



COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

SCHOOL OF RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY & CLASSICS

**TITLE**

**Prophecy, Signs, and Wonders in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Apostolic  
Fathers: A Socio-Rhetorical Reading**

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*Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology*

*In the field of*

**Biblical Theology**

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### **Declaration**

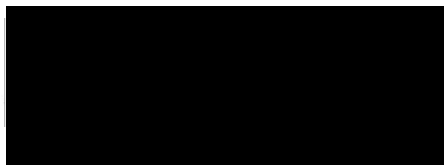
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## **Abstract**

The key research question of this work is: How the early Christian thinkers conceived of the role of the Spirit in the church, and especially the role with respect to operation of the gifts of the Spirit in prophecy, signs, and wonders. The methodology employed in this endeavour is socio-rhetorical criticism (SRC). SRC sets multiple contexts of Interpretation in dialogue with each other. It utilizes all the components of classical methods of persuasion namely ethos, pathos and logos embedded in the text and context to help us mine a more complete picture of the message of the author. It also utilizes sociological insights to help us construct reality from text, context, culture, and ideology. These multiple perspectives help us to see much more from the text than any one perspective ever could. With the help of SRC the Book of Acts of the Apostles and the Apostolic Fathers are surveyed. With respect to the Book of Acts of the Apostles the researcher will zero in on references to the operation of the Holy Spirit. Utilizing Intertexture (recitation, recontextualization and reconfiguration) to see how the author appropriates other texts and applies them to the current topic as well as social, cultural, and ideological textures in the narrative and plot structures of the text, an attempt will be made to reconstruct the attempt of the author to persuade the reader to adopt the author's point of view. It will be noted that in the Book of Acts of the Apostles, a sub-cultural relational stance (thaumaturgic) towards Paganism and Judaism (Revolutionist, utopian, conversionist, gnostic manipulation and thaumaturgic stance) was taken by the church.

Concerning the Apostolic Fathers, the researcher will utilize insights from sociology such as the conversionist, revolutionist, utopian discourses embedded in a counter-cultural relationship to the dominant culture. The researcher will then enquire as to whether Pentecost is to be viewed as a once-off historical event or whether it is to be viewed soteriological-historically utilizing Spirit-Hermeneutics as a theoretical framework. In terms of ideology, the author is an Evangelical and therefore embraces faith as an epistemic commitment that is therefore to be taken as a starting premise as all claims of ultimate authority must necessarily be taken. Finally, the insights gained above will be analyzed and prove the biblical veracity of Continuationism as not only legitimate but to be expected throughout church history.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Few will disagree with the contention that the concept of the Person and activity of the Holy Spirit in the church is important with serious theological, existential, and social implications. Theological implications are that extreme abuses perpetrated in the name of God and false hopes held out to the gullible would end or else be abated. Existentially, there will either no longer be Continuationists who imagine that they have a dynamic relationship with God, especially through glossolalia and inspired speech or else Continuationism will be normative and hopefully responsible and God-glorifying. Socially, there will be no division along the lines of Cessationism-Continuationism where churches and individual Christians are concerned. Either way, the implications are palpable, consequential, and far-reaching.

For me, this topic took on something of a significance when a well-known pastor by the name of John MacArthur wrote a book provocatively titled *Charismatic Chaos* (and another titled *Strange Fire*). In these works, he uncharitably lambasted a position I held dearly, namely that the gifts of the Holy Spirit still continue in the church from the times of the Apostles (also known as Continuationism). This plunged me into a quest for a historical-critical study of the charismatic movement from the Reformation period to date, which I undertook in my Honours research project.

There are three major feasts in the Old Testament that are prominent in the history of Israel and are seen as prophetic, as well as eschatological. They are prophetic in that they point to a future fulfilment beyond themselves, and one of the feasts is eschatological to the extent that it is seen as pointing to a crisis point in the future, ushering in the 'last days' which will be ushered in by a Messiah. These three feasts are Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Passover and Pentecost were historically fulfilled in the exodus and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai respectively (Exodus 12-13 and 19-20), and Tabernacles

was instituted historically in Leviticus 23 with a view to be celebrated in Israel after their arrival in the promised land. Passover was prophetically fulfilled in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels; it is thought to be spiritually fulfilled in the individual believer who turns to Christ for salvation. Tabernacles is seen (prophetically) to be largely eschatological and speaks of the national conversion of Israel and the second coming of Christ. Pentecost, which is seen as inaugurating the eschaton, was prophetically fulfilled in Acts chapter two verse four. It is generally accepted as extremely important and an epoch changing event which foreshadows the national repentance of Israel with the conversion of thousands of people when Peter preached in Acts chapter 2 (since it was a feast of the harvest that was anticipated during the feast of First Fruits, which was part of Passover). In this sense, Pentecost inaugurates and anticipates Tabernacles, during which the full national repentance of Israel as well as world evangelism will take place. However, there are differing Interpretations of the significance of the Pentecost event. While some see it as a purely unrepeatable historical event, others see it as having soteriological and existential implications (spiritual fulfilment) in the life of the believer of all times. Storms, for example, (Grudem; Gaffin; Saucy; Storms; Os, 1996:73) argues to the effect that Pentecost should not merely be seen as a unique historical event, but rather as the inauguration of the experiential application of blessings that it (Pentecost) was designed to procure.

The conclusion reached in that research was that there have always been efforts at restoring the church throughout church history, driven by the maxim *ecclesia semper reformanda* (The church is always reforming). It was also concluded that there is historical evidence from the Church Fathers right through to the present time of Reformed leaders who have had a category (no matter how nuanced) for the present-day activity of extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## **1.2 Motivation of the study**

The reason for studying the book of the Acts of the Apostles is that although in some sense the Apostles are unique in establishing the foundation of the church, the Acts of the Apostles was widely accepted to have been written by a person who was not himself an



Apostle (Luke) and who mentions that, in his first volume (the Gospel of Luke) he dealt with all that Jesus *began* to do and teach (Acts 1:1), leaving the obvious impression that his second volume deals with all that Jesus will *continue* to do and teach through the church of all ages (Carson; Moo, 2005:202). Since Luke's gospel narrates the story of Jesus as not only preaching but also full of prophecies and miraculous phenomena, on a *prima facie* basis, it implies continuation of the same ministry by Jesus done through the agency of his emissaries (the apostles), as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Since this was, in fact, the case, what remains to be demonstrated is whether similar ministry was done by the apostolic Fathers and then to seek to determine the purpose of such a ministry (especially miraculous phenomena) and whether the same is to be expected throughout the church ages, as intimated above.

Some, like John Macarthur, although acknowledging the Spirit's activity in the Acts of the Apostles, nevertheless see such activity as limited to the ministry of the apostles, for the main purpose of authenticating their message. In that view, the activity of the Spirit is expected to climax in Peter and Paul's ministries and then wane and wax from the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE shortly after which they ceased. Some within this larger group of Cessationists, acknowledge however that there were active miraculous phenomena even after the time of the Apostles, even though such phenomena eventually ceased sometime in the second century. The purpose of such phenomena, they assert, was mainly to secure the church in the Intervening period before the canon was widely established and accepted. This claim will be tested to see whether it holds any explanatory power of both the patristic period and to some extent to our time with respect to the activity of the Spirit.

The reason for studying the writings of the Apostolic Fathers is that they are closest in time and context to the Apostles, and we can get to decipher their understanding of the latter. Such an understanding, though not infallible, should make us stand back and take notice and not commit the 'sin' of chronological snobbery that makes us think that we can know the teachings of the Apostles better than they, just because they lived in antiquity and we in post-modern times. As persons and church leaders who ministered

after the time of the original Apostles, it may then be argued that they may serve as an example for the church of all ages.

### **1.3 Aims and objectives of the study**

The current work seeks to go to an earlier period and conduct a study of how the Apostles and the Apostolic Fathers perceived the Spirit and Spirit activity. To accomplish that task, we will study relevant sections of the Acts of the Apostles (with a view to discern the mind of the Apostles) and a handful of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers to gauge whether and how they expected the Spirit's activity in their own time. This reading will seek to establish whether there is any clue to the expected trajectory of the Spirit's activity from the time of the apostles to the church of all ages.

The key question that this research seeks to answer is how the early Christian thinkers conceived of the role of the Spirit in the church, and especially the role with respect to the operation of the gifts of the Spirit in signs, wonders and prophecy.

The sub-questions that guide this research are as follows:

1. What were cultural and religious influences of the day regarding supernatural events?
2. Do their writings offer uniquely Christian insights, or merely seek to justify current beliefs and practices?
3. How did they view the Gospels and Apostles in respect of this subject?
4. Which strands of their teaching seem profitable for post-Reformation/Enlightenment appropriation?

The objective of the study is to contribute to the conversation between Continuationists and Cessationists and to thereby contribute to the unity, theological health and soundness of the worldwide church of Christ.

## **1.4 Literature Review**

### **1.4.1 MacArthur's Position**

MacArthur makes two major contentions, namely that Charismatics have exalted personal experience over the more valid authority of biblical revelation and the error of failing to recognize that the power gifts (such as healings and working of miracles) ceased to operate in the church with the death of the Apostles. Before detailing Michael Brown's response to these charges one can already see the fault lines in the charges levelled.

He charges the modern charismatic movement with attributing the work of the devil to the Holy Spirit, condemning them as swindlers, con artists, crooks, and charlatans (MacArthur, 2013:14). He sees charismatic experiences as representing a "wholesale abandonment of the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*" (MacArthur, 2013:116).

MacArthur claims that the biblical criteria for apostleship mean that the charismatic doctrine is dead in the water. Concerning prophecy, he asserts that "giving of new revelation through living prophets in the New Testament era was intended only for the foundation of the church" (MacArthur, 2013:129) and rejects what he calls the "folly of fallible prophets" (MacArthur, 2013:105). He further insists that the New Testament gift of tongues involved the supernatural ability to speak precisely in a foreign language, while decrying the litany of fake healings and false hopes as evidence of cessation of genuine gifts.

MacArthur also says that the founders of the charismatic and word of faith movements are Charles Parham and E.W Kenyon respectively, whose characters have been proven to be besmirched and tainted with new thought principles. Charismatics are therefore "stuck with Charles Parham as the theological architect of their movement" (MacArthur, 2013:27).

Regarding the first, there is a dichotomy drawn between subjective experience and objective revelation. A natural question to ask here is whether Christians need to rank

these sources of authority in their order of plausibility, to the effect of choosing the more authoritative or reliable? Alternatively, is there a way to see these and others as different perspectives that can serve to confirm or else refute the conclusions of another perspective?

The second basis, namely that power gifts ended with the death of the Apostles, may reveal a lack of precision and sophistication in speaking about the power gifts as seen in the lives and ministries of the apostles. Is it possible that Christ and the Apostles operated with unique and unrepeatable authority and gifts, whilst also allowing for the following generations to operate under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit which is nevertheless authentic, Spirit-prompted, but not apostolic? To MacArthur, there is an unequivocal and antithetical polarity between the authority of scripture and experience and a simple but decisive cessation of spiritual gifts with the death of the last apostle. Any claim to having an experience of the *charismata* is therefore dismissed *a priori* as a non-starter that has failed the objective test of the scriptural doctrine.

#### **1.4.2 MacArthur in conversation with Michael Brown**

Brown accuses MacArthur of wilful ignorance and of genetic fallacy and the error of guilt by association. Brown (who is ethnically Jewish) asks rhetorically what conclusion one was to come to concerning the Reformation Movement, if they were to use MacArthur's arguments with respect to Martin Luther. He concludes that the fundamental doctrines and beliefs must be evaluated by the scriptures, and when judging others, the principle of refraining from comparing the best things about one's ideology to the worst things about someone else's must be remembered (Brown, 2014:90).

In *Authentic Fire*, Michael Brown details and then rebuts MacArthur's six arguments for Cessationism, as summarized below (Brown, 2014:287-299). MacArthur's position is stated first under the heading and then rebutted:

#### **1.4.2.1 The unique role of miracles**

There are three periods of history during which most miracles in the Bible occurred. They took place under the ministries of Moses and Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha, and in the time of Jesus and the Apostles. The reason, contends MacArthur, is that those periods coincide with a time of increased revelation and the need to authenticate the prophets/messengers.

As Andrew Wilson has pointed out, however, some of the miracles of Moses and Joshua were not primarily to authenticate the prophet, but to serve some other purpose. Examples are the exodus, the sun standing still for Joshua, Hezekiah's healing, and the prophecies of Samuel, David, and all the writing prophets (Brown, 2014:288). Strongstad agrees concerning the periods in the Old Testament where there was charismatic activity of the Spirit, but adds two observations, to wit, that there is no continuity between these periods regarding the experience of Spirit's activity and that the descriptions of the experience of the Spirit's activity are typically programmatic (Strongstad, 1984:39). Experiential continuity is asserted by those who point to the prophecy of Joel concerning charismata in the 'last days' seen as a continuum. This position would be formidable in favour of the Cessationists if the 'last days' referred to the first century alone. The programmatic aspect is common to the ministers that MacArthur mentions, as well as to Pentecost, which was meant for empowerment to preach the gospel from Jerusalem, through to Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. Again, this position would be devastating to Continuationists if the purpose of empowerment was terminated by the Spirit at the completion of the witness to the 'ends of the earth', namely reaching Rome with the proclamation of the gospel. If, however, the program is to witness to the 'ends of the earth', which includes every nation on earth, the argument remains unpersuasive at best and can be dismissed at worst! At any rate, Wilson has persuasively rejected the very premise of MacArthur's argument as a non-starter.

#### **1.4.2.2 The end of the gift of Apostleship**

Since the gifts of an Apostle like the twelve and Paul (those referred to in Ephesians chapter 2 and 4) have ceased without a clear statement in Scripture that they would, then

other gifts (those referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10) might cease without a clear statement in Scripture indicating this.

However, Cessationism refers to the discontinuation of the spiritual gifts referred to in first Corinthians, so whatever one may believe about the ministry gifts referred to in Ephesians has nothing to do with whether a person is a Cessasionist or not (Brown, 2014:290). In other words, the Cessasionist seeks to use an argument for the cessation of one set of gifts and then use that conclusion to argue for the cessation of a different and unrelated set of gifts. In so doing, Brown is daring the Cessationists to detail their objection to the continuation of the ministry gifts referred to in the book of Ephesians, rather than merely relying on their arguments for the cessation of spiritual gifts mentioned in first Corinthians and merely applying those arguments to the latter text.

#### **1.4.2.3 The foundational nature of the New Testament Apostles and Prophets**

The assertion here is that Ephesians chapter 2 says that the Apostles and Prophets were the foundation of the church and once the foundation is laid, they are no longer needed.

This argument depends upon the supposition that all the Apostles and Prophets serve a foundational role in the church. But Romans chapter 12 verse 6 and First Corinthians chapter 12 to 14 describe a role of prophecy in the church that is not foundational (Brown, 2014:292). The point here again is that one can hold to the opinion that certain gifts mentioned in Ephesians chapter 2 have ceased while also holding that the gifts of First Corinthians chapters 12 to 14 continue. Again, assertion alone will not do. Instead, actual exegesis to support one's position has to be done to support the assertion.

#### **1.4.2.4 The nature of miraculous gifts**

The claim here has two components. Firstly, the charismatic gifts that are claimed today by Charismatics are almost completely unlike their New Testament counterparts. Secondly, New Testament prophecy is equivalent to Old Testament prophecy. However, Wayne Grudem has successfully refuted this claim (Brown, 2014:293). That refutation

states that New Testament prophecy is inferior to Old Testament prophecy and that New Testament prophecy needs to be tested against the inspired biblical test.

#### **1.4.2.5 The testimony of church history**

MacArthur claims the following in this regard: 1. That the gifts waned during Paul's own lifetime, as seen in his letters, 2. That the gifts waned during the New Testament period, as evidenced in Hebrews 2 verse 3 and 4, 3. The gifts ceased after the apostolic period, as attested by church leaders throughout history.

As Brown points out, however, the fact that tongues are not mentioned in nine of Paul's letters is indicative not of the decline or absence of this gift but rather of whether or not the subject was controversial. In any event, why limit this to the Pauline letters? The Book of Revelation is probably the last to be written and it is more full of charismatic occurrences than any other book in the New Testament.

As for Hebrews chapter 2 verse 3 to 4, it may be noted that there are two categories of supernatural activity (namely signs, wonders, and various miracles on the one hand and gifts of the Holy Spirit on the other) and two categories of people (namely the apostles and believers who witnessed the apostolic signs). The text reads as follows: ... "This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders, and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (Heb 2:3b-4 ESV). The fact that the signs, wonders, and miracles, as was characteristic of apostolic ministry, may have ceased with their passing, does not mean that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have also ceased to operate in the lives of the believers who were witnesses to apostolic signs.

As for the argument that gifts have disappeared in church history, Andrew Wilson is again insightful. He says that the argument that asserts that since something gradually disappeared from history and therefore is invalid, should strike any five *sola* Protestant as "providing several hostages to fortune" (Brown, 2014:298). Wilson means that since MacArthur locates authority for faith and practice in scripture alone (*sola scriptura*), he

ought to be consistent and not argue on the basis of testimony from history, even if that testimony favours his position. To do otherwise is to hold your Interlocutor to one standard and yourself to a contrary standard, which is special pleading and therefore ultimately self-defeating.

#### **1.4.2.6 The sufficiency of scripture**

The idea that the Spirit speaks through the inspired Word only, is controverted by the abundance of testimony of God speaking directly to mankind. “The completed canon of scripture gives us general teachings that equip every believer, and they are sufficient for that purpose. But they do not give personal instructions with regards to matters of individual import” (Brown, 2014:299). There is abundance of testimony both from the scriptures and from history of people being led by the Spirit without reference to the Bible. An example of this is John Calvin feeling led by the Spirit to stay in Geneva after William Farel warned him against leaving under the threat of a curse from God.

#### **1.4.3 MacArthur in conversation with Frank Viola**

Viola (who is not a Charismatic/Pentecostal) decries MacArthur’s lack of objectivity in dealing with this subject. Unlike when MacArthur wrote *The Gospel According to Jesus*, which Viola found to have qualities that reflect the mind of an objective theologian, *Charismatic Chaos* and *Strange Fire* are both “exegetically incorrect on a number of levels...”. Furthermore, Viola complains that there is no text on which MacArthur relies for his assertion that the gifts have ceased, other than 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verses 8 to 13.

Viola’s criticism of MacArthur may be grouped under three main headings: the concept of Revelation, the nature of prophecy, and the nature of the relationship between truth and experience.

##### **1.4.3.1 Misunderstanding revelation**

MacArthur argues that if one believes that prophecy and revelation continue today, “he or she must believe that personal prophecy is equal in authority to the Bible” (Viola,



2013:36). While agreeing with MacArthur that God does not give ongoing revelation today in the sense of disclosing new doctrines that are not based on scripture, Viola lambasts his misunderstanding and confusion of revelation and illumination. Because scripture is prophecy that has passed the test, it is the touchstone against which prophecy must be tested. Such tested prophecy, however, though equal in truth with the scriptures, is nonetheless not equal in authority with the canon of scripture.

Viola quotes a slew of prophecies in the New Testament to show that they never usurped the authority of the Old Testament scriptures nor contradicted them. Examples are the following:

- Ananias and Saphira caught for lying to the apostles in Acts 5 verse 1 to 10;
- Sinner's heart exposed before the Lord in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 24 to 25;
- Agabus's prophecy about future famine in Acts chapter 11 verse 28 to 30;
- Peter sent to Cornelius's house in Acts chapter 10 verse 20.

#### **1.4.3.2 The nature of prophecy**

Having equated prophecy with scripture, MacArthur then forces the Continuationist into a situation where she must also likewise affirm that the canon is not closed, since revelation continues to be given by the so-called prophets. Viola retorts by saying that “the revelation that God grants today illumines the meaning of what He has already spoken in the past or it is divine insight whereby the Lord shows a person the past, the present, or the future, all for His glory” (Viola, 2013:38). In other words, although prophetic utterances may be true, they may not for that reason be used to introduce new authoritative doctrinal revelations.

The problem here is that the Cessationist has created a concept of New Testament prophecy that simply does not accord with how the New Testament itself regarded prophecy. The New Testament gift of prophecy may be defined as “a regulated message or report in human words usually made to the gathered believers based on a spontaneous personal revelation from the Holy Spirit for the purpose of edification, encouragement,

consolation, conviction, or guidance, but not necessarily free from a mixture of human error, and thus needing assessment on the basis of apostolic (biblical) teaching and mature spiritual wisdom” (Piper, 1990).

Support for John Piper’s definition may be found in the following texts:

- 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 19 to 20 exhorts believers to not quench the Spirit by despising prophecies. Instead, they are to test everything and accept what is good. Likewise, 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 29 exhorts believers to ‘weigh’ what was said by the prophets. Paul’s rhetorical question later on in verse 36, where he asks whether the word of God originated with them, and his assertion that his writing is the Lord’s command also indicate to the reader that he distinguishes between prophecy from the Corinthians and the Lord’s command from him as an apostle.
- Acts chapter 21 indicates to us that prophecy by non-apostles could be interpreted fallibly in merely human words.
- Philippians chapter 3 verse 15 and Ephesians chapter 1 verse 17 show that believers should rely on maturity and illumination by the Spirit to clarify apostolic doctrine.

The above indicates that prophecy and ‘revelations’ are not only on par with scripture but that they do not threaten the finality of the canon as asserted by Cessationists.

#### **1.4.3.3 Relationship between truth and experience**

Viola here says that in *Charismatic Chaos*, MacArthur makes three observations, namely that 1) Experience is the basis for the charismatic belief system, 2) that experience must be sought after, instead of biblical truth, and 3) that experiences cannot be judged because they validate themselves. Viola responds to this accusation by saying that in fact “The Bible stresses both in precept and example, that spiritual experience is the essence of the Christian life” (Viola, 2013:34). One could add that superb Christian theology that comes

from the likes of Jonathan Edwards, for example, in his treatise *The Religious Affections*, bears testimony to this.

In turn, Viola chastises MacArthur for his undue reliance on the power of the intellect to discern spiritual things. He further charges MacArthur with what he terms ‘textualism’, which he says is based on the same premise as the old rationalism. Viola asserts “philosophical rationalism is honest enough to reject the Bible flatly. Theological rationalism rejects it while pretending to accept it and in so doing puts out its own eyes” (Viola, 2013:44).

Viola concludes by saying that the primary focus in the Christian walk, then, is neither experience nor knowledge, but relationship.

## **1.5 Problem statement**

Were charismata such as prophecy, signs, and wonders given to the church only in the period of revelation? Are they meant to serve any other purpose other than authentication of the message and the messenger? Are there any clues as to the operation of these gifts outside the period of revelation, especially in the time of the Apostolic Fathers? What is the most appropriate theoretical and methodological approach to establish the veracity of such gifts in the period under review and how can one establish the expected trajectory for the rest of the church age? Answers to these questions delineate the problem that this enquiry seeks to unravel.

## **1.6 Proposed methodology**

The theoretical framework that provides the basis for data analysis and Interpretation of this study is *Spirit Hermeneutics*. Ideologically, the author is located in the Evangelical ecclesio-theological traditional background. Socio-rhetorical criticism will be especially utilized as a lens by which a composite picture of the role of the Spirit in the life of the church is hoped to be shown. It will be argued that historical criticism, which is how previous research on this topic has been conducted in the past, could only draw partial, if contradictory, insights into this all-important topic. Historical criticism is best suited to

investigate the world behind the text; socio-rhetorical criticism looks at the world of the text, and *Spirit Hermeneutics* is best suited to look at the world in front of the text.

The limitation with respect to this endeavour is that the study looks at the Acts of the Apostles and the Apostolic Fathers (Christian theologians and leaders among the church Fathers who lived in the first and second centuries AD, who are believed to have known some of the Twelve Apostles personally or are known to have been significantly influenced by them). These are, in turn, enquired into to the extent that they deal with the Spirit's activity in the lives of individuals as well as the early church corporately. In other words, this study does not conduct a thorough-going exegesis of the entire Book of Acts nor the entirety of the works of the Apostolic Fathers. It only concerns itself with specific references to the activity of the Spirit in the Book of Acts and the extant works of the Apostolic Fathers.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, arguments for Cessationism, which became the spark to the researcher for undertaking this journey of discovery, as well as the responses to these initial arguments were listed briefly. As discovered, these arguments ranged from the perceived uniqueness of miracles and their limited function in authenticating both the messenger and the message. They further allude to the testimony of church history, which is purported to prove the cessation of miracles, and finally rest on the supposed error on the part of charismatics who read their particular experiences into the biblical text. A brief rebuttal of MacArthur's position by Michael Brown is also set out. Furthermore, the reason for studying the Acts of the Apostles and of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers were detailed. With regards to the former, the purpose is merely to acknowledge the miraculous phenomena in the Acts of the Apostles and to seek to establish the purpose thereof. The reason for studying the latter is to establish evidence of the Spirit's activity in the lives of the successors to the Apostles and seek to draw conclusions for this fact or lack thereof.

In the following chapter we will seek to detail the methodological approach underpinning this work. Before outlining this methodology, namely socio-rhetorical criticism, we will first outline the chapters of this research project. These follow briefly here:

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In the Introduction, arguments for Cessationism and their preliminary rebuttal are laid out. Following that, the reasons for studying the Acts of the Apostles and of the Apostolic Fathers are laid out namely, whether Acts is to be seen as normative for the whole church age or whether it is a once-off unique and unrepeatable period and whether there is evidence of continuation of the gifts of the Spirit in the times of the Apostolic Fathers respectively. The motivation, aims and objectives, problem statement, and literature review are also done.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Socio-rhetorical criticism and Spirit Hermeneutics**

In this chapter, the salient features of socio-rhetorical criticism (SRC) are explored, such as philosophical underpinnings, broad outline of SRC, and insights from other disciplines such as sociology are explored. It also seeks to demonstrate: 1. multi-perspectivism is the single biggest advantage of this approach and 2. the justification of SRC as a methodological approach for this work, while comparing and contrasting it with other approaches, such as the historical-critical approach.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Prophecy, Signs, Wonders in the Acts of the Apostles**

The Acts of the Apostles will be surveyed, utilizing Inner texture, and more especially repetitive and narrational texture, as features of Inner texture. Inter texture will be utilized to discern how the author appropriates other texts and applies them (to this end recitation, recontextualization and reconfiguration as specific tools of Inter-texture will be used). Social, cultural, and ideological textures will then be employed to explore how the

narrative and plot structure are intended to persuade the reader to adopt the point of view of the author.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Activity of the Holy Spirit in the extant writings of the Apostolic Fathers**

Socio-cultural and ideological textures will be employed to understand and unpack the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, in order to understand the role of the Spirit. Christianity will be seen as a sub-culture, in different ways to both Judaism and broader pagan Roman culture, both of which will be seen as dominant cultures.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Findings concerning the place of the Holy Spirit in the church today**

Having noted the foundational imperative of the Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles, it will here be sought to establish whether Pentecost is merely a once-off historical event, or whether the Spirit is expected to act in the life of the church throughout history. It will be preliminarily concluded that the open-ended nature of the Acts of the Apostles and the incomplete witness to the whole world, read from the vantage point of spirit hermeneutics and readings from the global church, suggest that the Spirit's activity, including miraculous manifestations, is expected as a natural trajectory throughout the church ages.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

It will be concluded that the theme of empowerment is all pervasive when utilizing various perspectives. With regards to Inner texture, empowerment is seen through prophetic and miraculous activity. Regarding Inter texture, empowerment is seen in the Old Testament. Luke-Acts seeks to universalize it and not limit it to national Israel. Socio-cultural and ideological textures are demonstrated to use divine frame-of-reference and the open-ended finale of the Acts of the Apostles, as well as the incomplete witness to the world to show that Spirit empowerment is expected to continue until the work is completed at the coming of Christ.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Socio-rhetorical criticism and Spirit Hermeneutics**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, Socio-rhetorical criticism and Spirit hermeneutics will be defined, compared, and contrasted with related concepts, outlined with respect to their components and traced regarding their history. When contrasted with historical-critical methods, it will be noted that scholars who rely on the latter, although coming to vastly different conclusions, nevertheless utilize the same Interpretive and analytical grid. This grid, it will be shown, is limited in its capacity to see all that can be seen, both in the text and in the society in which the text was produced.

The input of other disciplines and the justification of Socio-rhetorical criticism in connection with this work will also be recognized. Robbins and Hur, who will mostly be relied on in unpacking the suitability and efficiency of Socio-rhetorical criticism, will be profiled with a purpose of demonstrating how SRC is likely to reveal more because of its predisposition to utilize insights from a multiplicity of relevant disciplines. Spirit hermeneutics will then be utilized to get insights concerning the world in front of the text.

#### **2.2 Socio-rhetorical criticism**

The concepts of rhetoric, socio-rhetorical criticism and Spirit Hermeneutics will now be outlined more broadly. In the next chapter, more specific attention will be placed on the bearing of socio-rhetorical criticism on Acts of the Apostles and Apostolic Fathers.

Ernest van Eck observes that “the hallmark of the historical-critical methods could be regarded as its emphasis on social context, the social conditioning and the social *Sitz im Leben* of biblical documents” (van Eck, 2001:594). He further suggests that “what is lacking at the basis of historical-critical method is a process for ascertaining not only what the socio-historical situation of a given tradition or text was, but also how and why these circumstances gave rise to the production of biblical texts.” In other words,

historical-critical methods limit themselves to the text and the world behind the text under investigation, but do not go deeper in analyzing how the author appropriates other texts in the production of the text under consideration and the reason or reasons for such production of that particular (new) biblical text. This omission or limitation can handicap the reader's ability to 'see' how the author may be developing or re-Interpreting a particular concept in line with a particular 'agenda' that she might be wishing to promote or advance at the particular historical point in time. This leaves the reader that much more non-the-wiser in appreciating the author's situation, style and intention.

This limitation may be the reason why leading scholars on the subject of the Holy Spirit such as Dunn, Menzies, Turner and Fee all land on mutually contradictory positions with respect to the role of the Spirit in the New Testament church. Hur points out that "although these scholars express different Interpretations, they nevertheless employ the same methodology" (Hur, 2001:22). The methodology that they use, continues Hur, is generally speaking the historical-critical methodology. More specifically, Dunn utilizes the author's thought and intention (which has a possibility of intentional fallacy). Menzies prefers the redactional-critical method and Turner leans on both the redactional-critical and traditional methods. The results of these methodologies is not necessarily that one is right and the other wrong, but rather that one reveals an aspect of reality fuller than another.

As Hur explains, "different methodological approaches to exegetical study may be likened to a set of keys on a ring. The various keys open different doors and grant access to different types of insights." He then concludes that the wise Biblical exegete will want to have as full a set of keys as possible so that she may be able to have access to as wide an access to as much as may be embedded in the type of literature she is studying (Hur, 2001:26).

It is in the context of this deficiency that Socio-rhetorical criticism has emerged as a "systematic approach that sets multiple contexts of Interpretation in dialogue with one another" (Robbins, 1996:9). This approach "combines diachronic analysis as a



methodological approach (historical development) and a synchronic analysis as a method which is primarily concerned with enabling the text itself to yield the depth and riches of its meaning” (Hur, 2001:34). Synchronic analysis, as the name suggests, looks at events that follow each other closely in time (*kronos*) whereas diachronic refers to events that take place across different times and/or epochs. The prefixes ‘*syn*’ and ‘*dia*’ in greek mean ‘together or with’, and ‘across or through’, respectively. Synchronic analysis gives us insights into events as they unfolded in time, whereas diachronic analysis aids us in tracking the development of events or concepts through different epochs and contexts. The challenge, according to Robbins, “is to use these dialogues and activities to explore the relation of texts, society, culture and history at the same time as we are negotiating our understanding of the relation of Christianity and Christian belief to society, culture and history.” The present author understands this to mean that a comprehensive basis for understanding, analyzing and Interpreting ancient texts must first enter into a dialectic between the world of the *real author* and the *implied author* (meaning the actual historical author and the author as discerned in the text itself) and that of the *implied reader* and the *real reader* (meaning the reader as anticipated in the text itself, and the historical reader to whom the text was directed). This must be done before attempting to apply these insights into the world of the reader (such as ourselves), who is located outside the first century Mediterranean world. It is our contention here that using socio-rhetorical criticism is more suited to erect a more composite picture than other methodologies. The reason being that SRC, unlike for example, the historical-critical method which is ill-fitted for that purpose, has a capacity to unearth the original context of a text as well as the context of the production of new (in this case New Testament) texts more fully.

This will, however, not be sufficient to settle the debate. Our Interest in biblical texts is not simply what they teach about ancient history and ideas; rather there should be an expectation on our part to share the kind of spiritual experience and relationship with God that we discover in scripture. As Crain Keener suggests, “if we are to be faithful to scripture *qua* scripture, we must not only explain what it meant to first-century hearers but also learn from its models” (Keener, 2016:36). Spirit Hermeneutics recognizes in

scripture the promise and prevalence of divine activity and expects the Spirit's presence and pedagogy as one reads scripture.

### **2.2.1 Historical and philosophical roots of rhetoric**

First, we need to explore the concept of rhetoric in a more general sense before seeking to understand it in the arena of Socio-rhetorical criticism. Socio-rhetorical criticism seeks to understand texts by discerning the rhetorical structure of a text. But this begs the question, what is rhetoric? To understand it, there is a need to trace it as far back as is usefully possible.

Rhetoric was already known in New Testament times as a result of Hellenization, popularized as it was by the works of Aristotle. Smidt (1994:231) reminds us that the three ways of persuasion which govern the concrete presentation of an oration in classical rhetoric are *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. He continues to explain that by using *ethos*, the author/speaker attempted to present a favourable image of himself to the readers/listeners; that the *logos* contained the requirements for logical deliberation and that *pathos* appealed to the reader's emotion. In other words, the classical rhetorician utilized *ethos* to bridge the gap between himself or herself and the reader/hearer, thus establishing common ground between the two. She then utilized *logos* to appeal to the mind of the hearer or reader and then finally to use *pathos* to appeal to the emotions of the recipient. All these may be used in one speech or in different speeches, depending on the audience. For example, *pathos* may be used in speaking to the unsophisticated masses, *logos* in a court of law and *ethos* in parliament.

Although the term 'rhetoric' in its classical Aristotelian sense refers simply to the art of persuasion, this definition has become blurred over the years. Wendland (1994:194) reminds us that although the primary components of classical rhetoric are source, receptor, and message; the modern offshoot of Classical Rhetorical method pays special attention to the receptors. In other words, there is a shift away from speaker orientation (source) to the effects of rhetorical discourse upon the audience. Decock, for example, states that "While Classical philosophy placed the objective basis of truth in the outer

world of things and the Kantian idealism rooted objectivity in the categories of the mind shared by all men, the sociological perspective recognizes objectivity in neither of these. For the world which confronts us and the world which we are, are in a dialectical relationship and keep on affecting one another” Decock (1993:263-264). Elsewhere he opines that “within the premodern horizon, reason is seen as the human ability to be receptive to God and to all reality... whereas within the modern horizon reason is not so much receptive but actively constitutes the object of thought” (Decock 2005:71).

As a result, classical approaches to understanding any text assumed a kind of objectivity of the written words, based on the understanding of particular conventions that controlled how texts were produced. Kantian inspired approaches, assuming a more complex relationship between the source of a text and the receiver of a text, would combine objective and subjective approaches, whereas the post-modern approach would rely a lot more on recipient-focused approaches of decoding a text.

It has also been asserted that reality may be defined as a “quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition” and knowledge as “the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966:13). The same sociologists (Berger and Luckmann) also assert that the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality. Again, one can sense a tension between these approaches to reality, one regarding reality as ‘objective’ while at the same time regarding our conception of reality as ‘a social construct.’

The approach of this study is not to view subjectivity, objectivity and even knowledge defined as ‘certitude’ as mutually exclusive philosophical positions. To be sure, the view of the present writer is that there is indeed objective reality outside of us, but since none of us can experience that reality immediately and comprehensively (except God), it is important to hold to some kind of a dialectic tension between objectivity and subjectivity. To get around this dilemma, a more comprehensive ‘multiperspectivism’ that Frame (more about this below) espouses will be adopted. In so doing, the insights of various

perspectives will be appreciated and integrated into a single visual-conceptual frame. The task of the enquirer, with regard to texts (especially ancient ones), will then be to develop approaches that will enable her to test their validity or appropriateness, before coming to a warranted conclusion about the meaning of any particular text or discourse.

Frame rejects both the ‘subjectivism’ of Schleiermacher and the ‘objectivism’ of Charles Hodge in favor of ‘multiperspectivism’ on the basis of the Creator-creature distinctions between God and man (Frame 1987: 96-104). Creator-creature distinctive refers to the infinity of God as Creator and the finiteness of man with respect to his capacity for knowledge, understanding and all aspects of our limited being. By perspective, however, he does not mean that everyone has their own view about the world and that nobody’s view is any more or less legitimate than anyone else’s. He affirms the objectivity of God’s word but suggests that since we are creatures and therefore limited, and God is the Creator and unlimited, it takes multiple perspectives to get to know God and that knowledge of God is analogical rather than univocal. To say that the knowledge of God is analogical rather than univocal, is to suggest that language itself is inadequate to fully communicate some of the attributes of God that are incommunicable, such as omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. As such these statements tend to be explained in negative rather than positive terms such as ‘not limited to time and space’ with regards to omnipresence and eternity, and ‘not limited in power and potentiality’ with reference to omnipotence. Analogical statements can be true (in a sense that they correspond to reality) without being precise in every respect. As the Interpreters of the bible, theologians should therefore be content to understand certain things in less precise but nevertheless true terms. It is this realization that has tended to lead to church dogmas being stated in the form of affirmations and denials rather than scientifically precise statements.

Kuhn observes that “what a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon what his previous visual conceptual experience has taught him to see” (Kuhn, 2012:116). He further asserts that “though the world does not change with a change of paradigm, the scientist afterwards works in a different world” (Kuhn, 2012:124). Again, this does not

mean that the world has actually changed, but rather that the perceiver's view of it has. It is on that basis that it is hoped to be proven that with the use of different perspectives towards this task, one can be enabled to see things that are present in the text, but which are nevertheless unable to be seen if one utilizes a key which is simply not fitted to open insights into such a 'world'. The reason for the failure to see is, not the thing looked at as such, but rather the inadequacy of the observer's previous conceptual experience to see all of what is staring at them in the thing observed. This challenge, it is hoped, will be met in adopting socio-rhetorical Interpretation, and Spirit Hermeneutics as a theoretical framework within which the task of analyzing the data presented here and applying it will be undertaken.

Another benefit of utilizing Socio-rhetorical criticism is its relationship to other disciplines. Rhetorical analysis, asserts Van Der Heever, "makes use of data from various fields be it linguistic (Inner texture), literary comparative (Inter texture), social and historical (Social and cultural texture), and the ideology of the text (ideological texture)" (Heever, 1999:343). With such a visual-conceptual framework, the task of unlocking the secrets of ancient texts in a more comprehensive way is possible simply because there is a larger repertoire of disciplines to discover the riches that may be embedded in the text.

The prefix 'socio'- in the term 'socio-rhetorical', indicates that this approach intends to bring the rich resources of modern anthropology and sociology in contexts of both textual production and textual reception to bear in analyzing any particular text. This is important because texts are not wooden but are a product of an author who is a product of his culture and context with its presuppositions and idiosyncrasies, which may not be immediately obvious to a reader who is located outside of the context of the production of such a text.

The term 'rhetorical' is related to the word 'orator', a person who speaks a message to others and hence refers to the way in which language is a means of communication between people. In an oral based culture such as the first century, speakers developed elaborate oratorical skills to communicate with their hearers. As Robbins succinctly puts

it, “Rhetorical argument, social act, and religious belief Intertwine in them (that is, in texts like the New Testament) like threads and yarn in a richly textured tapestry” (Robbins, 1996:22). This metaphor acknowledges the multifaceted nature of speech, which eventually became written texts, that will be appreciated in the course of this study.

### **2.2.2 Broad outline of classical rhetoric**

The broad outline of classical rhetoric will now be discussed. Wendland (1994:200-202) outlines as follows the major features of classical rhetorical criticism, following in the footsteps of Aristotle and George Kennedy:

- Delineate a passage
- Establish the rhetorical situation
- Identify the specific issue (*stasis*) under consideration along with the particular manner (*species*) of rhetoric e.g., judicial, deliberative, or epideictic.
- Analyze the text in terms of *inventio* (proofs and topics), *ethos* (character), *pathos* (emotions), or *logos* (modes of reasoning).
- Arrangement (disposition) e.g., *exordium* (introduction), *narratio* (initial statement), *propositio* (thesis), *probatio* (main body of the argument), and *peroratio* (conclusion).
- Matters of style (*elocutio*) e.g., diction, repetition, syntax etc.
- A proper analysis concludes with a careful evaluation of the overall effectiveness of a rhetorical process utilized in the text.

Before diving deep into the manner in which SRC further develops the above, it is important to do a brief overview of the above.

#### **2.2.2.1 Delineate a passage**

Words form sentences, and sentences which are in relationship to one another form paragraphs, “the paragraph in turn dictates the boundaries within which the sentences and words should be understood” (Wolvaardt, 1999:49). Therefore the first task of an

Interpreter is to deliarte the boundaries of a passage, which then becomes the basic unit of analysis. It goes without saying that how one chooses to delineate a passage may impact to a greater or a lesser extent on the meaning of the text and indeed the entire book.

#### **2.2.2.2 Establish the rhetorical situation**

Here the Interpreter needs to establish the context of communication, since words alone can at best express only possibilities of meaning. It is only with additional information of the situation in which a word is communicated and the context of the previous and following sentences, that the meaning of the sentence becomes clear to the reader as the author intended it to be. An example may clarify this. Suppose a person speaks or writes of a 'table'. Without the context of the communication, the reader/hearer may have a different conception of that word and may completely misunderstand what is meant. A simple appreciation of context, such as a carpenter or workshop on the one hand and parliament on the other where motions are tabled, will soon clarify the meaning of the author or speaker.

#### **2.2.2.3 Identify the specific issue under consideration along with the particular manner of rhetoric**

The above outline is important because, even though most New Testament writings are letters, because the majority of people were illiterate, those letters were written not so much to be read by the end user, but rather to be read to them in the context of a church service. They were therefore written in the style of a speech, rather than a typical letter. The task of an exegete is therefore to seek to determine any of the above elements of rhetoric in the structure of the passage or discourse, in order to appreciate the full meaning of the original author.

#### **2.2.2.4 Analysis**

Locating the genre of the communication in reference to the intended audience is crucial in undertaking the task of understanding the author's original intention from the use of particular rhetorical tools.

#### **2.2.2.5 Arrangement**

In analyzing a passage, having delineated a passage it is important to identify the introduction, topic, thesis, main argument, and conclusion, if one is to properly understand the author.

#### **2.2.2.6 Style**

Stylistic features, such as parallelism and chiasm, can point to the meaning and structure of a text. Therefore, language used, repetition, metaphors and synecdoche can be very important in deciphering the meaning of a text.

#### **2.2.2.7 Evaluation**

The overall evaluation will be based on proper analysis of all of the above.

### **2.2.3 Robbins outline of Socio-rhetorical criticism**

The broad outline that Robbins has outlined will now be used as a basis for our discussion regarding Socio-rhetorical criticism. The reason is that he has done the groundbreaking seminal work on this topic and all the writings on this subject that the author has had access to agree with him on the basic outline of SRC.

Robbins' Socio-rhetorical criticism has four textures, namely Inner texture, Inter texture, Socio-Cultural texture and Ideological texture<sup>1</sup> (see figure 1.1 below). Inner texture exists because every reading has a subtext which it is the duty of the exegete to detect and factor in to her explication of a text.

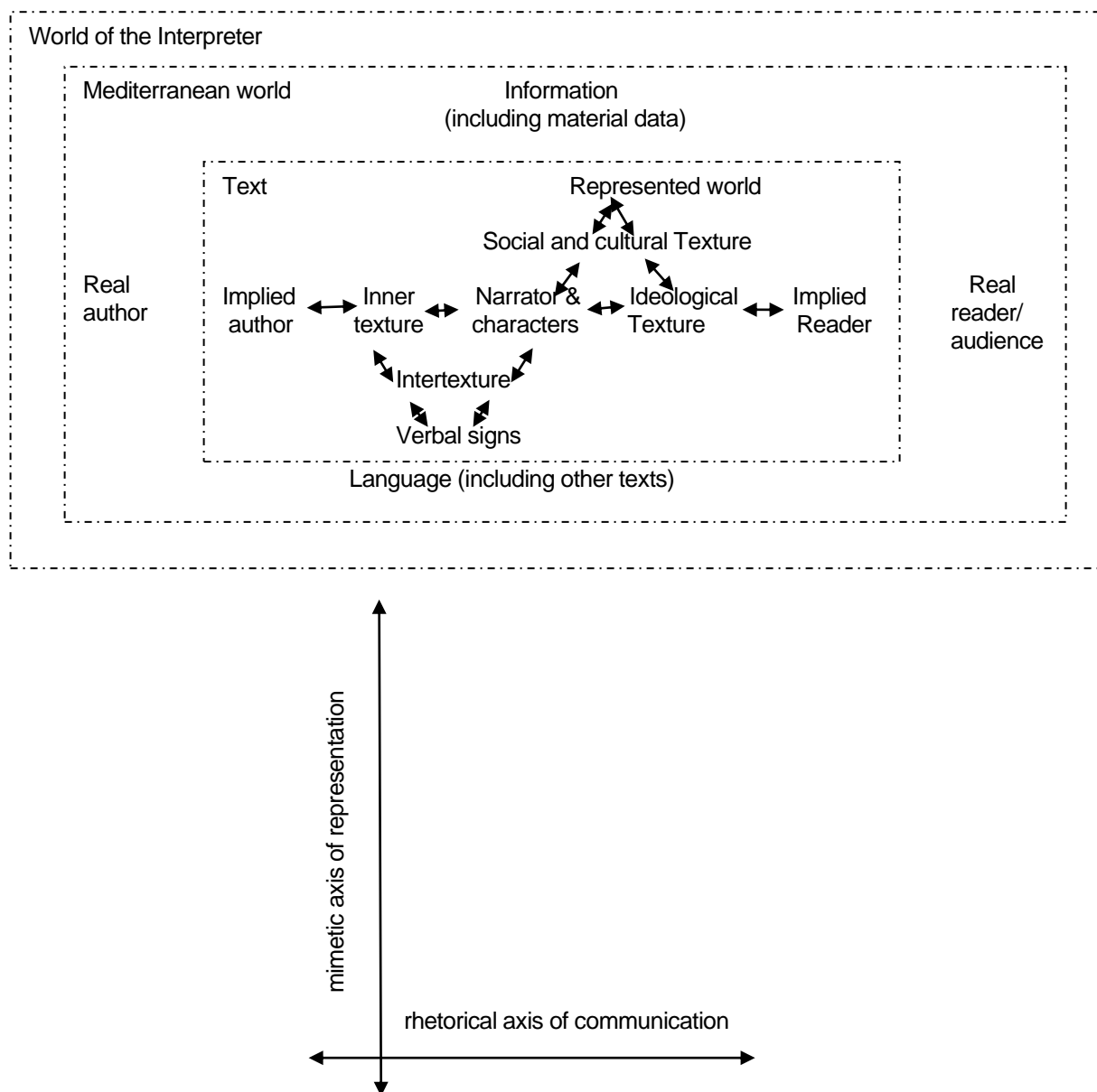
Inter-texture has relevance because every comparison has boundaries which are defined by the different contexts of the text and must be taken into consideration.



Social and Cultural texture has relevance because every meaning has a context and Ideological texture is important because every theology has and impacts on politics and therefore needs to be understood.

Subtext refers to the theme in the mind of the author as expressed in the world of the text; boundaries refer to the porous relationship between the world of the Interpreter and the Mediterranean world of both the author and reader.

Figure 1 Social Rhetorical model of textual communication. (Robbins, 1996:21)



### **2.2.3.1 Inner Texture**

According to Robbins, “Inner texture uses six sets of strategies within a boundary of a text delineated by an Interpreter for the purpose of creating an environment for analysis, namely (1) repetitive texture; (2) progressive texture; (3) opening-middle-closing texture; (4) narrational texture; (5) argumentative texture; and (6) sensory-aesthetic texture” (Robbins, 1996:66). As is evident, there is similarity with the broad outline of rhetoric as discussed above.

### **2.2.3.2 Inter Texture**

With respect to Intertexture, says Robbins, “the Interpreter works in the area between the author and the text, not between the text and the reader” (Robbins, 1996:111). It concerns itself with the act or process of the production of texts and not *per se* as a finished product or as received. In other words, the Interpreter needs to be cognizant of the fact that the author sometimes utilizes texts, which stand in relation to other texts in the act of manufacturing the text at hand.

Robbins asserts that “the Intertexture in a text covers a spectrum that includes: (1) Oral-scribal Intertexture; (2) historical Intertexture; (3) social Intertexture; and (4) cultural Intertexture” (Robbins, 1996:111). “Intertexture concerns the relation of data in the text to phenomena outside the text” such as other texts, and social as well as cultural aspects referred to or echoed in the text. To understand this, one needs only to think of a text under consideration as a circle and the use of other texts, historical, social, and cultural backgrounds also as circles. These circles are only to be considered to the extent that they intersect with one another and the extent of that intersection. Only the areas of intersection are to be considered as important for the Interpreter. However, insights from the ever-growing circle as disciplines develop and mature are to be carefully studied and examined for the possible light they may shed on a text under consideration.

Inter texture may be the single biggest difference between Socio-rhetorical criticism and historical-critical methods of biblical Interpretation.

### **2.2.3.3 Social and Cultural Texture**

Robbins opines that “this arena differs from the arena of Intertexture by its use of anthropological and sociological theory to explore the social and cultural nature of the voices in the text under investigation” (Robbins, 1996:159). He identifies seven major responses to the world produced by different types of religious discourse, namely:

- 1) “Conversionist
- 2) Revolutionist
- 3) Introversionist
- 4) Gnostic Manipulationist
- 5) Thaumaturgic
- 6) Reformist and
- 7) Utopian” (Robbins, 1996:162-165)

These will be explored in the following chapters, where the Book of Acts of the Apostles and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers will be studied in some detail.

### **2.2.3.4 Ideological Texture**

Quoting Eagleton, Robbins defines ideology as follows: “From a socio-rhetorical perspective ideological is the ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structure and power relations of the society we live in ... those modes of feeling, valuing perceiving and believing, which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and production of social power” (Robbins, 1996:36). Readers should therefore be aware of the ideological point(s) of view that are evoked, advanced, and developed by the text as well as their own ideological point(s) of view. At present, says Robbins, “the spectrum of ideology for socio-rhetorical criticism occurs in four special locations: (1) in texts; (2) in authoritative traditions of Interpretation; (3) in intellectual discourse; and (4) in individuals and groups”.

## **2.3 Spirit Hermeneutics**

It will now be inquired into Spirit Hermeneutics under five broad headings, namely 1) What it is, 2) Contextual readings of scripture 3) Reading experientially, 4) Global readings, and finally 5) Blind Spots.

### **2.3.1 Definition**

In Joel chapter 2, quoted and recontextualized by Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, we read of God's promise to pour out his Spirit on all flesh, and that sons and daughters will prophecy. Since this promise is said to be fulfilled by Jesus at his coronation at the right hand of the Father after his ascension, the obvious implication is that the resurrection is not to be seen merely as a historical data, but rather as his exaltation to the right hand of the Father from whence he sent his Spirit so that we may experience his presence. We therefore need to read the Bible dynamically as something that speaks to us about God's actions in our world, and time not just in the past.

### **2.3.2 Contextual readings of Scripture**

Is scripture written in some magical code that suspends its culture's normal rules of genre, and communication? It appears that the modern Interpreter, no less than the text itself, stands in a given historical context and tradition. Just as a dialogue with other cultures can enable one to adjust one's starting assumptions, so does engagement with scripture. This means that contemporary experiences, and points of view, can enable one to hear the biblical text in ways that resonate with biblical values.

Craig quotes Bartholomew as saying, "The text as the instantiation of a communication event comes into existence at a certain historical point: in all its synchronicity, it is crucial that this historical aspect of the text be taken seriously in Interpretation" (Keener, 2016:126). An example of this kind of contextualization in scripture itself is found in Acts chapter 15 verses 14 to 18, and 28. There the church was confronted with a contextual difficulty of the conversion and inclusion of non-Jews in the community of the church. It is Interesting that Jude is reported to have recontextualized Amos chapter 9

verse 11 to 13 and applied it to the situation confronting the church and attributed this application to the Holy Spirit.

### **2.3.3 Reading Experientially**

Reading scripture experientially does not mean that charismatics simply read Scripture in light of their experience. What is rather meant is that one's experiences are developed in light of scripture. It must be acknowledged, however, that such purely subjective experiential readings can mislead the reader in the same way as a purely rational way of reading can lead such a reader to not embrace its demands, thus also missing its function as scripture.

People with experiences that are similar to those in scripture often resonate more closely with scripture than those who do not have such experiences. Messianic Jews, for example, may hear certain emphases in Scripture compared with some others who do not share that heritage. Likewise, those who have experienced miraculous phenomena often find such phenomena more plausible than those who have not.

Keener therefore observes that “Peter explained the Pentecost experience in light of Scripture and Scripture in light of the Pentecost experience” (Keener, 2016:64).

### **2.3.4 Global Readings**

The entire Bible has a cultural context and therefore it offers us models for contextualization. Key characters in the Bible also offer us even more direct models for Spirit-led contextualization. As Paul says in first Corinthians chapter 9 verse 19 to 23, he became all things to all men, in order that he might win some to Christ.

The context of Acts chapter 2 is also instructive here. Keener observes that many scholars understand Acts 2 as a reversal of the Babel story and believes that Luke patterned his narrative after it. “Such an approach would certainly fit Luke's theme of mission transcending cultural and linguistic barriers” (Keener, 2016:84). And yet, we also hear the text more clearly when we listen to one another because Christians in some cultures

tend to hear certain gospel imperatives more clearly in line with the original context than those in other cultures. This welcoming of other ‘voices’ helps to keep our own biases in check. “But the ideal is that once at the table, dialogue can help all of us to hear more clearly not simply ourselves... but the biblical text and how it speaks to our various situations” (Keener, 2016:111).

### **2.3.5 Blind Spots**

Some will object that reader-response criticisms such as Tri-polar hermeneutics, Feminist readings, Liberation theology, and now Spirit-hermeneutics and the like locate meanings in the heads of Interpretive communities. The Interpretations are therefore viewed as political acts, that prescribe meaning to its community, devoid of any need to locate the author’s original intention.

Another critique of Spirit Hermeneutics is that it results in a hermeneutic circle. The logic here operates in this fashion: premise 1) I read scripture from the Spirit-hermeneutic position; 2) scripture was read using Spirit-hermeneutic by the apostles, therefore 3) Scripture ought to be read Spirit-hermeneutically. This means that readers of this sort seek to justify their experiences rather than measure their experiences against scripture. This approach says Keener is “inconsistent with a basic impulse in early Pentecostal tradition itself: the rejection of church tradition” (Keener, 2016:129).

However, this is not what Spirit Hermeneutics invites us to do at all. The new dynamic is not a dismissal of the old textual one: it simply seeks to submit to the Spirit’s leading and to affirm application by analogy, as the Spirit leads. Says Keener “ The canon provides us the opportunity and the responsibility to submit our hearing the Sprit to what the tested prophetic tradition has heard, and thus to grow in hearing correctly” (Keener, 2016:142).

To some degree, the underlying semantic question regarding determination of meaning, is what we mean by the term ‘meaning’. Our goal in Interpretation shapes the approach we will take in that endeavor. Some Interpreters have argued that the meaning of scripture is determined only by the reader’s context. Keener quotes John Winkoff as contending that

“scripture is the final authority only if the author’s original intended meaning as opposed to the perspectives of the readers, is determinative for all other possible valid meanings...” (Keener, 2016:163).

Exegesis in the usual sense focusses on the horizon of the original text; reader-oriented approaches focus on the present horizon. If the goal is merely fusing the horizons, says Keener, “insufficient objective distance remains to hear the text as something other than mirroring one’s thoughts”. The objective of hermeneutics is to “mirror the two horizons without obliterating either of them.” He then concludes that “The Spirit can guide us in exploring the gap between them, in applying the principles of the text to our lives and communities” (Keener, 2016:279).

## **2.4 Conclusion**

It has so far been seen that a proper study of a book which seems to self-identify as normative text for the whole of the church-age (as seen in Luke’s ‘began’ and ‘continue’ as quoted above) confronts us with a need for a new skillset aimed at a construction of reality represented by the texts in question. Kuhn teaches that all major progress that has taken place in the scientific arena has taken what he terms ‘revolutions’. He asserts that “a revolution changes the domain, changes even the very language in which we speak about some aspect of nature” (Kuhn, 2012:25). He later defines paradigms as something that “stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on, shared by the members of a given community. On the other hand, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science” (Kuhn, 2012:163).

In the field of theology and literary criticism, socio-rhetorical criticism is one such paradigm that can help answer questions that have long eluded the best minds, not for want of intelligence but simply because of inadequate paradigms that were incapable of yielding new insights into complex theological questions.

It has been illustrated that the Historical critical methods are best suited to investigate the world behind the text; Socio-rhetorical criticism enables the researcher to investigate the world of the text; and Spirit Hermeneutics is a theoretical framework that enables one to apply the text to the world in front of the text.

In the following chapter, relevant texts of the Book of Acts of the Apostles will be studied, utilizing tools availed by Socio-rhetorical Interpretation to show how the author of the book of Acts of the Apostles appropriates other texts and applies them for his own purposes.



## **Chapter 3**

# **Prophecy, Signs, and Wonders in the Book of Acts of the Apostles**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, specific texts in the book of Acts of the Apostles will be surveyed, wherein it records the activity of the Holy Spirit with respect to prophecy, signs, and wonders. Utilizing Inner texture (and more specifically the repetitive and narrational textures), references to the Spirit in the actual text of the book of Acts will also be surveyed. Turning to Inter texture (where reliance will mostly be on recitation, recontextualization, and reconfiguration under oral-scribal Inter-texture), it will be discerned how the author appropriates other texts and applies them to his treatment of the current topic. Finally, the author's utilization of social, cultural, and ideological textures in the narrative and plot structure will be explored to discern how the author sought to persuade the reader to adopt his point of view.

### **3.2 Acts of the Apostles**

#### **3.2.1 Inner Texture**

The Inner texture of a text appears primarily among the implied author, the narrator, and the characters, who work together to communicate a message (Robbins, 1996:43). Robbins distinguishes between 'real author' and 'implied author'. He defines real authors as 'historical persons' whereas implied authors "can be known through manifestations of their own expressions in texts" (Robbins, 1996:21). Since the implied author, narrator and characters are all implicit only in the text itself, Inner texture does not concern itself with language or information outside the text, that is, the world of the real author and the real reader (both of whom are embedded in particular social contexts).

Below, using Inner texture of the text, the text of the Book of Acts of the Apostles will be looked at to glean what it may teach concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

#### **3.2.1.1 Repetitive texture**

One of the most striking repetitive features of Acts of the Apostles is its sheer mentioning of the word ‘Spirit’ The outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost is arguably a key event in the book of Acts. According to Hur, ‘*pneuma*’ occurs 17 times in Luke and 57 times in Acts. In the same way that there is no life in the physical body apart from the spirit, there seems to be no life in the church or in creation apart from the Holy Spirit who in some way animates creation (Hur, 2001:14). According to De Smidt (1994:232), “the course of history from the resurrection to the Second coming of Christ is one of absolute victory for the kingdom of God and since the Spirit is absolutely key in this work, the outpouring on the Day of Pentecost was a sign of this victory in the world.” The repetitive mentioning of the Spirit at key moments in the narrative is therefore not accidental, but calculated to draw the attention of the reader to the Spirit as the source and instrument of the victorious gospel proclaimed by the Spirit-appointed and empowered witnesses.

He also suggests that ‘*en pneumati*’ in itself “constituted an aspect of the church’s living in the age of eschatological fulfilment” and thereby the Spirit is said to “orientate the church’s life towards the parousia” (De Smidt, 1994:241). Suggit agrees, and says that “just as Mary was promised that the Holy Spirit and the power (*dunamis*) of the Most High would overshadow her (Luke 1 vs 35), so the Apostles are promised that they will receive power (*dunamis*) when the Holy Spirit comes upon them (Acts 1 vs 8)” (Suggit, 1992:39). This point is impossible to exaggerate, as the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the foundation building through the Apostles appointed by Christ through the leading of the Spirit are absolutely indispensable to the Great Commission.

Of course the mere mentioning of the Holy Spirit does not automatically imply its (or more accurately, His) importance. As Meredith asserts “Not the frequency of the references to the Holy Spirit, but the foundational imperative of the Spirit to the narrative, his presence and

continuing leadership underlying the entire account, is the final measure of the significance of the Holy Spirit for the structure of the book” (Meredith, 2015:19).

The Spirit is clearly in charge of the church in the opening chapters. For example, He imparts inspiration and the gift of prophecy; plays a leading role in the appointment of the apostles and leads the way in mission work, including mission work among the Gentiles. Bruce says simply “in all the book there is nothing which is unrelated to the Holy Spirit” (Bruce, 1956:30). Again the statement is not hyperbolic but is literally true; the Spirit plays a crucial role at every turn and nothing happens without his leading and empowerment.

Carson and Moo judge that, based on Luke’s own emphases, he may have preferred a title such as “‘The Acts of the Holy Spirit’ for this book as opposed to the Acts of the Apostles” (Carson and Moo, 2005:285). They see the book as structured to fulfil Jesus’ command to the apostles that they be his witnesses “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8, ESV).

In summary, we can therefore conclude that in terms of the repetitive texture of the text of Acts of the Apostles, Pentecost is not only a key event but is a veritable sign of victory that also orientated the church towards Parousia.

#### **3.2.1.2 Narrational texture**

Peter is the main character in the first half of the Book of Acts and is often referenced to be in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria (chapters 1 to 12), and Paul is the main character in the second half of the book and is instrumental in taking the gospel from Syria to Rome (chapters 13 to 28).

Each of these major sections can be subdivided further into three parts which are marked off by key summary statements meant to shed light on the role of the Holy Spirit. In relation to Peter there is:

- (a) “And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7);

(b) “So, the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied” (Acts 9:31).

(c) “But the word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 12:24).

Regarding Paul:

(a) “So, the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily” (Acts 16:5).

(b) “So, the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily” (Acts 19:20).

(c) “And he lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered” (Acts 28:31) <sup>2</sup> (see figure 2.1).

The table below summarizes the key texts in the ministries of Peter and Paul as well as the Spirit’s activity and purpose in those texts with a view to showing a high-level synopsis of the activity of the Spirit in the Book of Acts.

**Figure 2**

**Peter and Paul in the Book of Acts**

Text	Referent	Theme	Spirit
1:1 – 6:7	Foundation of the church	Jerusalem	Spirit’s activity
<b>Summary</b>	“And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”		2:4 Prophecy, Boldness
6:8 – 9:31	Wider horizons for the church	Judea, Samaria	
<b>Summary</b>	“So, the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied.”		Chapter 8 The work of Philip and of Simon
9:32 –	Peter & First Gentile convert	Antioch	

12:24			
<b>Summary</b>	“But the word of God grew and multiplied”		10; 11 Boldness, Power. Samaritans, Simon, Ethiopian, Cornelius
12:25 – 16:5	Paul turns to the Gentiles	Asia Minor	
<b>Summary</b>	“So, the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”		13; 15;16 First Missionary Journey, Prophecy Spirit’s leading
16:6 – 19:20	Further penetration into the Gentile world	Europe & Ephesus	
<b>Summary</b>	“So, the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.”		19
19:21 – 28:31	Extension of church to Rome		John’s disciples
<b>Summary</b>	“And he lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered.”		20; 21; 28 Prophet Agabus, Prophecy; Revelation

Without doubt, the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts chapter two is meant by the implied author to be a pivotal moment in history. Firstly, the description of the coming of the Spirit upon the disciples is in regard to time (suddenly) and origin (from heaven). According to Hur (Hur, 2001:155), “this shows that the long anticipated event originates from God.” The external appearance of the Spirit as wind, fire, and possibly a dove is unprecedented in the Old Testament and also critically important. Although scholars dispute the significance of relating the dove to the Spirit, it can be said that the dove represents a new creation (recalling Genesis one verse two) as well as a new covenant (echoing Noah’s dove in Genesis chapter eight). Fire is often related to a theophany; wind may be associated with the Spirit, therefore implying an overwhelming and mysterious power coming upon them. Strongstad agrees, seeing as he does, that “wind and fire are reminiscent of the exodus

narrative in that the Lord is said to have led the nation out of Egypt”, “going before them in a pillar of fire by night.” It is also recorded that “he sent a strong east wind all night to sweep the sea back” (Strongstad, 1984:96). He, however, denies that these phenomena attest to a new exodus, but rather to a theophany, demonstrating that God was present and active.

‘Divided tongues’ seems to be related to speaking in other languages and therefore alludes to the coming of the Spirit as related to world-wide mission originating from among the Jews. There is, therefore, in the event of Pentecost, an illustration of a sudden, God-initiated, Christ-revealing, new-covenant ratifying, new creation initiating, exodus-like moment, that imposes an imperative for the proclamation of this Good News to the whole world in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The rest of the narrative records miraculous phenomena which seem to be at the service of the gospel advance from Jerusalem to Rome. These phenomena are a mixture of prophecy, healings, extraordinary occurrences, liberation from prison, and exorcisms in both ministries of the apostles which serve to advance the gospel despite great opposition and trials, as illustrated in the above summary statements. It is important to note at this stage that how the book of Acts is viewed and Interpreted is going to be of critical importance to our ability to draw significant conclusions for reading it. If it is seen as a unique historical record, nothing will turn on what has been observed above, as most scholars agree with the book as generally historically accurate. However, if it is read dynamically, as something that speaks to us about how God acts in the world and in our time, and not only in the past, it will be Interpreted experientially, eschatologically, and missionally. The results of such a reading then will be that the principle of command, example, and necessary inference, will enable a lot to turn on the observation that the Acts narrative is intended to demonstrate the gospel advance from Jerusalem to Rome, accompanied by signs and miracles. The principles of command, example, and necessary inference means that whatever is commanded, set forth as an example, or is recorded in such a way that the reader can reasonably infer that the record is intended to be a norm, may be taken as warranted belief and practice for the church of all ages. Some have argued that the purposes of God must never be sought from historical parts of scripture, which are merely descriptive, but rather from the didactic parts of scripture, which

are prescriptive. From this perspective, what Paul teaches, for example in the epistle to the Corinthians, must take precedence to whatever might be learnt from Luke-Acts. Strongstad rejects this artificial dichotomy between descriptive and didactic texts. Citing second Timothy chapter three verse sixteen to seventeen and Romans chapter fifteen verse four, he demonstrates that all scripture is profitable for teaching and that “whatever was written in the Old Testament was written for our instruction” (Strongstad, 1984:23). Reading from a Spirit Hermeneutics vantage point, believers today are to be viewed as part of the narrative of salvation history, a view which though post-canonical, suggests a need for power to complete the mission commenced by the apostles.

In summary, we have seen that in terms of the narrational texture, Peter and Paul are the main characters. The parallelism between Peter and Paul in the Acts narrative, as Bruce affirms, is meant to indicate the author’s intention to defend Paul’s apostolic dignity and equality with Peter (Bruce, 1956:33).

It may also be said that the Holy Spirit is also a main and round personal character, as nothing happens without Him in Acts. The Spirit also functions as God’s onstage representative and provides narrative-reliability for the reader (Hur, 2001:30). The Spirit is represented as inaugurating a new creation and a new covenant and as inconceivably powerful. This is illustrated by the use of the most powerful and impersonal forces of nature such as fire, wind, and water used metaphorically to refer to the Spirit in Acts chapter two. As has been noted, the narrative moves from Jerusalem to Rome and ends in an open-ended manner.

### **3.2.2 Inter Texture**

Intertextuality arose when some Interpreters observed that not only are author and reader involved in the writing and reading of texts, but other texts play a decisive role and that every text is a rewriting of other texts, making it an Intertextual activity (Robbins, 1996:30). Therefore, to investigate and conduct a close reading of one aspect of a text thoroughly calls for comparison between the text under investigation and other texts.

Intertextual investigation also “analyzes and Interprets the dynamics of recitation, recontextualization and reconfiguration when different sources, traditions, redaction and amplification stand in relation to one another” (Robbins, 1996:33). Recitation, Robbins continues, “is the presentation of speech or narrative or both, either from oral or written tradition, in words identical to or different from those the person has received” (Robbins, 1996:118). He continues to say that recitation may omit or add some words, conjunctions, and qualifying phrases with words both abbreviated or rearranged for rhetorical purposes. So recitation is a citation of material, usually known or assumed to be known to the implied reader, and which may be altered in some way in line with the communication context of the implied author.

Recontextualization as it stands is in contrast to recitation. It quotes from biblical texts without mentioning that the quoted words are taken from some other text. This may be due to the assumption by the author that the cited material is known to the reader.

Reconfiguration, on the other hand, refers to the restructuring of an antecedent tradition (Robbins, 1996:122). In the New Testament, this seems to be done on the basis of the Apostles’ assumption that they were the authorized spokespersons and authoritative Interpreters of the Old Testament in line with the teachings of Christ. For example, Jesus demonstrates his understanding that he is the authoritative Interpreter of the Old Testament in Matthew chapter five verses twenty one to forty eight. In those verses, he deals with a range of issues ranging from anger, to retaliation against one’s enemies which were dealt with in the law of the Old Testament and the traditions of the Jews as contained in the Talmud and other traditions. Introducing these with a refrain ‘you have heard that it was said... but I say’, and concluding with an authoritative Interpretation of the written or oral tradition under the said topic.

According to Marshall, “it is clear that for the most part Luke has followed the Septuagint (LXX), making appropriate changes to accommodate the material in his narrative and to bring out its significance more clearly, but also that there is some evidence of use of other textual traditions, whether by Luke himself or by the sources that he is using” (Beale & Carson,



2007:1071). Marshall goes on to elaborate how scripture is used and Interpreted by Luke and classifies it as follows: history; promise and fulfilment; pattern and type; principles; characterization and allegorization (Beale & Carson, 2007:1076).

Regarding history for example, Marshall asserts that the first Christians were conscious of being involved in a new act of divine redemption, comparable with the exodus from Egypt. It is important to note that the Jews of the first century were conscious of the absence of prophetic inspiration in Judaism and were looking forward to a future restoration of prophecy in Israel.

Strongstad quotes from Baruch (2 Baruch 85:3) and Josephus (Against Apion 1:4) and demonstrates that prophecy had ceased with the last Old Testament prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). This was because of “the failure of the exact succession of the prophets” (Strongstad, 1984:55). It was precisely this recognition of cessation of the prophetic gifts that spurred them on to look forward to the restoration of prophecy. For example, claims Strongstad, as part of the purification of the temple, which Judas Maccabeus had just recaptured from the Syrians, the priests tore down the alter and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill “until a prophet should come to tell them what to do with them” (Strongstad, 1984:52). He further insists that “we should Interpret Luke-Acts against this background of the Old Testament record of the prophetic hope of the coming Messiah. Hope for a people who would be both Spirit annointed and Spirit empowered... (Strongstad, 1984:61).

Marshall affirms that the major theme running through Acts is that of the new exodus in which the first exodus is seen through the lens of Isaiah, where the new exodus foreseen in Isaiah takes place in the life of the church (Beale & Carson, 2007:1087).

Marshall also identifies various subthemes in the “Isaianic new-exodus program namely: the reconstitution of Israel; the ingathering of the exiles; the community of the Spirit; the rebuilding of the Davidic kingdom; repentance and turning to the Lord and the inclusion of the outcasts.” He notes, however, that “Luke goes beyond Isaiah and transforms his vision

regarding the relationship of Jews and Gentiles. The tension in Isaiah, between universalism and nationalism is removed in Acts” (Beale & Carson, 2007:1088). Whereas Isaiah sees Israel as the people of God who are to be gathered from the ends of the earth, Luke reInterprets Isaiah to include the Gentiles in the people of God and sees Christ as the servant of God who brings in both Jews and Gentiles, instead of the Jews being the light of the Gentiles.

In the final assessment Luke’s text, where he utilizes Inter-texture, recalls the outside texts as models to articulate his own understanding not simply as causes of his understanding.

### **3.2.2.1 Quotations from the Old Testament in the Book of Acts**

#### **Acts Chapter 1**

verse 1 – 2

Luke’s quotations of and allusions to the Old Testament in the book of Acts is enlightening in as far as it shows us that he seems to understand God’s covenantal promises as fulfilled in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ and the church. An example of this is a possible link between Jesus being ‘taken up’ (*anelēmphthē*) (Acts 1:2) to heaven with Elijah being ‘taken up’ (2 Kings 2:11) to heaven in a whirlwind in the sight of Elisha, his appointed successor who proceeded to act as a prophet capable of mighty works. In both cases an anointed servant authorizes and empowers his successor with a view to having the latter continue the words and deeds of the former through divine enablement. “The idea in the book of Acts being that God is doing something similar, albeit significantly different in the departure of Jesus and the subsequent empowerment of His disciples” (Fee, 1994:1107). By this transfer of the Spirit therefore, the disciples become the heirs and successors to the earthly charismatic ministry of Jesus. This ‘transfer’ motif will be more and more significant when Inter texture is taken into consideration. This is an example of recontextualization in that the author does not inform the reader that he is quoting from the Old Testament and then goes on to use the allusion for his own rhetorical purposes in a different context from that of the antecedent tradition.

verse 8

The use of ‘comes upon you’ (*eperchomai*) to describe the arrival of the Spirit on the disciples has a parallel in Isaiah thirty-two verse fifteen, in the passage that describes the promise of the transformation of the natural world and the inauguration of God’s new era of justice and prosperity for his people. “Other passages confirm that the gift of the Spirit is an indication of the arrival of the new era promised for the last days when God will establish his king, who will reign in righteousness (Isaiah 32:1; Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28-29)” (Beale & Carson, 2007:1092). This again is recontextualization for the same reasons given above, namely that the source is not acknowledged explicitly.

The purpose of recontextualization in these two cases may be to indicate the new exodus and the constitution of the new Israel (which unlike its historical counterpart is composed of Jews and Gentiles), characterized by the presence of and empowerment by the Spirit on God in a way that both fulfills and expands the promises of God in the Old Testament.

Confirmation of the point may come from another phrase in the same verse, in which the disciples were to be witnesses ‘to the end of the earth’. The identical phrase occurs in Isaiah forty-nine verse six where the mission of the servant of Yahweh is to be ‘a light for the Gentiles, so that you may be for salvation to the end of the earth’. This verse is quoted explicitly in Acts chapter thirteen verse forty-seven. “The precise wording is actually found five times in the LXX and is not recorded elsewhere. In this context it then becomes likely that ‘you will be my witnesses’ should be seen as echoing or paralleling the frequent references to Isaiah’s hearers in their role as the Lord’s servant acting as witnesses to him” (Beale & Carson, 2007:1093). The theme of witness is prominent throughout Acts, being applied to Peter and his colleagues and to Paul.

## **Acts Chapter 2**

verse 1

The occasion of the coming of the Spirit is the day of Pentecost, otherwise known as the feast of weeks. In the Old Testament it was a celebration of the wheat harvest. It was associated with the renewal of the covenant made with Noah and then with Moses and regarded as the day when the law was given at Sinai. The historical inauguration of Pentecost no doubt

marked and changed Israel forever. The question here is how the prophetic and spiritual fulfillment are expected to impact on the people of God.

verse 2

Fire accompanied the theophany at Sinai. The descent of the Spirit on the people and their consequent speech has a model in Numbers chapter eleven verse twenty-five where the Lord came down in a cloud and took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on seventy of the elders of Israel, causing them to prophesy. “It was understood in later Judaism as having an eschatological fulfillment and was linked with Joel which was understood as its specific fulfillment (Midrash Psalm 14:6)” (Beale & Carson, 2007:1100).

Peter’s appropriation of this text indicates that he sees Pentecost as the eschatological fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. The ‘seventy elders’ who received the Spirit that came upon Moses are the 120 Jews who were present in the upper room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. But the Lord did even more as prophesied by Joel in line with Moses’ wish that “...all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!” (Numbers 11:29). This ‘empowerment’ motif will also take on more and more significance when considered under Inter texture in the quest to understand the New Testament appropriation of this motif.

verse 17-21

This verse is a quotation of Joel chapter two verse twenty-eight to verse thirty-two. A major difference is the replacement of ‘afterwards’ (*meta tauta*) in the LXX with the phrase ‘in the last days’ (*en tais eschatais hēmerais*). This is an example of reconfiguration, where there is an intention of showing how the coming of Christ and subsequently of the Spirit indicated a new era in redemptive history. Marshall believes that “the intention of the change is to emphasize that the events of Pentecost do belong to the activity of God in the last days in the scheme of promise and fulfilment” (Beale & Carson, 2007:1106). The author of Acts shows an unblushing sense of freedom to change the text to suit his rhetorical purpose. This he seems to do openly, speaking as he does, to people who are not ignorant of the text he is quoting and even citing it. Peter uses the ‘this is that’ principle to show that the phenomenon observed was

a fulfillment of the promise given by God through the prophet Joel. ‘This’, asserts Strongstad, refers to ‘the phenomena of wind and fire and more particularly the disciples’ speaking with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance’. And ‘that’ refers to the “ancient oracle of Joel predicting the outpouring of the Spirit in the age of restoration” (Strongstad, 1984:92). What will become of significance here is whether the fulfillment of promise will be limited to the first century in a once-for-all sense or whether this age of restoration will cover the entire church age.

The language of ‘wonders in the heavens above’ is one associated with theophany, especially with the judgement on the day of the Lord. A further observation is that the theophanic language is particularly associated with the description of the giving of the law at mount Sinai. The expectation is that the readers should understand that nothing short of eschatological fulfilment has been inaugurated by the Pentecost event and the restoration of all things is imminent.

## **Acts Chapter 6**

verse 7

The verbs ‘grew’ (*auxanō*) and ‘multiplied’ (*plēthynō*) are used in Acts chapter seven verse seventeen with the single subject of the people of Israel in Egypt, using wording based on Exodus chapter one verse seven. In Acts chapter twelve verse twenty-four the same phrase is used with reference to the word of God in connection with the growth and spread of the Christian mission. Here the two verbs are given separate subjects: the word of God grew, and the number of disciples multiplied, and this indicates more clearly what Luke means in chapter twelve verse twenty-four and chapter nineteen verse twenty. “Thus, there is some parallel between the growth of the people of God at the time of the exodus and the growth of the number of disciples at the time of the new exodus: the new factor in the latter case is the powerful effects of the preaching” (Beale & Carson, 2007:1149).

The rhetorical use of reconfiguration here is to show both promise and fulfilment, but also to highlight continuity and discontinuity. Continuity is referring to multiplication of the people of God despite unfavorable conditions. Discontinuity is pointing to inclusion of the Gentiles in

the people of God, as well as to the dynamic effect of preaching and Spirit-empowerment, as factors in this growth and expansion of the people of God.

## **Acts Chapter 9**

verses 32-43

The story of Peter's resuscitation of Tabitha contains one or two similarities to the stories of Elijah and Elisha. It would be difficult to avoid the impression that the typology seen to exist between Elijah/Elisha and Jesus is now extended to cover the followers of Jesus, who continue to do mighty works in the same way that he did.

It will be remembered that in First Kings chapter seventeen verse twenty-one to verse twenty-four Elijah the prophet brought the widow of Zarephath's son back to life after praying and stretching himself on him. He then delivered the son now alive to his mother. Elisha similarly prayed for and brought the Shunammite woman's son back to life and asked the mother to pick her son up in Second Kings chapter four verse thirty-four to thirty-seven. Jesus likewise raised the widow's son back to life and gave the boy, confused but alive, back to his mother. Seeing a similar miracle, this time performed by Peter, seems to point to the continuation of miracles that Jesus performed by his disciples in the same way. The reason is that there was a transference of power from Elijah to Elisha, allowing the latter to perform twice as many miracles as the former.

Strongstad (1984:92-94) sees these five factors in Joel's prophecy:

- "First, he sees the gift of the Spirit as eschatological (in the last days).
- Secondly, the gift of the Spirit is prophetic and as such the disciples constitute a prophetic community.
- Thirdly, the gift of the Spirit is universal (on all flesh).
- Fourthly, the gift of the Spirit is attested by signs and wonders. The first two being unique, namely wind and fire, and the last one continuing to accompany subsequent Spirit baptisms, namely speaking in tongues.

- Fifthly, Pentecost is a great and glorious day of salvation, therefore, it is not the day of the Lord that brings judgement.”

In summary, it has been noted that insights from Inter texture enables us to grasp how the author of the Book of Acts of the Apostles reconciles how God’s covenantal promises given in the Old Testament to the people of Israel are fulfilled in Jesus and the church. For example, by appropriating the phrase ‘taken up’ concerning Jesus, the author expects his hearers to remember Elijah who was likewise ‘taken up’ and the double portion of his spirit given to Elisha, that he might do even greater works that he himself had done. In the same manner, ‘comes upon you’ in reference to the arrival of the Spirit, is calculated to conjure up memories of the Spirit ‘poured upon us’ in Isaiah chapter thirty-two verse fifteen. The point being to indicate the introduction of a new era of righteousness under a new king. Witness to ‘the end of the earth’ in Acts chapter thirteen verse forty-seven is also appropriated from Isaiah chapter forty-nine verse six to show the fulfilment of the Lord’s servant in that text by Jesus and the church who now act as God’s witnesses to the nations.

Many other themes and subthemes in the Old Testament such as the Feast of Pentecost, the theophany at Sinai, descent of the Spirit and the consequent speech in the book of Numbers, growth and multiplication of the people of God in the book of Exodus are all likewise shown to be fulfilled in the ‘last days’ prophesied by Joel but now fulfilled in the person and ministry of Christ, as well as in the church.

### **3.2.3 Socio-cultural and Ideological Texture in Acts**

According to Robbins “the social and cultural texture of a text concerns the dynamics of ‘voice’ as they function among the narrator and the characters in texts” (Robbins, 1996:34).

In addition, elucidates Robbins, “analysis of the social and cultural texture of texts focusses on the full range of rhetorical topics in the text rather than only the four topics of traditional literary criticism – metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony” (Robbins, 1996:34). “In contrast to the kind of Intertextual analysis that textualizes culture, society and history, social

and cultural analysis invites the full resources of the social sciences into the environment of exegetical Interpretation”.

An example of this is narrative theory of character, which utilizes sociological resources to determine various responses to the outer world as well as an understanding of the various cultures in society.

With regards to narrative theory, “Abrams defines the literary term ‘character’ as persons presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are Interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral, dispositional and emotional qualities that are expressed in what they say – dialogue and by what they do – the action” (Hur, 2001:115). Rimmon-Kenan’s analysis of characterization consists of two basic types of indicators of character in a text namely ‘direct definition’ and ‘indirect presentation’, along with a reinforcement of characterization as ‘analogy’. This means that the author may invest certain characters with particular moral, or emotional, qualities that induce the reader to be either well disposed to or unsympathetic to such a character. Supernatural entities such as angels and other beings may be presented as characters and likewise endowed with particular qualities to aid the particular rhetorical purpose of the author.

Hur, for example, considers the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts as a character because he is portrayed as ‘person-like’. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit, like God, possesses some traits that ordinary people cannot share, that is, person unlikeness... “Hence the Holy Spirit can be seen as a character who holds two dialectic paradigms of traits... those of ‘person-likeness’ and ‘person-unlikeness’” (Hur, 2001:129).

Robbins, applying an adapted version of Wilson’s sociological definitions to the book of First Corinthians, “sees the distinctiveness of Pauline discourse in its particular configuration of conversionist, revolutionist, utopian, and gnostic manipulationist discourse” (Robbins, 1996:194). He further notices Paul’s optimism regarding people’s potential to change as a diversion from the Moral Philosophers on account of Paul’s belief about the workings of God’s power and Spirit in people’s lives. This would explain a much more positive note that is



struck by Paul concerning his confidence in the human capacity for change when indwelt by the Holy Spirit as opposed to the Moral Philosophers of his time and of previous epochs.

Regarding culture, Robbins sees Pauline discourse “as embedded in a counter-cultural relation to the dominant Hellenistic-Roman and Jewish cultures, although it also has a healthy dose of sub-cultural and contra-cultural features supporting it” (Robbins, 1996:201-202). The church’s posture towards broader culture was in the ‘against’ mode to the extent that it was counter-cultural. The church’s posture towards Judaism was, on the other hand, ‘positive’ to the extent that it saw itself as ‘true Israel’. Open persecution would eventually force the church to adopt a separate sense of identity with respect to Judaism which the church saw as being in the state of ‘apostasy’.

### **Ideological Texture**

Quoting Eagleton, Robbins defines ideology as follows: “From a socio-rhetorical perspective ideology is the ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structure and power relations of the society we live in ... those modes of feeling, valuing perceiving and believing, which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and production of social power” (Robbins, 1996:36). Ideology, from this standpoint, may be utilized by those in the faith community as well as those in power to either advance particular points in a manner that leads to a mutually beneficial symbiosis or negatively lead to mutually exclusive parasitic and antagonistic relations, especially with those outside the community.

The ideological texture of text features the arena between the implied reader and the narrator and characters (see figure 1.1). The particular way in which the implied reader and real reader/audience receive the narrator and characters concerns ideology. Reciprocity between the empowerment of the narrator and characters, the verbal signs and the represented world by the implied author and the implied reader represents the ideology in the text. “In turn, reciprocity between meanings and meaning effects in the world of the implied reader and meaning and meaning effects in the world of the real reader represents ideology of the text. In other words, the emphasis now lies on the arena of the text where the implied reader and the real reader/audience receive and empower the message of the text” (Robbins, 1996:37).

Ideology, therefore, happens in the Intersection between the author's original intention expressed in the text, as received and acted out by the original reader/s in their context.

Nel (2009:281), explains that "Ideological texture is concerned with the particular alliances and conflicts nurtured and evoked by the language of a text, as well as the way the Interpreters of the text position themselves in relation to other individuals and groups." Robbins says of Acts of the Apostles that it "is an ideologically driven account that appeared near the end of the first century and that now stands alongside the account that emerges from all the voices available to us in the discourse of New Testament literature" (Robbins, 1996:206). An example that might be cited is Paul's arrest in Jerusalem in Acts 21 verse 27 to 36. The Jews from the Roman province of Asia charged him, demanding immediate action against him in Jerusalem, as follows: "This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and *this place*. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place" Acts 21:28 (emphasis mine). The ideological texture is undeniable as there is direct reference to the power structures, which in this case were challenged and disrupted by a message that they felt was inclusive and universal and was therefore, from their narrow Interest of clinging to power, "*against* the people, the law and this place (meaning the temple)".

Hur contends that "the most discernible literary index in Luke-Acts that makes the narrator and characters reliable (thereby joining the side of the author's ideology), is their linking with the 'divine frame of reference', such as angels, heavenly voices, scriptural citations and especially the Holy Spirit" (Hur, 2001:101,113). This 'empowerment' of the narrator and characters is meant by the author to show that his ideology is reliable, endorsed as it is by the Holy Spirit. It should, therefore, be embraced and lived out.

#### **3.2.3.1 Plot function and the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts**

Hur explains further that "a plot refers to a narrative flow that is engendered by causality in orderly sequence, evoking an affective or emotional response in the reader" (Hur, 2001:183). He further concludes that "the plot of Luke-Acts... is the way of witness, in seeking and saving God's people engendered by Jesus (in the gospels) and his witnesses (in Acts), through

the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the plan of God” (Hur, 2001:183).

The causal stages of plot-development can be discerned through geographical references as the ‘way of witness’ advanced by Spirit-inspired characters. This geographically oriented plot can thus be divided into the following five causal stages in an orderly sequence:

1. “Beginning (Luke 3:1-4:13) at the Jordan river.
2. Development towards the central point (Luke 4:14-19:44), from Galilee to Jerusalem.
3. Central point (Luke 19:45 - Acts 2:13) in Jerusalem.
4. Development towards the end (Acts 2:14-28:15), from Jerusalem through Judea and Samaria, and towards Rome.
5. Open-ended finale (Acts 28:16-31) in Rome.”

“In relation to the causal aspect of the plot, the Spirit, in the prologue is characterized as inspiring the main characters ... to bear witness to the unborn Jesus and the child Jesus through prophetic speeches/praise” (Hur, 2001:202).

“Regarding the causal aspect of the plot in the geographical area between Galilee and Jerusalem, the reader is prepared to expect that the Spirit, already characterized as empowering Jesus in the previous stage, will be presented as empowering the disciples to bear witness to the resurrected Jesus ... in proclaiming the salvific message and performing miracles to the ends of the earth” (Hur, 2001:227).

In Jerusalem (Acts 2:14-7:60), “the Spirit is presented as empowering Peter and the other apostles, and Stephen as bearing witness to the resurrected and ascended Jesus, by causing them especially, to speak prophetic words boldly and wisely and perform signs and wonders powerfully” (Hur, 2001:237).

Regarding the causal aspect of the plot in the region of Judea and Samaria, the role of the Spirit is characterized as empowering and guiding “Philip, Saul and Peter to bear witness to

Jesus in each context; at the same time, the Spirit verifies the Samaritans and the household of Cornelius as God's people, especially by causing the Gentiles, like Jews, to speak in tongues and praise God" (Hur, 2001:249). It must be noted here, however, that there is a difference of opinion regarding the Spirit coming upon the Samaritans in Acts chapter 8. Some think they were non-Christians before Paul prayed for them; in which case their receiving of the Spirit may be said to be a 'verification' of their genuineness as the people of God. If, however, they were already disciples as explicit in the context, the reception of the Spirit would have been for a purpose other than verification.

The section dealing with witnessing towards the ends of the earth (Acts 11:19-28:15) "develops the plot by focusing on Paul as a witness of Jesus to Gentiles. The characterization of the Spirit in this section is that of a mission director, causing the Antioch church leaders to appoint Paul (and Barnabas) ... to bear witness to Jesus to the people in Asia Minor and Europe" (Hur, 2001:266).

In light of the Lukan narrator's final open-ended remarks in Acts chapter twenty-eight verse thirty to thirty-one, "readers may postulate that the way of witness is still in process, and Rome is to be considered part of the world-wide mission rather than the final mission to the ends of the earth. And if the witness-mission as God's enterprise or the risen Jesus command remains incomplete, the work of the Holy Spirit would continue through bold witness" (Hur, 2001:269).

### **3.3 Conclusion**

The following conclusions can be drawn regarding the Socio-rhetorical criticism of the Book of Acts of the Apostles. Regarding Inner texture, we have noted that '*pneuma*' is the foundational imperative and is therefore immensely significant in the narrative. It has also been noted that among the leading scholars on this subject there is a difference of opinion with regards to precisely what the role of the Spirit is supposed to be in reference to the church beyond the time of the Apostles.

Concerning Inter-texture, an undeniable link between Luke-Acts with Exodus, Isaiah, Numbers, Kings and even Malachi has been noted. Following any of the major themes whether it be History, Promise and Fulfilment, Pattern and Type, Principles or Characterization and Allegorization as used by New Testament authors leads to universalization of the promises of God resulting in 'New Israel' through the agency of the Spirit and Spirit-inspired human agents.

With reference to socio and ideological texture we have noted the following: "The Holy Spirit in Acts is presented as the Spirit who incorporates non-Jews into God's eschatological people, whereas the Spirit of the Lord God in the Jewish Bible is consistently characterized as the Spirit who inspires God's faithful Jews past, present and future. Hence, the Lukan Holy Spirit is presented as the missiological Spirit – empowering God's human agents to witness to the risen Jesus, not only to Jews, but also to non-Jews."

"These two points reflect the religious ideology of the implied author or community of Luke-Acts, which can be compared with that of the inspired authors of the Jewish Bible as a whole, and this ideology affects the implied reader" (Hur, 2001:283).

Concerning Ideology, the reader is forced into a tension regarding the power structures and power relations with regards to the need for evangelization of the world and what that implies for the special place of the people of God in the Old Testament (namely the Jews).

With regards to the Plot Function in the Book of Acts, we have seen that the narrative flow is from Jerusalem to Rome with the empowering role of the Holy Spirit on the key characters and witnesses playing a crucial role. The plot functions to condition the reader to expect the Spirit to play an empowering role to the disciples inspiring them to bear witness to the resurrected Jesus in the same way as the Spirit is represented as having inspired Jesus himself and empowered him for his own ministry. The plot develops by showing various disciples as instrumental witnesses, climaxing with Paul's powerful witness in Rome. The open-ended

finale is meant to suggest that the Spirit will be needed to empower witnesses of all ages for the world-wide mission that was represented by Rome.

As alluded to above, there are those who argue on historical, hermeneutical and eschatological grounds for the Spirit's activity down to our age. The self-conscious eschatological outlook of the book of Acts, for example in Luke's references to 'the last days', also needs to be taken notice of. He seems to intend his hearers to see that the 'last days' that the prophet Joel speaks of, are inaugurated in the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost and will be consummated at the 'restoration', when Christ returns in judgement. The entirety of the church age, therefore, is seen as the 'last days' that will be characterized by the Spirit's activity. Fee agrees with this observation by stating "Probably the one feature that distances the New Testament the most from its contemporary counterpart is its thoroughly eschatological perspective of all of life" (Fee, 1994:803).

In the end, perhaps the epistemic approach of the reader, will decide how it is Interpreted. If it is studied as an ancient book by a person positioned and trained in a culture that sees the universe as a closed system, undue reliance may be placed on the intellect and supernatural phenomena will be left hermetically sealed in the ancient world. If, however, it is studied from the vantage point of Pentecost and from an experiential pre-understanding, the bible will be read eschatologically and with a Continuationist expectation on the grounds that Pentecost offers a last days perspective on scripture. This does not mean that one must simply come to scripture to support one's experiences. As Keener explains, "Spirit hermeneutics may be more than simply traditional exegesis, yet it should also not be less than traditional exegesis" (Keener, 2016:141). This means that such a reader must not do any less rigorous exegetical work than others; to avoid a hermeneutical circle, she must indeed ultimately privilege scripture.

The following chapter will focus on the Apostolic Fathers and how they understood the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives. It will also be sought to understand how the early church related with Judaism, from whence it came, and its relations with the broader Roman society over time.

## **Chapter 4**

# **The Holy Spirit in the extant writings of the Apostolic Fathers**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, insights from the socio-cultural and ideological textures will be utilized to understand how the Fathers understood the role of the Spirit in their lives individually and corporately. Socio-cultural texture and ideological textures will also be utilized to help understand the conflict between Christianity and both Judaism and paganism and other Christian groups. It will be noted that besides the Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr (as well as Clement,) was the leading apologist who defended Christianity against Judaism and Paganism and are referred to as early apologists. The confrontation with Judaism eventually resulted in a complete break from Judaism and a clear identity of Christianity as a separate religion.

The Apostolic Fathers or subapostolic writings, belong to the period between the New Testament and the early apologists and Church Fathers. Naturally, the Church Fathers come after the period of the apologists. The period of the Apostolic Fathers is from the first to the middle of the second century CE. In this work as in Lightfoot, these include the Epistle to Diognetus, first and second Clement, the Didache, the Epistle of Barnabas, seven Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch, the Epistle of Polycarp, the martyrdom of Polycarp, the Shepherd of Hermas and the fragments of Papias of Hierapolis. Emperors who are prominent in this time are from Claudius to Septimius Severus<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 3.1 below).

#### **4.1.1 Historical context**

To understand how these Fathers understood the role of the Spirit, we will utilize the socio-cultural and ideological textures as elucidated by Robbins. It is also important at this stage to lean on insights and concepts gleaned from the field of sociology and utilize these to understand relevant sociological phenomena. Adapted from Wilsons' sociological definitions,

Robbins comes up with seven major responses to the world that are evidenced in the early church as follows:

#### **4.1.1.1 Conversionist**

Considering the outside world to be corrupted because it is a product of corrupt human beings, “This stance takes no Interest in programs of social reform” (Robbins, 1996:162). Many of those who embody this posture are in the so-called ‘Evangelical Right’ in the United States of America. In the South African context, these represent a vast majority of Evangelical Christians who imagine that lasting change in our country and the world will come through the conversion of as many people as possible, or else at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They tend to despair of any social reform, except perhaps the ‘coming to power’ of a ‘Christian political organization’ such as the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) or a similar organization. The ACDP is led by Rev Kenneth Meshoe and believes that only a ‘Christian organization’ can usher in the kingdom of God and therefore true biblical justice and righteousness. In the city of Pietermaritzburg, there is an organization started by evangelical Christians known as Raising Righteous Rulers (RRR) led by pastor Jonathan Van Niekerk. The current writer had opportunity to meet with this leader, when asked why he did not think it fit to join the ACDP the only response given was that he had met with the leader of the ACDP and that leader never invited van Niekerk to any meeting or church organization, leaving him unwilling to support that organization. They (RRR) exemplify the essence of conversionists, who imagine that only Christ followers can bring lasting change in the society through evangelism and by enforcing biblical values on the unbelieving masses.

At the height of the COVID pandemic, many people who peddled misinformation and extreme skepticism came from this camp. They saw an opportunity to show the utter hopelessness of secular governments and leaders in the face of challenges that could only be met by ‘spiritual’ solutions and resources.



#### **4.1.1.2 Revolutionist**

These are those who “maintain an eschatological position that desires to be rid of the present social order when the time is right and are willing to use the force of arms to achieve that objective” (Robbins, 1996:162-163). A recent example of a revolutionist stance is perhaps the Reverent James Jones who led the People’s Temple in the early 1970’s. He is reported to have encouraged his followers to achieve their ‘Apostolic Communal Lifestyle’ by any means possible. James Jones ended up murdering a United States Representative and four others, who came to investigate rumours of abuse at the church.

In South Africa, this posture was exemplified by Eugene Terblanche and his Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB). Although they were a sub-culture within the broader apartheid regime, they saw no other alternative but to shore up the collapsing apartheid regime through the force of arms and their Christian Nationalism.

#### **4.1.1.3 Introversionist**

This response to the world neither seeks to convert the world nor encourage the overthrow of the present order, but rather “encourages its adherents to simply retire from the world in order to enjoy the security granted by personal holiness”. It “seeks to deepen rather than widen the spiritual experience of its possessor” (Robbins, 1996:163). Those who adopt this attitude tend to separate themselves from the ‘world’ much like what are today known as ‘doomsday preppers’ in the United States of America. Perhaps their modern-day equivalents are the Amish Christians and Mormons, particularly in Utah in the United States of America, to cite extreme examples. The adherents of this philosophy tend to think that as soon as there is a critical mass of people who think like them, or if they themselves are ‘holy’ enough, there will be an automatic change in the world. If only adherence were more fervent, all of the problems of the world will simply vanish.

#### **4.1.1.4 Gnostic Manipulationist**

The adherents of this posture insist on particular and distinctive knowledge that is not revealed to the uninitiated. “It proclaims a spiritualized version of the cultural ends of global society without rejecting the cultural ends themselves” (Robbins, 1996:163). Various forms of

gnosticism have resurfaced time and again throughout church history; the earliest was Docetism. Perhaps a modern example of this is the Jehovah's Witnesses.

#### **4.1.1.5 Thaumaturgic**

These insist that "it is possible for people to experience the extraordinary effect of the supernatural on their lives" (Robbins, 1996:164). Various kinds of charismatic Christian groups, which are virtually found in almost all Christian denominations (including Roman Catholics), embrace this posture. In South Africa, these include many groups that are otherwise mutually exclusive, such as different churches within the umbrella of African Initiated Churches (Shembe, International Pentecostal Holiness Church, Zion Christian Church), and various charismatic and independent churches. These believe that the root cause of all sorts of problems, whether they be diseases, social, psychological, or Interpersonal problems, have their root in the arena of the spiritual world. Therefore, the lasting solution to these problems is to be found in the spiritual world. Dealing with these will result in an effortless resolution of the problems.

#### **4.1.1.6 Reformist**

"This argumentation insists that social, political and economic institutions can serve good, rather than oppressive ends." It also "encourages active association with the world without becoming a part of the same" (Robbins, 1996:164). These tend to be found in older, more established churches, such as Roman Catholics and Anglican churches. These churches tend to have various kinds of 'think-tanks' whose task are to debate and develop position papers in response to various and complex social ills. They tend to be regarded as too accommodative, neutral and non-radical by other types of churches.

#### **4.1.1.7 Utopian**

This theory asserts that "people should inaugurate a new social order free from evil and corruption to run the world" (Robbins, 1996:165). These tend to be represented by political or social organizations rather than religious organizations. An example of these in the South African context are socialists (South African Communist Party, Azanian People's Organization, Socialist Party of Azania etc.).

#### 4.1.2 Social and Cultural Texture

Concerning social and cultural texture, it appears that the Apostolic Fathers under consideration, like the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians, utilize a mixture of conversionist, revolutionist, utopian, and gnostic Manipulationist discourse which is embedded in a counter-cultural relation with the dominant cultures. But unlike Paul, Acts of the Apostles also has a strong sub-cultural relation to Judaism. This means that their relation to the world is a mixed bag of objectivistic (revolutionism and utopianism), subjectionistic (conversionist and gnostic manipulationist) as well as relativistic (thaumaturgic) discourse.

In the early church, because the church was still *religio illicita* they tended to organize themselves in smaller groups, except in times of great persecution, when they would send larger resources to struggling communities. This status was repealed at the Edict of Milan in 313 CE (although it was eased at the Edict of Toleration two years earlier).

With regards to culture, two concepts need definition, namely the dominant and sub-cultures. Robbins defines the dominant culture as “a system of attitudes, values, dispositions and norms supported by social structures vested with power to impose its goals on people in a significantly broad territorial region” (Robbins, 1996:184). A “sub-culture finds ways of affirming the national culture and the fundamental value orientation of the dominant society.” A “counter-culture on the other hand rejects the norms and values which unite the dominant culture” (Robbins, 1996:185). In South Africa, during the Apartheid era, the dominant culture was Afrikaner Nationalism. This was supported and justified by the Dutch Reformed Church and other like-minded organizations. Organizations such as the AWB and Afrikaner Bond were sub-cultures that saw themselves as the true custodians of Afrikaner Nationalism. Currently, the dominant culture is wielded by various African Nationalistic organizations. Sub-culture is represented by ultra left organizations, such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and the Pan African Congress (and the splinter groups that emerged from it).

Gager presented three critical movements in the history of early Christianity, namely: (1) conflict with Judaism, (2) conflict with paganism, and (3) conflict among Christian groups over the claim to embody the authentic faith of Jesus and the Apostles (Robbins, 1996:207). Concerning Judaism and Paganism which were dominant cultures, Christianity was a sub-culture claiming to embody the noblest attitudes, values, dispositions and norms of those dominant cultures better than members of those cultures.

#### **4.1.2.1 Conflict with Judaism**

Bruce Metzger asserts that the church did not cease to be Jewish after their experience of Pentecost (Metzger, 1965:185). There was, however, persecution of the church by the Sadducees who feared that the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah might excite feelings of revenge against them for having secured his crucifixion (Acts 3:11–26 and 5:17-18). At that exact time, the church leaders, who saw themselves as Jewish, sought to convert fellow Jews to what they saw as authentic Judaism by preaching in the Synagogues.

The whole situation, however, “was suddenly changed by an event which roused the anger of the Pharisees even more than of the Sadducees, and thus brought upon the disciples the hostility of the whole Sanhedrin” (Metzger 1965:187). This event is the preaching of Stephen, “who was also a worker of miracles and who seems to be the first Christian to make a clear distinction between Judaism and Christianity, and to proclaim a Christianity that was emancipated from Jewish national limitations” (Metzger, 1965:187-188). Ironically, it was this very persecution which spurred Christians to reach out to their Gentile neighbours.

It was, however, in Antioch where the final break with Judaism was to occur. Antioch formed a natural centre of operations from which Christianity, if it was to be separated from Judaism, could go forth, to make converts in the Gentile world. The heart of the conflict was that Christianity was claiming to represent ‘true Israel’. It was in Antioch that the disciples were first given the name ‘Christians’ (Acts 11:26). It is also Interesting to note that these events unfolded naturally, if hesitantly, as there was no clearly mapped out strategy and doctrine concerning the distinct identity of Christianity from the start. For example two incidents are

recorded for us in the Book of Acts of the Apostles and the epistle to the Galatians which indicate ambivalence on the part of Peter concerning the status of Gentile believers. Chapter 10 narrates a story of Peter seeing a vision of all kinds of ceremonially unclean animals and hearing a voice from the Lord instructing him to ‘kill and eat’. Horrified at the instruction to participate in killing and eating unkosher food, Peter exclaimed “By no means, Lord”, to which the voice responded with “What God has made clean, do not call common”. This incident seems to have prepared him to receive a Roman centurion and many Gentiles as his brothers and sisters in the Lord, when he evidenced them being filled with the Spirit.

In Galatia, Peter was again confronted with his identity and the status of Christians who were not ethnically Jewish. This time the issue was of separation from those accepted as brothers and sisters, on the grounds that they do not or should not participate in ceremonial washings and dietary strictures of cultural Jews. Galatians chapter two verse 11 to 14 records a nasty confrontation between Peter and Paul on this issue. Paul’s accusation was that Peter and Barnabas’ conduct “was not in step with the truth of the gospel” and his rhetorical question to the Galatians as to whether they “received the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith” (Gal 3:2).

#### **4.1.2.2 Conflict with Paganism**

The relationship to paganism was a lot more complicated and had aspects of a sub-culture as well as counter-cultural discourse, with some adopting an ‘against’ mode while others were a lot more ‘positive’ in their stance.

Bediako traverses through the early Christian time when the Romans understood Christianity to be a sect within Judaism. Judaism at that time was trying desperately to distinguish itself from the church, which led to continued tensions between the two. As the Romans were trying to get to understand Christianity, they were struck by a huge anomaly in that this ‘third race’ was made up of people from different races and cultures, slaves and freedmen, and did not have a particular country of origin and traditions of their ‘fathers’. This launched the church into an identity crisis that they soon were on a quest to remedy and articulate their own distinctives within the Greek intellectual and cultural tradition.

Religion in Graeco-Roman paganism existed as an intrinsic aspect of social organization. Kwame Bediako observes that “The association of religion with the well-being of the Roman commonwealth and its validation on the grounds of ancestral custom, also meant that religious piety was the ground for social morality” (Bediako, 1999:22). To depart from these traditions, therefore, implied relaxation in commitment to the Roman ideals, or simply betrayal of Roman grandeur.

It is in this sense of understanding national identity and religion as having the same basis in traditional Graeco-Roman society that we are to understand the Roman distinction of religion from superstition. The ‘religious’ were those who “carefully revered . . . and retraced all the lore of ritual” whereas the ‘superstitious’ were “persons who spent whole days in prayer and sacrifice”. Hence these terms came to represent censure and approval, respectively. ‘*Religio*’ was seen as a distinguishing mark of ‘*Rominitas*’ and ‘*superstitio*’ was seen as belonging to the ‘barbarians’.

‘Superstition’ was therefore seen as a religious attitude and devotion, marked by “excess of emotion” and evident in “bizarre and irrational practice” which was “derogatory to the gods”. True religion, on the other hand, was seen as lying in a continuum between hardened atheism on the one hand and the “diseased condition of superstition” on the other. “An atheist was one who denied the traditional state gods” (Bediako, 1999:27).

However, there were leaders like Justin Martyr, “who did the ground-clearing work to secure the rights of Christian revelation in the context of rival claims” and Clement who “sought to unify Christian insights and what he considered worthy in the Hellenistic tradition into an integrated account of reality, with Christ at its head as the ultimate hermeneutical key to the entire religious history of mankind” (Bediako, 1999:xvi). Earlier on, the Apologists sought to present Christianity in a positive light and as embodying the ideals of Roman culture and society. However, as rhetoric gave way to threats and eventually open hostility and persecution, the church leaders began to present Christianity as counter-cultural.

The relationship between Church and State was also precarious at best and downright life-threatening at worst. Around 52 CE, the Roman Emperor Claudius heard that there was some sort of conflict in the Jewish quarter of Rome. To prevent any possible unrest, Claudius expelled all Jews from the city of Rome, including of course Jewish Christians.

On July 18, in the year 64 CE, a fire broke out in the city of Rome. It levelled a major part of the center of the city center. Rumors began to circulate that Nero had started the fire to make room for his new ‘Golden House’. To divert attention away from himself, Nero blamed the fire on the Christians, and thus began the first persecution of Christians at the hands of the Romans. Many people, including Peter and Paul, would be martyred in the circus of Nero, which is now in the Vatican, at the site of St Peter’s Basilica.

From that time to the reign of Septimus Severus, who became an emperor in 193 CE and issued an imperial edict in 202 CE that made conversion to Christianity illegal, there were conflicts between the church and state, with various Christian leaders adopting a range of attitudes from pacifism to near open hostility.

**Figure 3**  
**Apostolic Fathers**

Name	Source	Miracle	Emperor
Peter and Paul			Nero Claudius expelled Jews from Rome
Clement of Rome	Letter of Clement to the Corinthians		Trajan
Polycarp	The Martyrdom of Polycarp	“Vision of pillow under his head seemed to him on fire. Interpreted it as prophecy that he would be burnt alive” Chapter V	Antoninus

		“In the stadium he heard a voice from heaven saying ‘be strong, and show thyself a man, O Polycarp’” Chapter IX	
		“Witnesses beheld a great miracle. The fire shaped itself into the form of an arch, like the sail of a ship when filled with the wind, encompassed as by a circle ‘the body of the martyr’”... Chapter XV	
		“On piercing him, there came forth a dove, and a great quantity of blood, so that the fire was extinguished” ... Chapter XVI	
Ignatius	Martyrdom of Ignatius	“Martyred during the emperorship of Trajan. Cast to the wild beasts close beside the temple. After his death, he appeared in visions to the many brethren”	Domitian Trajan (Martyrdom)
Papias	Epistle of Barnabas. Daughters of Philip	“Dead man raised from the dead. Prophecies from the daughters of Philip”	
The Didache	10.7	“Permits prophets to give thanks however they wish”	
	11-13	“Criteria by which true and false prophets should be distinguished”	
Shepherd of Hermas	Commandment 6  11-16	“How to recognize the two spirits attendant of each man, and how to distinguish the suggestions of the one from those of another”	



## **4.2 A brief introduction of the Apostolic Fathers under discussion**

### **4.2.1 The Apostolic Fathers**

#### **4.2.1.1 The Didache**

The Didache may be divided into two parts dealing with the preparation for baptism and instruction for church leaders. Draper and Jefford opine that it tries “to articulate a Jewish identity and a Christ-believing identity, but the Jewish identity has become symbolic and not concrete (national) as gentiles continue to join the group” (Jonathan Draper; Clayford Jefford, 2015:24). This identity dysphoria led to the church being neither Jewish nor Gentile but for a time a strange syncretistic mixture of both. This placed the church in a precarious legalism that put it at risk of losing “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3c).

There is, however, difference of opinion as to whether there is in the Didache a “secure and continuous possession of charismata” or whether “religious charismata are proved by rational ethical conduct within the world” (Jonathan Draper; Clayford Jefford, 2015:573-574). Although Draper favours the latter position, it is undeniable that there were charismatic gifts in the form of prophets in the church, although these were mostly itinerant ministers who soon fell out of favour with the leadership of the church due to the chicanery of some amongst them.

#### **4.2.1.2 Shepherd of Hermas**

Shepherd was given in a vision much like the vision of the Book of Revelation. It was quoted as scripture by Irenaeus and was considered inspired by Origen and Clement of Alexandria. In commandment sixth of Hermas, mention is made of how to recognize spirits “attendant of each man, and how to distinguish the suggestions of the one from those of another” (Alexander Roberts; James Donaldson, 1885:24). This indicates that the activity of the Spirit was considered normative. The mere fact that some prominent leaders thought this book was equal in authority to scripture (regardless of whether this would later be deemed acceptable or

not) gives us a peek into the general attitude of the church of that era. Tertullian, however, rejected it and thought of it as inferior in quality to scripture.

#### **4.2.1.3 First and Second Clement**

Clement, who was a disciple of the Apostle Peter and became the Bishop of Rome from 88 to 97 CE, wrote First Clement on behalf of the church in Rome to the Christians in Corinth. According to Papandrea, Second Clement was almost certainly not written by Clement. Clement seems concerned about the authority of some priests, as well as the question of apostolic succession of the Bishops of Rome (Papandrea, 2012:20-22). It seems plausible that at this time, the position of a 'bishop' made (at least in Clément's mind) redundant the need for 'prophets' and their respective ministries and prophetic insights. This is what perhaps may have led to spiritual gifts being made to be proved by 'ethical and rational conduct' rather than by miraculous phenomena.

#### **4.2.1.4 Ignatius of Antioch**

Ignatius was bishop of Antioch and a disciple of the Apostle John. Pliny sent him to Rome to be executed by the emperor Trajan for spreading the faith. En route to Rome, he authored seven letters; his primary concern was unity and the primacy of the office of a bishop (Papandrea, 2012:23). Ignatius also made it his primary concern to strengthen the office of the bishop with his threefold division of Bishop, Elders and Deacons. Prior to him there was mention of only two-fold division, namely bishop and deacons.

Many claimed that Ignatius appeared to them in visions after his death.

#### **4.2.1.5 Papias**

Papias was a contemporary and colleague of Polycarp. "It was said that he knew the daughters of Philip and some later writers said that he knew the Apostle John. Papias relates that he had received a wonderful narrative from the daughters of Philip, and also that a dead man was raised to life in his day" (Papandrea, 2012:26). "He also mentions another miracle relating to Justus, surnamed Barsabas, how he swallowed deadly poison, and received no harm, on account of the grace of the Lord" (Alexander Roberts; James Donaldson, 1885:154).

We only have fragments of his writing; he interprets the millennium in the book of Revelation to be a literal one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

#### **4.2.1.6 Polycarp**

Polycarp was also a disciple of the Apostle John and a bishop of the church in Smyrna and a mentor and teacher of Irenaeus of Lyons.

He is said to have got a vision where “the pillow under his head seemed to him on fire. Upon this, turning to those that were with him, he said to them prophetically, ‘I must be burnt alive’” (Alexander Roberts; James Donaldson, 1885:40). His is the oldest of the martyr documents that we have. It was written by the church of Smyrna to the church of Philomelium. He was martyred in 156 CE, at which witnesses “beheld a great miracle, where fire shaped itself into the form of an arch, like the sail of a ship when filled with the wind, encompassed as by a circle the body of the martyr... a sweet odour as if frankincense or some such precious spices had been smoking there” (Alexander Roberts; James Donaldson, 1885:42).

Polycarp seems to be the last bishop to have known any of the apostles personally, and he represents that generation who are the link between the apostles and successive generation of leaders (Papandrea, 2012:25).

### **Ideological texture**

With regards to ideological texture, we will look primarily at ideology in the texts, in intellectual discourse and in individuals and groups. Ideological texture recognizes that every theology has politics. Ideological texture in this sense functions more like critical discourse analysis. As Teun van Dijk asserts, “Critical Discourse Analysis continues a tradition that rejects the possibility of a value-free science, and that instead any theory formation, description, and explanation are socio-politically ‘situated’” (Teun A Van Dijk, 2001:352).

Various leaders had a complicated relationship with the State from the time of the Apostles to the time of the Edict of Milan in 313 CE. Ideology in the intellectual discourse of the

Apostolic Fathers was influenced by Justin Martyr who according to Bediako sounded a note of exuberant triumph in the much-quoted epitaph: “We have not been deceived and shall not cease to confess Him (i.e., Christ) ... we have not believed empty fables, or words without foundation, but words filled with the Spirit of God, bursting forth with power and exuberant with grace”. Then he says later “The Christian stance, therefore, amounted to confrontation of the Spirit of classical paganism, the religion of culture, with the culture of religion” (Bediako, n.d.:31-32).

Jewish-Christian and Christian-Roman conflict were exacerbated by two important periods in history, namely the destruction of Jerusalem (66 - 74 CE) and the Jewish revolts against Rome (132 – 135 CE). “In response to the loss of the temple, Judaism underwent a reformulation with the synagogue and an academy and scholarly Rabbis replacing the temple as the focal point for the faith” (Holmes, 1999:6). In this sense it was similar to Christianity which was already then functioning outside of the formal structures of the temple. However, Judaism went on to put a lot less emphasis on the scriptures, but on the Interpretations of the various Rabbis and on tradition.

The second Jewish revolt “led by messianic aspirant Simon Bar Kochba marks the beginning of the end of this overtly hostile phase of Jewish-Christian relations” (Holmes, 1999:7). But it also marked the emergence of a distinctive Christian identity, which initially surprised the pagans but soon led to resentment. The pagans were surprised because up until that time Christianity was in their minds a sect within Judaism.

The fall of Jerusalem also coincided with the death of the Apostles who were the stabilizing centre and foundation of the church. They had served to define the centre of Christianity, it now “fell to later generations to attempt to define the boundaries” (Holmes, 1999:9). The culmination of this effort was the Nicene Creed in 325, which sought to safeguard the essentials of Christian doctrine and deal with contemporary controversies.

The Holy Spirit in the works of the Apostolic Fathers is mentioned under the general concepts of terminology, inspiration and prophecy.

### **4.3 Terminology**

“In comparison with over 200 references to the Spirit in the New Testament, the Fathers have in excess of 70 which is comparable to the number of times to which reference is made to the Spirit in the Old Testament” (Mare, n.d.:4).

“In the Old Testament, the names used to express the concept of the Divine Spirit vary, with the terms ‘The Spirit’ and ‘the Spirit of the Lord’ occurring most frequently (25 times each), while the phrase ‘Spirit of God’ is used 11 times, and the term ‘Holy Spirit’ is only expressed in three places” (Mare, n.d.:5).

In sharp contrast to the Old Testament, the New Testament in its numerous references to the Spirit only uses “Spirit of the Lord” in three texts and refers to the “Spirit of God” 17 times, but very frequently to the expressions, “the Spirit” and “the Holy Spirit” which are referenced over 90 times each. Almost half of the uses of “Holy Spirit” (41 times) occur in the Acts of the Apostles; then in the Gospels with 26 occurrences and Paul’s epistles has 17. It is Paul who utilizes more frequently the term “Spirit of God”, with 12 of the 17 uses. The expression “the Spirit of the Lord” occurs only once each in the Gospels (Luke 4:18 in a quotation from the Old Testament), in Acts 5:9 and in Paul (2 Cor 3:18) (Mare, n.d.:5).

The terminology that the Fathers in reference to the Spirit prefer to utilize is generally that employed in the two Testaments, but the pattern of frequency follows more nearly the New Testament in choosing not often to use the two terms, “Spirit of the Lord” (only 3 times) and “Spirit of God” (only once) and rather in using the words, “Holy Spirit” (38 times), and “Spirit” (22 times) more often (Mare, n.d.:5).

In addition to how the New Testament uses these terms, the Apostolic Fathers introduce three new terms namely: ‘the Divine Spirit’ (used 7 times in Hermas), ‘the Delicate Spirit’ (Hermas), and ‘the Spirit of the Godhead’ ... “It may be reasonable to suggest that this general uniformity to the usage of the New Testament terminology for Spirit argues for the knowledge

of, reverence for, and dependence upon the New Testament on the part of the Apostolic Fathers” (Mare, n.d.:6).

#### **4.4 Inspiration and Prophetic Inspiration**

Inspiration is the most frequent activity of the Spirit in 1 Clement. But Clement does not seem to refer to contemporary prophets as such (Thiselton, 2013:165). Clement is primarily concerned with unity in the church. For him, the Holy Spirit comes to lead believers to repentance, strengthens them in the pursuit of unity and appoints bishops and elders and deacons, testing them by the Spirit.

“Ignatius has less reservations about seeing himself as inspired by the Spirit”, but he does have a high view of ecclesiology as seen in his opinions about the importance of Bishops in the church (Thiselton, 2013:165). In his letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius using an analogy, speaking of believers as being “made ready for the building of God our Father, carried up to its height by the engine of Jesus Christ, that is, the cross, and using the rope of the Holy Spirit” (Thiselton, 2013:167).

The Didache deals with the gift of prophecy as if it were a standard affair within the church (Van Oort, 2012:4). It speaks of prophets and people ‘speaking in the spirit’.

Thiselton (2013:166) quotes Swete as asserting that “The Didache is the earliest post-apostolic writing that gives any account of a charismatic ministry”.

The Shepherd of Hermas records prophesyings and speaks of a prophet who does not possess the spirit as ‘empty’ and as prophesying “according to the desires of men” (Thiselton, 2013:168).

Polycarp is said to have had a vision where the pillow under his head seemed to him on fire. He is said to have turned to those who were with him and said to them prophetically: “It is necessary that I be burned alive” (Holmes, 1999:231).

Papias relates wonderful narratives that he received from the daughters of Philip. He even relates miracle stories, including of a dead man raised to life in his day (Holmes, 1999:567).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

At the center of the Jewish-Christian conflict there was a question of what ‘true Israel’ really was. Jews and Christians gave conflicting answers to that question. To the Jews, the answer was to be found in ancestry and Judaism, whereas to the Christians it was faith in Christ. Initially the church seems to have seen itself as a sub-culture within Judaism, trying to point Jews to their Messiah and true destiny of their faith by preaching in synagogues. Soon, however, it became a counterculture, as Jews rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah as well as Christians and as Christians began to develop a unique sense of identity, separate from Judaism, from the time of Stephen the martyr onwards.

Roman pagans, on the other hand, were very open and accepting, except that a citizen was expected to pay homage to Caesar as a sign of goodwill to the State. The church fathers struggled to show that to be Christian was to be in favor of the State in ways that truly mattered, while not willing to pay homage to Caesar. They also strove to show that Christians sought the common good and posed no threat to the State. The task of unifying Christian insights and Hellenistic traditions fell to Justin Martyr and others who laboured to demystify Christianity and demonstrate its intellectual robustness and compatibility with Hellenism.

We have also seen that there is a consistency between the writings of the Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament with regards to the activity of the Holy Spirit. The sheer compatibility in terminology regarding the Spirit as well as the frequency and strategic role played by the Spirit in the New Testament and the writings of the Fathers is also enlightening. They report miraculous phenomena attributed to the activity of the Spirit and also believe themselves to have prophetic insights. The Didache even has a set of criteria to be followed in distinguishing true from false ‘prophets’. It has, however, been noted that there is room for difference of Interpretation regarding whether these gifted people were to be replaced in some way by those occupying ecclesiastical office.

It is not surprising that Clement seems to ignore the activity of the Spirit in the church. It has been seen that his primary concern was the unity of the church, which he sought to protect and engender uniformity as a dominant Internal culture through common doctrine. In this regard he adopted a conversionist attitude.

Ignatius, on the other hand, sought to advance the unity of the church through strong ecclesiastical authority. He is the first to speak of Deacons, Elders and Bishops; prior to him there was only talk of Deacons and Elders. Although he accepted spiritual gifts in the church, he saw them as being replaced by the office of the bishop.

The Didache, Shepherd of Hermas, Polycarp and Papias were all affirming of the miraculous activity of the Spirit in the church, thereby adopting a gnostic Manipulationist and conversationist attitude. The reason might be that they all functioned in a time of great persecution and were desperate for God's Intervention in the church. It is in respect of their writings that we see a much more explicit record of miraculous phenomena.

In the following chapter it will be sought to understand what the place of the Spirit in the church is today. Having noted the foundational imperative of the Spirit in the book of Acts, it will now be enquired as to whether Pentecost is merely an historical once-and-for-all kind of event or whether it is to be seen as soteriological and expected to be experienced by all believers of all time.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Findings concerning the place of the Holy Spirit in the church today**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

As has been noted, socio-rhetorical criticism recognizes that rhetorical argument, social action and religious belief Interrelate to produce a richly textured tapestry that we receive as a text. It utilizes rich anthropological and sociological resources as well as literary methods to map out, weigh and Interpret ancient texts.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to summarize the consensus among scholars who have already been surveyed and to point out tensions between their various viewpoints.

#### **5.2 Inner Texture**

Tracing out the thread of Inner texture, which concerns itself only with the text and its attempts to persuade the reader, the foundational imperative of the Spirit in the Book of Acts of the Apostles has been established. The Spirit is seen as animating the church in a same way as a human being is a body animated by the human spirit. To this effect the Spirit in both the ministry of Peter and Paul is seen as imparting gifts of prophecy and leading in the missionary enterprise for the purpose of world evangelization.

The questions that are raised by leading scholars are as follows:

1. Is Pentecost to be seen as a once off phenomena or is it to be repeated throughout history?
2. Are prophetic gifts and miracles to be expected as standard occurrences throughout church history?

James Dunn is quoted in Thiselton (2013:55). as saying that “In one sense... Pentecost can never be repeated – the new age is here and cannot be ushered in again. But in another sense... the experience of Pentecost can and must be repeated in the experience of all who would

become Christians.” In other words, Dunn sees the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost in the light of the scheme of salvation-history, that is to say, the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant-promise and the fulfilment of the promises in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. There is some nuance in declaring that on the one hand Pentecost was a once-off historical event, while also maintaining that in some sense it becomes an experiential realization for all who come to a saving knowledge of Christ through faith.

Max Turner holds a contrary view to Dunn’s view that the Spirit received at Jordan is mainly to be understood as an archetypal experience of the Christian church and only secondary to this, as an empowerment for service. Turner avers that “evidence suggests that Luke identifies the Spirit received there primarily, if not exclusively, as a power enabling Jesus to effect the unique task of the prophet-like-Moses” (Hur, 2001:20). He however believes that the more significant the revelations given through the Spirit of Prophecy for the group’s life, worship, and service are, the more the shift from the Spirit as *donum superadditum* to the Spirit as central to the community’s life before God. Agreeing with Odette Mainville, he asserts that Acts 2:37 is the lynchpin of Luke-Acts, where Jesus is seen as being exalted to the eschatological throne seen by David, from whence he effects his rule as Messiah by pouring out God’s “spirit of prophecy” on his people (Turner, 1996:90). Like Dunn, however, Turner tends to regard ... Pentecost itself as “paradigmatic, as models or blueprints for all or later times” (Thiselton, 2013:60). The difference between these two is with regards to the purpose of the outpouring of the Spirit and as to whether spiritual phenomena are normative. Turner sees the role of the Spirit as empowerment for service and therefore as normative, while Dunn sees no such purpose, at least not as primary. Consequently, he sees no need for spiritual phenomena.

Menzies, contra Dunn and Turner, sees the reception of the Spirit by Jesus and his disciples, not as the Spirit of sonship or of new age or covenant, but as a “prophetic *donum superadditum* (that is, a second grace beyond salvation, and distinct from it) which enables them to accomplish successfully their appointed tasks” (Hur, 2001:14). He, however, sees the Spirit as always the Spirit of prophecy and therefore limited primarily to new revelations and devoid of any ethical-religious implications beyond revelation. He also sees the Spirit of

prophecy as a force for mission. Menzies is therefore closer to Turner, differing with him only with respect to the Spirit as *donum superadditum*.

Gordon Fee understands the Spirit of God in terms of continuity and discontinuity. He also sees the presence of the Spirit as the fulfilment of the promises found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, namely “that God himself would breathe on us and we would live, that he would write his law in our hearts, and especially that he would give his Spirit unto us, so that we are indwelt by him” (Fee, 1994:30). For him “power is not to be thought of merely in terms of the miraculous, the extraordinary. Rather, because of his basic eschatological framework, Paul understood the Spirit’s power in the broadest possible way” (Fee, 1994:33). It seems that Fee understands the Spirit to have an effect on both the ethical conduct of its possessor as well as on empowerment for service, while also rejecting the Spirit as *superadditum*.

Andrew Wilson resonates with Fee’s position on hermeneutical and eschatological grounds. Arguing primarily from First Corinthians, he avers that given the clarity and frequency of the apostolic instruction to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, as well as the natural assumption that New Testament imperatives apply to us unless context indicates otherwise, charismatics are quite justified to believe that the burden of proof rests on those who say those imperatives do not apply to us, rather than those who say they do (Wilson, 2019:17). On the basis of eschatology, he resonates with Menzies in that Peter’s sermon recorded in Acts indicates that Christians live between inauguration and consummation, between Pentecost and *Parousia*, between D Day and VE day as it were (Wilson, 2019:17). This means that according to Wilson, since the outpouring of the Spirit in the Book of Acts inaugurates the ‘last days’ which are expected to terminate with absolute victory at the consummation when Christ returns, the spiritual gifts should naturally continue to operate in the life of the church of all ages. Wilson also is in agreement with Menzies except with regards to Menzies’ belief that prophetic empowerment is related primarily to new revelation.

The scholars who were surveyed see Pentecost primarily in the light of salvation history. Dunn sees Pentecost as an archetypal experience for Christians of all times. Turner agrees that Pentecost is paradigmatic of the Christian life, but also sees the Spirit as empowering the

church for service. None of them see the Spirit in the classical Pentecostal way. Menzies is closest to the Pentecostal view with his *donum superadditum* concept, but does not go as far as to believe that there could be a significant lapse of time between conversion-initiation and baptism in the Spirit. It must be admitted, however, that the current author is in the same *ecclesio-theological* tradition with Andrew Wilson and agrees with his position, which is even closer to the Pentecostal position than Menzies. It will be remembered that their difference is with regards to whether the purpose of the outpouring of the Spirit is merely prophetic or whether it also encompasses empowerment for missions. The only point of difference between Wilson and Menzies with the Pentecostals is that the latter regard tongues as the only ‘initial evidence of Spirit baptism’ and is subsequent to conversion, whereas the former believe that tongues are not the sole initial evidence of Spirit-baptism, and that Spirit-baptism may happen at conversion.

Menzies, contra Dunn and Turner, sees the gifts of the Spirit as *donum superadditum*, whereas Gordon Fee sees a more complex continuity/discontinuity in the presence and activity of the Spirit in the church, while also rejecting Spirit baptism as a *donum superadditum*.

Ben Witherington III agrees with Wilson, adding “that ‘ἐκπλησθησάω’ (filled) in Acts chapter two verse four ‘describes an initial endowment of someone by the Spirit for service’ or a person inspired to speak God’s word. And that ‘in some cases related forms of the word refers to repeated fillings or continuous process of filling...” (Witherington, 1998:133). In other words, they both understand the empowerment of the Spirit as related to service, as opposed to ethical transformation.

### **5.3 Inter Texture**

The thread of Inter texture as applied to the tapestry of the text of the Book of Acts of the Apostles, seeks to trace out the role that other texts, socio-cultural practices, and ideology as displayed in the original context, play in this book. It was noted that the church is seen as the new exodus through the lens of Isaiah. The sub-themes of reconstitution of Israel, ingathering of the exiles, community of the Spirit, and rebuilding of the Davidic kingdom in this regard are also prominent.

Strongstad (1984:45-52), sees three charismatic motifs in the Old and New Testaments, namely the transfer, sign, and vocational motifs. The transfer motif is illustrated in the ministries of Elijah and Elisha as well as in Christ and the church at the day of Pentecost. The sign motif is illustrated in the life of Saul as a way of confirming and authenticating God's call to leadership in his life. He elaborates this by mentioning three signs: 1) asses found 2) loaves of bread given to Saul at Bethel and 3) the Spirit of God coming upon him at Gibeath (1 Samuel 1:1-11). In the New Testament, there are various signs done by both Peter and Paul in the book of Acts. The vocational motif is evidenced in the books of Exodus (28:3, 31:3, 35:31), Deuteronomy (34:9) and Judges (6:34), where the recipients of the Spirit are not merely confirmed, but endowed with particular skills that are appropriate to their call to leadership, such as wisdom, craftsmanship, and military prowess.

Strongstad's further point is that these motifs point to the Messiah who will receive the fullest endowment of the Spirit recorded in scripture and who will transfer this gift for the first time to the Messianic community, resulting in the community itself being a charismatic community.

The Spirit's activity in the Book of Acts of the Apostles is also referred to variously as signs and wonders (Acts 2:19, 4:30, 5:12, 6:8, 14:3, 15:2), as signs (4:16,22, 8:6), and signs and power (8:13). This is the author's way of presenting the church age as similar to the Mosaic age of eschatological redemption, which was characteristic of the redemption of Israel from Egypt, which similarly was accompanied by signs and wonders. The tension in Isaiah between universalism and nationalism is, however, removed in the Book of Acts of the Apostles with the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God. The Spirit is seen as instrumental in this inclusion project.

#### **5.4 Socio-cultural and Ideological Texture**

As has been noted, socio and ideological texture have to do with the dynamic 'voice' through the narrator and characters in texts as well as the Interconnection between belief and power structures and relations of the society we live in. In this regard, we have seen that the Holy

Spirit as a 'Divine frame of reference' plays a central role in enabling and empowering Jesus and believers to bear witness, giving them prophetic words, enabling signs and wonders and leading to an open-ended finale as Paul ministers in Rome. This, in turn, further emphasizes the need for the incorporation of all nations into the new humanity in Christ and this task is enabled by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

This open-ended finale seems to be intended to lead readers to expect the way of witness to still be in process and that Rome should be considered as part of that world-wide mission, rather than the final mission to the end of the earth. In other words, Rome was the termination point of apostolic reach in the person of Paul, who was the chief proponent of the gospel among the gentiles, as well as the far limit of their known world. Within the frame of that apostolic ministry, are principles to be emulated by later generations on the schemes of command, example, and necessary inference. Command refers to whatever the apostles gave by way of imperatives to be obeyed. Example is anything that the apostles did, some of which may be unique, unrepeatable and absolute, and others which may be emulated as principles which may be applied relative to each particular context and not hard and fast methodology. Necessary inference refers to all other things that are not necessarily explicitly taught, but which may be derived by way of inference and necessary conclusions by way of common sense and reason.

Reaching out to every nation beyond Rome, would therefore fall somewhere in the nexus between command (Acts chapter 1 verse 8), example (Paul reaching out to regions beyond 2 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 16), and necessary inference (the open-ended finale of Paul's ministry in Rome) (Acts chapter 28 verse 28 to 31).

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Utilizing Inter texture, there is veritable consensus regarding the centrality of Pentecost for the church of all ages, especially with respect to prophecy. There is also consensus regarding the theme of the new exodus through the lens of Isaiah running through the Book of Acts of the Apostles as well as the sub-themes of the reconstitution of Israel, ingathering of the people of God, the people of God as the community of the Spirit, as

well as the church as the re-institution of the Davidic kingdom under Christ the Messiah as the head. It is also indisputable that this reconstitution of the people of God functions as an ideological mechanism that not only animated evangelism but also fueled tensions with both Judaism and Hellenism. The open-ended finale of the Book of Acts is also universally acknowledged by leading scholars.

The tension that exists is the importance of Pentecost to world evangelization and if so whether that purpose was achieved in Paul's evangelism to the end of their known world, namely Rome, or whether Pentecost is important for empowerment actual world evangelization. Additionally, the question of whether the Spirit was received once-and-for-all by the entire church at Pentecost or whether there is a need for individual believers of all time to have personal experience of the same. For those who believe the latter, there is an additional conundrum of whether such reception of the Spirit is as a *donum superadditum* of whether the Spirit is received for both ethical transformation as well as empowerment for service all at once. Finally, there are some tensions among the writings of the surveyed scholars regarding the hermeneutical principle, the two contending ones being command, example, and necessary inference on the one hand and reading the book of Acts as description of what the early church did rather than as a prescription for the church of all ages.

The book of Acts, however, seems to be concluded the way it was to suggest that "if the work of advancing the gospel is incomplete, the empowering presence of the Spirit is imperative and needed". This theme of empowerment, analysis, and final remarks will be the burden of the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

#### 6.1 Introduction

Using the socio-rhetorical criticism in the study of the Book of Acts of the Apostles, the following have been established by way of consensus among the leading scholars:

1. The indispensable necessity of Pentecost as an eschatological reality for the church,
2. The theme and sub-themes of new exodus, reconstitution of the people of God as a community of the Spirit and as the new Davidic kingdom.
3. The need for empowerment of the Spirit, and
4. The open-ended way in which the Book of Acts of the Apostles is concluded.

We have, however, also noted that there are tensions with regards to the following:

1. Whether Pentecost was meant to empower the church for world-evangelism,
2. Whether the Spirit comes upon the church as a *donum superadditum*,
3. Whether Rome was the termination point for the purpose of Spirit empowerment, and
4. How the Book of Acts ought to be Interpreted.

This chapter seeks to answer the remaining questions outlined above and bring concluding thoughts concerning the entire topic as outlined in the preceding chapters. The appropriate theoretical framework to help answer these questions of application that lie in the world in front of the text is Spirit Hermeneutics.

Firstly, we will enquire concerning the Spirit in the works of the Apostolic Fathers.

#### 6.2 Apostolic Fathers

Concerning the Apostolic Fathers, although not much has been committed to paper from them on the topic of miraculous phenomena, it is clear that the empowering presence of the Spirit in the form of prophetic utterances was considered to be a standard affair in the churches. Only Diognetus is silent on the Spirit; Ignatius sees himself as inspired; the Didache expects and



regulates the ministry of prophets in the churches; Shepherd records prophesyings; Polycarp is indeed very ‘prophetic’ and Papias records both miracles and prophecies. Although Clement does not refer to prophecies, concerned as he was for unity, he does refer to the testing of leaders ‘by the Spirit’, the meaning of which is somewhat obscure. However, as Wire says, “Second Corinthians, Acts, and 1 Clement speak of the same community in the same half century...” (Wire, 1990:1). Therefore, it may be safely concluded that ‘by the Spirit’ must mean what it means in the Book of Acts and Second Corinthians, namely speech that is influenced by the Holy Spirit.

Draper and Jefford see the Didache as a document that tries to articulate a Jewish and Christian identity in which the Jewish elements are transformed and universalized (Draper, Jonathan; Jefford, Clayford, 2015:22-24). In other words, they do not see it as theological, but rather as a moral document. Indeed Draper sees in it a “happy closure of mind about the meaning of the world” (Draper, Jonathan; Jefford, Clayford, 2015:575). As Viola confirms: “The testimony of post-apostolic writers verify that the gifts of the Spirit were still in operation after AD 70” (Viola, 2013:21).

As has been noted, others have seen in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers not so much a continuation of charismata but rather a gradual embodiment and formalization of these phenomena in the offices of the church leadership, such as Bishop, Elders and Deaconate. This formalization was first championed by Ignatius, in his desire to affirm ecclesiastical authority.

## **6.3 Analysis**

### **6.3.1 Empowerment**

That the theme of the empowering role of the Spirit permeates “the warp and woof” of the fabric of this book is self-evident. For example, the empowering role of the Spirit includes but is not limited to the following key events in the Book of Acts: not laying a heavy burden on the gentiles (Acts chapter 15 verse 28), appointment of Elders (Acts 20 verse 28), commissioning pioneers (Acts chapter 13 vs 2), and directing mission (Acts chapter 16 verse 6

to 10). It can be argued that these key events touch the very core of the purpose of the church, namely ethics, ecclesiology, strategic leadership and missions.

With reference to Inner texture, we have seen that the Book of Acts is filled with the empowering acts of the Holy Spirit in both prophetic utterances and miraculous activity on the part of Jesus, the Apostles and indeed ordinary believers<sup>4</sup> (see figure 4.1 below).

**Figure 4**

**Manifestation of the Spirit in Acts**

Ordinary		Extraordinary		Super Extraordinary		Liberation		Prophecy	
3:1-10	Healing of lame, Peter	9:36-41	Restoration from the dead of Tabitha, Peter	5:15	Healing by shadow, Peter	5:19-24; 12:6-11	Freed from prison by angelic Intervention, Peter	2:17 Pentecost	4:31 Apostles
9:18	Blindness, Paul	20:9-12	Restoration from the dead of Eutychus, Paul	19:11	Healing by handkerchief, Paul	16:26	Freed from prison by earthquake, Paul	10:46 Christians	19:6 John's disciples
9:33	Paralysis Aeneas, Peter			5:1-11	Death of Ananias & Sapphira	28:3-6	Deliverance from death by snake bite poison, Paul	11:27 Agabus	15:32 Judas, Silas
14:8-10	A cripple in Lystra, Paul			13:8-11	Blindness of Elymas			21:10 Agabus	13:1 Antioch
8:7	Exorcisms and healings							21:9 Four Daughters	

	of Philip in Caesarea							of Philip	
28:8	Fever and diseases in Malta by Paul								

Empowering manifestations of the Spirit are referred to as Signs and Wonders (2:19, 4:30, 5:12, 6:8, 14:3, 15:2) as signs (4:16,22, 8:6) and as signs and Power (8:13).

This is probably to indicate the New Mosaic age of eschatological redemption, characterized by the same kind of signs and wonders that characterized the redemption of Israel from Egypt.

Concerning Inter texture, the theme of empowerment is carried through as the Spirit is likewise seen as active in inspiring prophetic utterances and miraculous phenomena. There is, however, tension between the Old and the New Testaments with reference to the role of the Spirit in Israel versus His role in the church. The tension, if one sees the relationship between the Old and New Testaments as that of promise and fulfilment, concerns universalism and nationalism with respect to the reconstitution of 'Israel' and the rebuilding of the 'Davidic kingdom'. Are Gentiles included in the 'new' people and Davidic kingdom or not? The Old Testament is decidedly nationalistic, whereas the New is universalistic in scope. The writer of the Book of Acts resolves that tension in favour of universalism. The role of the Holy Spirit is that of empowering witnesses towards the goal of extending the kingdom of God to include the Gentiles in the new Davidic kingdom.

It is here also where Spirit Hermeneutic or reading from the vantage point of Pentecost with respect to the world in front of the text rather than the world of the text is insightful. First of all, reading from this vantage point is missional as well as eschatological because of Luke's recontextualization of the Joel text from 'those days' to 'the last days'. Keener asserts that

“Luke means his programmatic use of Joel as theologically prescriptive and not merely historically descriptive...” (Keener, 2016:77).

With respect to the Socio-cultural and Ideological texture, again the theme of empowerment is advanced through the narrator and characters. They are rendered reliable by use of the ‘Divine frame of reference.’ This leads us to conclude that based on the open-ended finale of an incomplete witness-mission regarding Paul’s ministry in Rome, the work of the Spirit would continue through bold witness by the church that will succeed Paul. This is also strengthened by the eschatological outlook of the book, which sees the ‘church age’ as co-ordinated with the ‘last days’, which is in line with the Book of Joel. These days are expected to be characterized by the unprecedented outpouring of the Spirit. Ideology comes through in a ‘voice’ given to the Spirit, in the forms of person-like and person-unlike qualities. This voice, whether through direct utterances, angelic appearances etc., approves of certain witnesses, thus carrying through a particular ideology to the implied reader. That ideology is that of the need to complete world evangelism in the power of the Spirit, that includes both Jews and Gentiles with Christ as the unifying center.

Spirit Hermeneutics is also relevant here, especially if one considers the narrative quality of the Book of Acts. By grafting ourselves into that narrative, the reader becomes part of the extension of that narrative. When Luke mentions speaking in other tongues, he seems to have in mind the tower of Babel and the table of nations. It appears that he wishes to emphasize a different aspect of tongues to what Paul does in his writings. Luke uses the experience to emphasize the fact that the Spirit empowered the church to cross cultural barriers (represented by the various languages) with their prophetically inspired message. Hence, concludes Keener “Tongues thus offer one kind of prophetic speech... one particularly relevant for Luke’s emphasis on cross-cultural mission” (Keener, 2016:86). Thus those who continue this mission today, remain part of the narrative of salvation history to which the Book of Acts points.

### **6.3.2 Importance of the Spirit for Evangelism and Spirit as *Donum superadditum***

It has also been noted that the tension between Pentecost viewed as paradigmatic, archetypal and even as *donum superadditum* on the one hand and as the classical Pentecostal view of distinct, normative, and subsequent experience from conversion on the other is a difficult one to resolve. This difficulty becomes almost insurmountable if it is approached using the traditional exegetical tools that were utilized in the past and particularly during the Reformation.

The Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin embraced Cessationism largely because they denounced practices in the Roman Catholic Church regarding relics and what they saw as the “cult of the saints” (Keener, 2011:372-373). BB Warfield, who is perhaps the biggest single influencer and defender of Cessationism in the Reformed tradition of early twentieth century, also rejected continued activity of the Spirit especially miracles, on the grounds that they are associated with revelation. He asserts that “miracles belong to revelation periods and appear only when God is speaking to his people through accredited messengers, declaring his gracious purposes” (Warfield, 1918:21-22). Gaffin is firmly in this tradition, affirming that the material authority (the gospel) and the formal authority (the apostles) belong together (Grudem, 1996:39). In other words, the Spirit’s inspiration and empowerment of the apostles was meant to authenticate the gospel message in such a way that to claim what is seen as unique to the apostles, namely Spirit gifts such as prophecy and miracles, is essentially to claim authority to write scripture and bring new revelation; therefore it could usurp the unique authority of Jesus and his special emissaries, the apostles. John MacArthur is also firmly of this view.

When one considers the above using Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation by viewing the text of the Book of Acts of the Apostles not as individual threads written as a theological treatise on the Holy Spirit, but as a tapestry (including various textures) woven beautifully together, the following becomes clear. The theme of the Book of Acts of the Apostles is that of Spirit empowerment of the human witnesses. Spirit Hermeneutics helps us to look beyond the world of the text, enabling us to insert ourselves in the narrative and thus conclude that the implied

author expected us to conclude that as long as the witness-mission remains incomplete, the ministry of the Spirit, complete with prophetic utterances and miraculous activity are both needed and should be expected. Strongstad points out that the Pentecost narrative fulfills not only paradigmatic elements but also programmatic elements. To that effect there are vocational, commission-related, and empowerment purposes to the narrative (Strongstad, 1984:102-104).

The said tension can be resolved by means of multi-perspectivism that Spirit Hermeneutics avails to the biblical scholar. Personal and subjective experience and objective revelation are not irreconcilable polarities. Experience can function as a perspective that either confirms or refutes dogma, which also functions as a confirming/refuting perspective from a different angle. In this way, one may conclude with Gordon Fee that there is a particular kind of apostolic authority through inspiration and the particular quality of signs and wonders that were unique to Jesus and the apostles, but which nevertheless are still operational today as non-inspired utterances and powerful manifestations of spiritual gifts (Fee, 1994:28-30).

MacArthur's contention that miracles in the Old Testament were connected with increased revelation (Moses, Joshua, and Elisha) and that therefore they were programmatic on the one hand and that there was no experiential continuity between those periods on the other can also be easily refuted. Firstly, it is clear that the 'last days' of Joel as quoted in the Book of Acts of the Apostles is a unified and unbroken eschatological period of time. The out-pouring of the Spirit in that time-period is meant for the 'program' of world evangelization and incorporation of both Jews and Gentiles as the one 'people of God.' The open-ended conclusion of the book of Acts of the Apostles, read from the vantage point of Pentecost, therefore proves the continuation of that program. Therefore, as long as the world-evangelization program is incomplete, Spirit empowerment accompanied by various miraculous phenomena is to be expected and yearned for.

There are some who see Pentecost in the light of *historia salutis*, such as Dunn. He sees the role of the Spirit as 'archetypal' for the rest of the church age. In this way, he can accept that in the Book of Acts of the Apostles, there were indeed Spirit empowered individuals, but that

phenomenon was once and for all time activity. His answer to our first question above would be that the Book of Acts of the apostles is unique, and it documents a completed history. This may be termed a classical Cessationist position, which was espoused by the Reformers, BB Warfield, and those in the classical Reformed tradition, such as Richard Gaffin.

Strongstad, however, sets off four arguments against this view. First, he observes that baptism or filling in the Spirit is not an isolated and unique event, but rather occurs to different people on different occasions. Secondly, being filled with the Spirit is both an individual and collective experience. Thirdly, it is not a once for all experience, but happens to the same group of people repeatedly. Lastly, he asserts that being filled with the Spirit “invariably results in one of several speech patterns” (Strongstad, 1984:89-90).

Again, Dunn seems motivated by a desire to protect the foundational nature of New Testament apostles and prophets and to protect the authority of scripture. However, as has been shown, insights from Inner texture in Luke-Acts and from Gordon Fee demonstrate a continuity and discontinuity in Spirit empowerment of the people of God. This can simultaneously protect the authority of scripture, on the one hand and safeguard the continuity of spirit-empowered utterances and miracles, on the other. For example, the Old Testament indicates transfer of Spirit empowerment from Moses to Joshua and the seventy and from Elijah to Elisha. This served a practical program and also showed the unique authority of these servants of God. The fact that Moses and Elijah are seen at the mount of transfiguration with Jesus speaking to them about his departure (*exodon*) in Luke chapter nine verse thirty-one and the language of Jesus promising his disciples that they will receive Spirit baptism in Acts chapter one verse two to eight, is meant to encourage the disciples to expect the same transfer in their lives. This is indicating continuity, but also discontinuity in that there is a sense in which the apostles were unique in authority. The false dichotomy that says you either submit to unique apostolic authority and expect to have no spirit empowered ministry or empowerment which goes hand in hand with inspired authority must therefore be rejected. The church can be both empowered by the Spirit and submit to unique authority of inspired scriptures from the hand of the apostles and not arrogate that authority to themselves. Viola claims that Cessationists started to Interpret the 1 Corinthians 13 verse 8 to 13 text which speaks about gifts ceasing when the

‘perfection’ came as referring to the closing of the canon only after the Jesus Movement and charismatic movement of the 1960s (Viola, 2013:19). There is also no tension in the scriptures themselves between prophecies of non-apostles and the authority of the apostles.

Much like Dunn, Turner sees the Spirit’s activity as ‘paradigmatic’, by which he means that the activity of the Spirit in the early church serves as a sort of a necessary template and example for the rest of the church age. He, however, also asserts that Jesus’ reception of the Spirit at Jordan and that of the disciples at Pentecost, is the Jewish Spirit of prophecy and therefore acts as an organ of revelation and not primarily as a grace of religious renewal. He further says that the Spirit of prophecy is associated with miracles but is not related to the power of preaching. The only possible way that he differs materially from Dunn is that he (Turner) makes room for a powerful demonstration of Spirit’s activity not only in the beginning chapters of the book of Acts but throughout the book and indeed in the life of the church. He, however, seems to deny the mission-advance purpose of Spirit empowerment. This seems to make the activity of the Spirit normative to the extent there may be a need for prophecy (perhaps associated with some revelation). But since the Spirit is not for the purpose of gospel advance, miracles and related spirit activity are not to be expected with respect to world evangelization.

The current author agrees with Turner that the Spirit at Jordan and Pentecost is primarily the spirit of prophecy and not of spiritual renewal. Christ at Jordan was already ‘indwelt’ by the Spirit from conception, and the disciples at Pentecost had already received indwelling Spirit as recorded in John chapter twenty verse twenty-two. Turner does not, however, give a persuasive argument for asserting that the Spirit enables prophecy but not preaching. His limitation in this regard is based on his utilization of only Inner texture in his exegesis, and not on the full orbit of socio-rhetorical Interpretation. Socio-cultural and ideological textures, if they were available in his repertoire of hermeneutical skills, would have enabled him to make much of the plot structure and geography of Luke-Acts narrative as was illustrated in chapter three:

- “Beginning (Luke 3:1-4:13) at the Jordan river.
- Development towards the central point (Luke 4:14-19:44), Galilee to Jerusalem.



- Central point (Luke 19:45- Acts 2:13) in Jerusalem.
- Development towards the end (Acts 2:14-28:15), from Jerusalem through Judea and Samaria, and towards Rome.
- Open-ended finale (Acts 28:16-31) in Rome.”

This would have enabled him to see the connection between spirit-empowerment and gospel advance, not merely with prophecy and miracles. Again, the insinuation that prophecies somehow rival the authority of scripture is controverted by prophecies in the biblical narrative itself. We are told that there were many believers who prophesied in the New Testament, but no attempt is made to record such prophecies for future generations. This seems to indicate that prophecies were not considered canonical and therefore were not authoritative for the whole church.

Menzies sees the role of the Spirit in a believer as foreshadowed in the birth and baptism of Jesus as an archetype. In the same way as Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and then subsequently endued with power from above for missions at his baptism at the Jordan river, so the believer receives the Spirit at conversion and becomes transformed ethically and then needs Spirit’s empowerment for mission. Although Menzies speaks of *donum superadditum*, his view is different from the classical Pentecostal view, in that the empowering presence of the Spirit though distinct is not a second work of grace but rather is only logically subsequent to conversion, and not temporally so. In other words, the Spirit is received at conversion but has two distinct functions, one to ethically transform the believer and the other to empower her for service. As can be seen above, Turner rejects the separation of ethics and empowerment for missions but rather sees the two as accomplished by the selfsame Spirit at conversion without distinction. The present writer agrees with Menzies on this point and therefore separates with Turner. The main reason is derived again from the plot structure. Both Acts chapter one and two do not mention ethical transformation as connected in any way to Spirit baptism, but rather single out gospel proclamation as the main purpose of Spirit baptism and empowerment. In chapter one, the writer says, “You will receive power when the Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The connection of spirit baptism to witnessing is

unmistakable, and the lack of reference to ethical transformation is conspicuous by its absence. Peter's sermon in Acts chapter two, which references to Joel's prophecy is also silent on ethical transformation, but extravagant in its enunciation of the empowerment theme, such as prophecy, visions, dreams, wonders, signs and the results of such empowerment, namely the salvation of "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord..." (Acts 2:16-21).

Fee has similar views to all the above, but sees continuity and discontinuity in the Spirit's activity then and now. The Old Testament believers were looking forward to the New Age, which was ushered in through the Person and ministry of Jesus and the witness of the early church. The Spirit is the clear evidence and sure sign of that New Age. Fee is the most sympathetic to the classical Pentecostal position in that he sees the coming of the Spirit in the life of a believer as having phenomenological evidence. He separates from Pentecostals in that he sees the Spirit as an eschatological reality, the veritable *sine qua non* and essence of what it is to be a Christian as far as the early church is concerned. In this respect he is in agreement with both Menzies and Gaffin that "the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor 15:45c). His sympathy with classical Pentecostalism is predicated on his observation that they are right as to their experience of the Spirit and their discontent in what they see as powerless and ineffective Christian witness while asserting that they err in reading their experience into the biblical text.

The above tension can be resolved not by doing more of the same exegesis, but rather by coming to the text with a different paradigm. Hur points out that although the scholars above express different Interpretations, they nevertheless employ the same methodology, namely literary-criticism (Hur, 2001:22). He notes that, that new tool and paradigm is narrative criticism, which he claims has opened some doors that had previously been closed to scholars. Used in this manner, Luke-Acts will be seen not with an eye to reconstruct the historical and theological concepts of the Spirit that lie behind it, but rather a fuller picture of the Lukan Spirit will be appreciated. Our assertion here is that an even more holistic reading of the Spirit's activity in Luke-Acts with respect to the world of the text is socio-rhetorical criticism; even more applicable to the world in front of the text, is reading from the perspective of Spirit Hermeneutics.

### **6.3.3 Expectation regarding miraculous phenomena beyond the ministry of the Apostles**

Having established the central role of the Spirit in the life of the church, what is left to be done is to assess whether such an activity is a harbinger of things to come or a dying flame of the Apostolic deposit on their disciples in the scheme of *historia salutis*. As has been observed, it is perhaps here that perspective plays a decisive role in Interpretation. If one approaches Luke-Acts as a theological treatise about the Holy Spirit, rather than as a narrative, one is likely to end with what has been uncovered by leading scholars. These as we have seen are namely, the Spirit in line with the Jewish concept of the Spirit of prophecy as seen in Inter-testamental texts such as the documents of the Qumran community, and Spirit in terms of both prophecy and miraculous phenomena as illustrated in the book of Acts of the Apostles with a purpose of authenticating his messengers.

However, if one utilizes the Interpretive keys gleaned from socio-rhetorical criticism, such as viewing Luke-Acts as a narrative, a much more comprehensive view is gained. For example, using insights from Inter-texture and noting that the Book of Acts sees the church as new Israel through the lens of Isaiah and involved in the new exodus, parallels in both the Old and New Testaments become evident and motifs of transfer, sign, and vocation can be clearly perceived. Sub-themes of reconstitution of the people of God, ingathering of Jews and Gentiles, and rebuilding of the Davidic kingdom also become evident. Seen in this way the Spirit is not to be viewed either historically or soteriologically, but in both historical and soteriological senses as viewed from particular angles and sub-themes. For example, the motif of transfer that is seen in the Old Testament between Elijah and Elisha on the one hand and Jesus and the church on the other, which is meant to show continuity of the Spirit's activity through his servants, can be confirmed. This will serve to confirm Gordon Fee and Wilson's view of continuity and discontinuity. It is indeed true that Jesus receives and then confers the Spirit on his disciples. But it is also true that there is an infinite difference between Christ's reception of the Spirit and that of his disciples, and there is also a uniqueness about the Spirit's activity in the lives of the apostles and in the lives of subsequent disciples.

The sign motif can also be discerned. This is demonstrated in the Old Testament in the life of Saul, and the New Testament counterpart in the ministries of Peter and Paul respectively. It was were meant to confirm and authenticate their ministries. This serves to underline the view of Dunn, Turner, and the Reformers that the Spirit served to confirm and authenticate Saul in the Old Testament, Jesus Christ as the Messiah in the Gospels, and Peter and Paul in the book of Acts and the epistles of the New Testament. It is, however, clear that the Spirit does more than merely confirmation and authentication of leaders. There is confirmation and authentication of the message as well, and wherever the message is preached it needs to be confirmed and authenticated by signs and wonders. The perspective that Spirit Hermeneutic brings is to enable us to see both continuity and discontinuity. Discontinuity in that no one today should claim equal status with Jesus Christ and the Apostles, continuity in that the spirit still confirms and authenticates not the messengers but the gospel message, through signs and wonders. One could object that at this point this perspective leads to a hermeneutical circle, where the reader simply reads their presupposition into scripture, thus justifying rather than measuring their experience by scripture. To this objection, can be responded that the dynamic of the Spirit is not a dismissal of the old textual one. Rather, it is a dynamic that seeks to submit to the Spirit's leading and affirms application via analogy. The canon retorts Keener "provides us the opportunity and the responsibility to submit our hearing the Spirit to what the tested prophetic tradition has heard, and thus grow in hearing correctly" (Keener, 2016:142).

Lastly, the motif of vocation which is seen in the Old Testament as an impartation of particular skills in particular people is seen in the New Testament as the Spirit that Jesus receives after his resurrection and pours out into the church, not once but over and over again, thus confirming it as a charismatic community. This serves to confirm Menzies's view of Spirit as *donum superadditum*, imparting certain gifts and abilities as may be required by the moment.

Sub-themes such as growth and multiplication (exodus), witness (quotation from Isaiah 'light to the gentiles'), theophany (reference to fire) and the reconfiguration of 'afterwards' with 'in the last days' in the quotation of the Joel text are also evident in the book of Acts.

The view of the present author, as influenced by the resources of socio-rhetorical criticism, is that all of the above quoted scholars contribute but a piece of the puzzle that adds to build a composite picture of the Spirit's activity, rather than a fragmented one. For example, like Dunn and Turner believe, to have Christ is to have him with all of the benefits that he procures for his people. These benefits include salvation as well as spiritual gifts. Contra Dunn and Turner, however, although it is affirmed that in principle all the gifts of Christ are received at conversion, the present author denies that all Christians receive all of the benefits experientially. This is consistent with Inter-textual reading of the text, especially when the parallels between ancient Israel and the disciples of Jesus are noted. When Moses appointed the seventy men of Israel to assist him in bearing the burden of the people with him (Numbers 11), the purpose was not to constitute them as the people of God, but rather it was for service. When the Spirit rested on them they prophesied. Similarly, when the Spirit came on the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, it was not the Spirit of sonship as they had already received the Spirit of Sonship (John 20:22), but rather Jesus said to them that they would "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The present author agrees with Menzies that the typical Jewish understanding of the Spirit is that of the Spirit of prophecy. The disciples on the day of Pentecost receive the Spirit not as the Spirit of sonship but rather as a *donum superadditum*. It is, however, denied that such a Spirit is limited in activity only to prophecy (revelation), but rather it is affirmed that it also includes empowerment for fulfilling the Great Commission and therefore such empowerment and concomitant miracles are needed as long as and to the extent that the gospel is proclaimed. Once again, the present author relies on Spirit Hermeneutic reading here. There is a difference between the activity of the Spirit among Jews in the Inter-testamental period with that of the post-Ascension Jesus community. In fulfillment of the Joel prophecy, there is to be expected an unprecedented eschatological outpouring of the Spirit. This is not merely limited to prophecy but also to miracles spanning the entire period of time known as the 'last days'. In this regard one can affirm the historical uniqueness of Pentecost on the one hand, while also viewing it as an inauguration of the blessings it was designed to procure on the other. One can

further see the experiential dimension not as automatic, but rather requiring Christians to strive to receive such an experience through the God-ordained means of grace, such as prayer.

With Menzies, the present author sees the distinction between the Spirit within (for ethical transformation) and the Spirit upon (for missions). With Fee, we affirm that Spirit empowerment for service has phenomenological evidence, whether that being speaking in tongues, or some other evidence of empowerment for service and missions. The experiential dimension and its impact on the mission of the people of God is often overlooked. Strongstad observes that Pentecost alone is the sufficient cause for the transformation of Peter and the disciples. He further draws a parallel with Moses, Isaiah and Saul and their transformation after experiencing the Spirit of God. Moses's experience at the burning bush is the sole explanation for his resultant courage and leadership. Isaiah's vision of the Lord in the temple accounts for his response to the call of God, and Saul's encounter of the risen Lord explains his transformation afterwards. He concludes that "Pentecost is analogous to the experience of Moses, Isaiah, and Paul in that the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost commissioned and equipped the disciples for service" (Strongstad, 1984:99).

It is also the view of the present author that there is a pyramid of giftedness which may be ranked as follows: 1. Messianic giftedness, 2. Apostolic or foundational giftedness, 3. Repeatable gifts and finally 4. gifts that are available to every believer (Poythress, 2010:14-15). This view fits in with how Fee understands continuity and discontinuity with respect to the church in the Book of Acts and the church beyond the time and ministry of the original apostles.

The reason for the different categories is that Christ clearly had special gifts as the unique Son of God, and secondly, that it appears that although there were manifestations of spiritual gifts in the life and ministry of the Apostolic Fathers, they seem to have been more infrequent, although they have increased and decreased through the vicissitudes of time.

Furthermore, it seems what is lost in the debate is the purpose for Spirit empowerment. We have seen that ideologically, the author of the book of Acts of the Apostles, is at

pains to show us that it was through Spirit empowerment that Paul was able to take the gospel to the ends of the known world. We may thus infer that as long as the work of ingathering of people from every nation into the new humanity in Christ is incomplete, the Holy Spirit will continue to empower his servants with prophetic utterances and divine empowerment to finish that task. This can also be inferred from the open-ended manner of the end of the Book of Acts of the Apostles.

On the strength of such a perspective, the ebbs and flows of the Spirit's activity in the works of the Apostolic Fathers will be evaluated not as a gradual fading of what once shone bright under the Apostles of Christ, but as indicating the state of the church in various epochs. During times of spiritual awakening, the church has seen mass conversions, activation of prophetic utterances, healings, and reports of miraculous phenomena. But as the Second Coming inches closer and closer with each passing day, it is expected that greater Spirit activity will be seen and that will result in the national conversion of Israel and the Gentiles in anticipation of the spiritual fulfilment of the feast of Tabernacles.

Concerning the Apostolic Fathers, the following may be concluded. From Inner texture it is clear that of the spiritual gifts at least prophecy was a standard affair in the churches and the writings of the Fathers. Regarding Inter texture, it appears the Apostolic Fathers saw themselves in the same trajectory as the epistles. Confirmation of this is also in the fact that many writings of the Fathers were thought to be 'inspired', and others were written in a self-consciously similar structure to the epistles (for example Clement). From a socio-cultural and ideological textural point of view, some see the writings of the Fathers as a "happy closure of the mind about the meaning of the world", and as an attempt to transform and universalize Judaism in a quest for a unique identity. Others, such as Clement and Ignatius consumed with a desire for 'unity', sought to embody miraculous phenomena and subsume it under the 'offices' of the church, namely Bishop, Elder, and Deacon.

What is nevertheless clear is that however infrequent or of poor quality the spiritual phenomena were compared to the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles, there was an undeniable presence of the prophetic and miraculous phenomena in the time of the Apostolic Fathers. Since these occurred temporally after the time of the Apostles, one can conclude that these gifts should be expected to go through ebbs and flows throughout church history.

#### **6.3.4 Hermeneutical Principle**

As was noted in chapter three, one of the issues that need resolution is how scripture needs to be interpreted. Many Cessationists insist that doctrinal matters must be sought from the didactic passages of scripture which are seen as prescriptive, and not from the historical portions of scripture which are seen as merely descriptive. They will therefore dismiss the hermeneutical approach that seeks to establish doctrine from the Book of Acts using the command, example, and necessary inference principle. The principle that is otherwise accepted as expressly stated in the Westminster Confession of Faith which states that “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence, may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or by traditions of men” (MacArthur, 2013:116).

Strongstad has, however, in our view persuasively, refuted that view. Relying on Second Timothy chapter three verse sixteen and seventeen which states that all scripture is inspired and therefore profitable for doctrine and Romans chapter fifteen verse four which likewise asserts that whatever is written in the former days (scripture) was written for our instruction, he goes on to assert rightly that the descriptive/prescriptive principle with reference to didactic/historical portions of scripture is unbiblical and therefore should be rejected.

That being the case, it means that the narratives found in the Book of Acts, including the plot structure, convey inspired scripture and are therefore to be carefully studied and obeyed. Careful consideration needs therefore to be placed on the empowerment theme that runs throughout these narratives with regards to things like Christian liberties (No burden of



Mosaic law to be placed on the Gentiles as in Acts chapter fifteen verse twenty-eight), what is needed for appointment of church leaders and pioneers (Acts chapter twenty verse twenty-eight and chapter thirteen verse two respectively), mission strategies and the like (Acts chapter sixteen verse six to ten). Also, the tension between the New Testament and the Old Testament with regards to nationalism and universalism, which is resolved by way of the narrative structure of the Book of Acts and in particular by the ‘voice’ given to the implied author and narrator, must be accepted as authoritative, at least in the world of the text. The Book of Acts (which terminates with Paul’s ministry) goal of empowerment, which is set out as world evangelism through the divine frame of reference; it also has an eschatological outlook. These may then be expected, if not by command, at least by good and necessary inference, to encompass evangelism of all people of all time to the very ends of the earth.

#### **6.4 Final Remarks**

The key question guiding this research is how the early Christians thinkers conceived of the role of the Spirit in the church. It is clear that the Spirit played a prominent role in both the gospels and the Book of Acts of the Apostles. It is also clear that there was considerable Spirit activity recorded in the writings of the early Christian thinkers and leaders. We can therefore conclude that the early Christian thinkers, read in line with the insights from both socio-rhetorical Interpretation with respect to the world of the text, and Spirit Hermeneutic as an epistemic approach regarding the world in front of the text, conceived the role of the Spirit as central in the Christian community, which was itself seen as a community of the Spirit. Nay, they concluded that Christian life, mission, goal, and over-all purpose was unachievable without the active, miraculous, empowering, and phenomenological involvement in every aspect of the life of the church.

Even as the debate rages, there is a shift in the western worldview regarding affirmation of miracles. Power encounters have often sparked church growth as thousands of followers of traditional religions became Christians, following a confrontation and clash of spirits from leading evangelists. Not surprisingly, such experiences have influenced how believers have approached what they view as analogous accounts in the bible. Of course for Christians, Scripture has or should have epistemic primacy and therefore the goal of exegesis is to seek an

author's own intent in what has been written. This quest is not undermined by the problem of pre-understanding where the reader may be charged with understanding the Bible on the basis of his own presuppositions. "The hermeneutical goal is that of a steady progress towards a fusion of horizons. But it is to be achieved in such a way that the particularity of each horizon is fully taken into account and respected. This means both respecting the rights of the text and allowing it to speak" (Keener, 2016:173). This for me is the role of Bible scholars in their noble task of Interpreting and applying the text of Scripture.

Craig Keener suggests that the fastest growing churches in the United States are those that affirm miracles. He further asserts that the situation, though less so in Europe, is even higher in most of Africa and Latin America (Keener, 2011:204-205). Even so, may the church of Christ be continually filled by the Spirit.

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