and that Jesus was Christ. The experience made him know who Christ (Messiah) was and confident to preach and prove that Jesus was the Son of God and that Jesus was the Christ. Paul now knew the significance of the Son of God and the Messiah, for he was a scholar of the Old Testament. Especially proving that Jesus is Christ was what Paul emphasized (9:22; 17:3), because he experienced him personally, so that he could understand Jesus better with his biblical knowledge about him. Luke also knows well who Christ is and thus describes: he suffered (3:18), was crucified, died (4:10), rose from the dead (2:31) to fulfill the will of God, and now he is exalted to be with the Father (2:33, 36). Now the exalted Jesus heals the sick and saves souls (4:8-12), and welcomes the saved souls (7:55-60). Jesus in the book is closely related to salvation, and so Luke's Christology is soteriological.

## 5. A Fresh Pentecostal Approach: Narrative Criticism and Empirical Criticism

My methodology of empirical criticism has just begun and needs to develop further, but it is common knowledge among us that one criticism is not good enough to deal with any book

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 37.



properly, especially the book of Acts. So I suggest two methods that can be more comprehensive and inclusive to the approach of the book. The matter is how to reconcile the two. As Kant reconciled two concepts of rationalism and empiricism with the relation between form and content respectively, I will reconcile narrative criticism and empirical criticism with the relation between form and content respectively. In other words, I will use the former for literary analysis and the latter for biblical experience. It is hoped that the result of this approach will be satisfying because with narrative criticism (form) empirical criticism (content) is clear and with empirical criticism narrative criticism is full.

Now we need to know what narrative criticism is, as above we knew what empirical criticism is. Narrative criticism is a form of literary analysis that focuses on genre (history, narrative, speech, testimony, biography, etc.), structure (setting, motif, plot, theme), characterization (protagonist, antagonist, motive), and narration (point of view, first person narration "I/we", omniscient narrator). Is narrative criticism then proper in interpreting the book of Acts? Most scholars regard the genre of Acts as history, narrative, or historical narrative, and so it would be proper to use this criticism for the exegesis of the book. More importantly, Luke the author seems to recommend it by himself. "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed" (RSV, Luke 1:1-4).

The benefits of narrative criticism are manifold. First, narrative criticism deals with the book as a unity. It is unlike historical criticism that dissecting the Gospels leads one neither to read the coherence of narrative in general, nor to appreciate the significance of the narrative world in particular. Secondly, it concentrates biblical texts for interpretation. It is unlike source criticism that analyzes the words and compares the books concerned, overlooking the meaning of the texts. Thirdly, it emphasizes the word of God and life of Jesus as well. It is unlike form criticism that focuses chiefly on Christian community in its life-setting, not being interested in the kerygma of Christ. Fourthly, it deals with the whole book in a comprehensive way with equal emphasis. It is unlike redaction criticism that is concerned with a theology as a whole, focusing chiefly on the central theme and overshadowing other important issues. So the book of Acts must be studied from the point of view of narrative criticism.

The benefits of empirical criticism are manifold. First, empirical criticism deals with the essential factors of early Christianity: Spirit baptism, conversion, salvation, the witness of the truth, mission, etc. Second, it focuses on empirical evidence based on the word of God. Thirdly, it helps to develop a rational accountability of the word of God with its verification. Fourthly, it reconciles the dichotomy between faith and reason to be balanced. Fifthly, it makes it easier for a Christian to approach the word of God without knowing traditional hermeneutics, for he or she has experienced conversion or Spirit baptism. I agree with Ervin's definition that "the Scriptures are the product of an experience with the Holy Spirit which the biblical writers describe in phenomenological language." This is particularly true of Acts.

## **Conclusion**

Having done the survey thus far, we reach these conclusions:

1. The general principle 1 in genre hermeneutic is propositional. So if an interpreter can demonstrate that "Acts is normative for Christians today, for it is related to what any given narrative was intended to teach", this hermeneutic can be useful for Pentecostal hermeneutics.
2. A holistic hermeneutic, if the hermeneutical order is changed into the suggested way, can

be useful for a formulation of Pentecostal theology.

3. Pneumatic epistemology (or pneumatic hermeneutic), instead of presenting the methodology, identifies the qualified person as a Spirit-filled one with proper education. Man is more important than method because man uses method. Pentecostal churches need a lot of this kind of person.

4. Narrative criticism is most proper for the hermeneutics of Acts in terms of literary analysis, and empirical criticism is most proper for the hermeneutics of Acts in terms of *Sitz im Leben*. Thus the combination of these two criticisms can be the hermeneutics of Acts par excellence.

5. Both narrative criticism and empirical criticism can produce the theology of Acts par excellence.

6. The theology of Acts can be regarded as a Pentecostal theology. The answers are as follows. (1) As a narrative in Acts was hardly to be expected to establish a theology, Pentecostal theology was not expected as such simply because it was a collection of historical stories or an oral tradition. (2) As historical precedents in Acts were not regarded as having normative value, Pentecostal tradition, oral or written, was not regarded as normative. (3) As it is a characteristic of Acts in that there is a theology in the speech or sermon, it is so of a Pentecostal theology. (4) As Acts is considered both history and theology after a long debate, so there is a firm ground in Acts to establish Pentecostal theology. (5) The genre of Acts is closely related to experience or empirical evidence. (6) As Spirit baptism (filling) in Acts indicates for subsequent experiences, Spirit baptism carries on even today. (7) The theology of Acts can be formulated better if empirical criticism is used as content that places a dynamic phenomenon of Christian community. (8) Pentecostal scholars affirm that the Pentecostal church today follows the tradition of the Pentecost church in Acts 2. (9) Pentecostals regard the book of Acts as a textbook of Pentecostalism, believing that the Bible is the inspired, the only infallible, and authoritative word of God.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aune, David E. *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987.

Bruce, F F. "The First Church Historian" in *Church, Word, and Spirit*. Edited. James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

Ervin, Howard M. "Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option," in *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M Ervin*. Edited. Paul Elbert. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985.

Fee, Gordon D. "Hermeneutics and Historical Precedent - a Major Problem in Pentecostal Hermeneutics," in *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M Ervin*. Edited. Paul Elbert. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985.

Harrison, Everett F. *Interpreting Acts*. Academie Books: Zondervan, 1986.

Hollenweger, Walter. "Hermeneutics: Who Interprets Scripture Correctly?" in *The Pentecostalism: Origin and Development Worldwide*. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1997.

Klein, William W. *Introduction to Bible Interpretation*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1993.

- Marshall, I Howard. *Acts*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Luke: Historian and Theologian*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.
- Menzies, W William. "The methodology of Pentecostal Theology: An Essay on Hermeneutics," in *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M Ervin*. Edited. Paul Elbert. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985.
- Petts, David. "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit: The Theological Distinctive". Edited. Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Perspectives*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998.