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TOPIC: *OUR HERMENEUTIC CENTER*

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Introduction

Hermeneutics has been defined by Dana and Glaze as, "... the science which deals with the history, principles, laws, and methods of interpretation ..."¹The word Hermeneutics comes from the Greek word *hermeneuein* that means, to explain.²In addition, Robert M. Grant has also defined the task of interpretation of any written record of human thought as "... the exposition of its author's meaning in terms of our own thought forms ..."³The paper addresses the subject of hermeneutics using the grammatical-historical approach that Baptists have embraced for a long time. According to Abner Chou, this approach is "... the hermeneutic prescribed by Scripture, and ... is the hermeneutic that leads to a full exposition of Scripture's message that honors Christ ..."⁴ and also enables the reader to "... see what the authors have established ..."⁵The presentation emanates from the Baptist denomination's emphasis on the primacy of Scripture for faith and Practice. Baptists are known as people of the Book. The major historical and contemporary Baptist confessions affirm this reality. For instance, the short statement in the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* holds:

1. God, who is himself truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by his Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches; it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine author, both authenticates it to us by his inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

¹ H.E. Dana and R.E. Glaze, *interpreting the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1961), 110

² Weldon E. Viertel, *The Bible and its Interpretation*, First Course. Biblical Background ((El Paso, Texas: Carib Baptist Publications, 1973), 110.

³ Robert M. Grant *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (rev.ed., New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), 11

⁴ Abner Chou, "A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic" *THE MASTER'S SEMINARY JOURNAL* 27 (fall 2016): 135

⁵ Ibid.

5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the church.⁶

Likewise, the first statement in the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message* also affirms that:

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation to its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.⁷

Both statements affirm the primacy and inerrancy of Scripture and its value as the fundamental basis upon which Baptist beliefs and practices are to be derived. As this paper shall observe, Baptist responses to Pentecostalism have confounded the efficacy of these statements.

This paper aims to examine the subject of hermeneutics in the light of some Baptist churches' tendency to compromise their position regarding the doctrine of the primacy of Scripture. As Kevin Rodgers has rightly observed, "... while we have been careful not to allow some of the bad doctrines in other churches to infiltrate our churches, we have not been very careful with some of the practices ..."⁸. The paper also examines the reasons Pentecostalism has been a challenge among Baptists, particularly, in the African context; and also attempts to identify the real point of departure from the primacy of Scripture; and the necessity of adhering to proper Biblical Hermeneutics and return to our Baptist heritage.

The paper deals with the following topics;

- The Pentecostals in Africa
- Baptist vulnerability to Pentecostalism
- The Baptists' drift toward Pentecostalism and their response
- The importance of Hermeneutics in restoring the primacy of Scripture

⁶ The Baptist Start Page, "*The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*", http://www.baptiststart.com/print/chicago_statement.html (Accessed July 23, 2018), 2

⁷ Southern Baptist Convention, "*The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*" (2016), 1. <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000.asp> (Accessed July 23, 2018)

⁸ Kevin Rodgers, *The Issue of Pentecostal Praying*. 3

The Pentecostals in Africa

The Pentecostal drift among Baptists in Africa is evidenced by the prevalence of charismatic practices formally despised in Baptist circles. Among them are the manifestations of prophetic utterances, speaking in tongues, deliverance and the prosperity gospel messages. To understand these practices, we must first understand who Pentecostals are, their origins; and their basic teachings and subsequent hermeneutics.

Pentecostal Origins and Work in Africa

The majority of mainline Pentecostal Denominations have their historical descent in the Azusa Street Revival (1906-09) led by William J. Seymour which were later accompanied by the Charismatic movement and Neo-Pentecostalism in the latter half of the twentieth century. The origin of Pentecostalism itself can be traced from the Methodist and Holiness movements that emphasized the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the nineteenth century.⁹

The European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism reports that “Classical Pentecostals have been operating in Africa since 1907, when the first missionaries from Azusa Street arrived in Liberia and Angola.”¹⁰ John Graham Lake arrived in South Africa in 1908 resulting in the founding of the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Zion Christian Church. This was followed by the founding of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in 1913 by Lehman, a companion of Lake. In Kenya, the first Pentecostal missionary arrived from Finland in 1913.¹¹ Since then, Pentecostalism has spread throughout Africa to emerge as the largest Christian movement in Sub-Saharan Africa.

According to the Pew Research Center of Religion and public life report:

Pentecostals represented 12%, or about 107 million, of Africa’s population of nearly 890 million people. This figure comprised individual subscribing to the classic Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God or the Apostolic Faith Mission that were founded in the early 20th century, as well as those who belong to Pentecostal denominations or churches that have formed in the recent past such as the Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria. Charismatic members of non-Pentecostal denominations, who in Africa are drawn mainly from Catholic and Protestant churches and Africa Instituted Churches (AICs), number an additional 40 million, or approximately 5% of the population.¹²

⁹ Madalitso K. Banja, *Faith of Many Colours: Reflections on Pentecostal and Charismatic Challenges in Zambia* (Lusaka: Mission Press, 2009), 2

¹⁰ European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism (2007) Africa. Birmingham University. <http://www.glopent.net/globalpentecostalism/Africa>. (Accessed July 22, 2018)

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Pew Research Center, Spirit and Power- A 10 Country Survey of Pentecostals: An Overview of Pentecostalism in Africa (2005). http://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/overview_pentecostalism_in_africa (Accessed July 24, 2018)

The report also cites Zimbabwe, South Africa, Ghana, Congo-Zaire, Nigeria, Kenya, Angola, Zambia and Uganda as accounting for phenomenal Pentecostal expansion of which Pentecostals and Charismatics represent more than 20% of the national population while at the lower end were Ivory Coast, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Madagascar and Sudan at less than 10% of national populations. Countries in the middle range included Congo-Brazzaville, the Central African Republic, Malawi, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia and Mozambique. Recent characteristics have included Mega Assemblies with ‘apostolic figure heads’¹³

Basic Pentecostal Teachings

Pentecostals largely appear to teach orthodox Christianity. However, Classic Pentecostals are “Christians who believe that there is a post-conversion experience called BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT available to every believer.”¹⁴ Drawing their theology from the Book of Acts, Pentecostals argue that the Spirit Baptism experience supplies spiritual power for ministry and witnessing through the manifestation of spiritual gifts (*Gk. charismata*) mentioned in the Pauline epistles. Particularly, speaking in tongues is evidence of Spirit Baptism and prophecy and miracles accompany a successful preaching ministry.¹⁵ Out of Charismatic/Pentecostal Christianity emerged the Word of Faith (or Word-Faith) movement in the later part of the twentieth century. Their basic theology is a mix of orthodox Christianity and mysticism and is characterized by emphasis on the force of faith. They denounce the idea that Christians can suffer. Based on their interpretation of the Greek word *sozo* (salvation), they teach that the saving work done by Jesus on the cross included health and provision in this life.¹⁶

The Baptist Drift toward Pentecostalization

Baptist Responses to Pentecostalism

Whereas Classic Pentecostalism was viewed with suspicion by most Baptists, Neo-Pentecostalism appears to have caught the attention of many and invited diverse responses among Baptist churches in Africa. Arnett, suggests that the slow church growth of the 1990s in the Baptist churches coupled with the mass exodus of members that followed the resurgence of Neo-Pentecostalism have ignited a spectrum of responses.¹⁷ On the one extreme, the traditionalists hold firmly to historical Baptist faith and practice. These maintain a Cessationist approach in their view of *Charismata* and resist Neo-Pentecostal influences. Next to them are Baptists who manifest a Hidden response to Pentecostalism. They appear as the historical traditional Baptist church and

¹³ In the Zambian scenario, the largest Pentecostal church in the Bread of Life International under Bishop Dr. Joe Imakando, formerly a Baptist pastor overseeing his Mega church of around 10,000 members and numerous congregations throughout Zambia, and many more in the Southern African region.

¹⁴ James D. Hernando, *Dictionary of Hermeneutics: A Concise Guide to Terms, Names, Methods, and Expressions* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2005), 171

¹⁵ Hernando, 169

¹⁶ *Word of Faith*, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Word_of_Faith

¹⁷ Randy Arnett, *Pentecostalization: The Evolution of Baptists in Africa* (Eldon: Randy Arnett, 2017),

do not promote charismatic manifestations as a core element of their corporate life but their individual members attend meetings with ministries where charismatic expressions are visible. To a large extent, the church neither restricts nor affirms the practices publicly.

On the other extreme side of this spectrum, there are Imitator churches. These are Baptist churches who unconsciously or consciously copy and apply the charismatic manifestations in their corporate life. Baptist churches in rural areas without strong theologians near them have been particularly vulnerable in this regard. Charismatic manifestations among Pentecostals are deemed simply as expressions of a 'church on fire' by Baptists and imitating them is attempting spiritual things. Next to the Imitators are Baptists who have embraced the Word-Faith teachings.

In the center of the spectrum are two other response models. The Restrained Baptists on one hand restrict Neo-Pentecostalism. These are the common brand of Pentecostal-oriented Baptists. These are Baptists who at some time in the past had embraced Neo-Pentecostalism but were disappointed with extremism. They allow and even support charismatic manifestations, yet suppress any sign of disorder. The converse side of this response is the Unrestricted Baptists who openly accept, welcome and encourage speaking in tongues, prophecy, and deliverance even in their worship services. This is the most prevalent manifestation of Pentecostalization among Baptist churches in Africa.¹⁸

Baptist Vulnerability to Pentecostalism

The broad spectrum of Baptist affinity toward Pentecostalization is clear evidence that Baptists in Africa were already vulnerable to the Pentecostal/Charismatic onslaught. In his Book, Arnett draws three conclusions from his Togolese research that can be summarized into three basic problems- foundational, structural and polity inadequacies. According to Arnett, "... The Mission created vulnerable churches because of its failure (1) to grasp the deep structures of culture, (2) to develop an effective communication strategy, (3) to present the gospel accurately, and (4) to apprentice church leaders appropriately..."¹⁹ Most respondents to his research averred Southern Baptist Convention Mission agencies did not contextualize the Gospel into the African worldview. In his words, "the Mission did not penetrate beyond the culture's surface levels of artefacts, processes, products, myths and rituals. The belief systems, much less the epistemology, categories and logic of the worldview remained unaddressed because the Mission's Western influenced plausibility structures did not correlate with those of the African context."²⁰ For example, Baptist witness ignored the middle zone (the world of spirits) so prevalent in African Traditional Religions (ATR), a factor the Neo-Pentecostalism movement has exploited in its African drive.

¹⁸ Arnett, 70

¹⁹ Ibid., 64-65

²⁰ Ibid., 65

Second, the heightened focus on decisions for Christ and church planting overlooked the significant aspects of discipleship and leadership development. The main thrust in discipleship was the Baptist Beliefs booklet that was famously taught in the Baptism classes for Baptism and membership purposes. Matters of the Christian life experience were not emphasized. Instead of propagating an apprenticeship model of discipleship, a text-oriented approach among a non-text and highly oral audience was emphasized. Theological education, though introduced early in the 1960s was highly centralised and accessed by the 'called', only prepared to function in a local church and not in the theological market place of apologetics.²¹

Thirdly, the dissolution of Mission organizations in African countries in preference to the cluster approach by the International Missions Board in the 2000s disrupted developmental goals of their agencies. This was very evident especially in countries where the nationalization program had already commenced through which Mission bodies hoped to steadily pass leadership on to national conventions, such as in Zambia. This disruption resulted in a reduced resource envelope for national conventions and waning morale among them as the Mission drew back.

These factors, compounded by congregational church polity of the Baptist churches enhanced the vulnerability of both local churches, Associations and Conventions to the seemingly vibrant and well-resourced Neo-Pentecostal movement. A revolt was certain to come.²²

The Importance of Hermeneutics in Restoring the Primacy of Scripture

At the core of the Pentecostalization of Baptist churches was the inability among them to guard the primacy of Scripture and apply themselves fully to biblical hermeneutics on one hand; and the indifference to challenging the emerging Pentecostal hermeneutic. These responsibilities were emphasized by Apostle Paul to young Timothy:

“O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.”

1 Timothy 6:20-21 (ESV)

In essence, Paul charged Timothy to guard biblical hermeneutics against onslaughts of anything that appeared as attractive hermeneutics and yet contradicts the faith. Such is what Pentecostal hermeneutics, especially Neo-Pentecostal hermeneutics is.

²¹ To address the deficiency of theological education in Zambia, the Mission combined efforts with the theological seminary to accelerate theological education through Theological Education by Extension; establishment of Bible Schools and Non- Residential Pastors' Theological Institutes. Further the Mission has recently partnered with SBC theological seminaries in the USA to help accelerate post-graduate theological education.

²² In Zambia, this turned out into a split in the local Convention leading to the formation of two independent organizations with the original falling prey to partnership with Western sponsors of charismatic tendencies.

Hermeneutics as the Center of Theology

Kostenberger ponders the question, “Why would we want to take the time and exert the effort to learn to interpret Scripture correctly?” He supplies two primary motivations for the solemn task of hermeneutics. The first motivation is the search for truth which liberates rather than error which enslaves (John 8:32). Believers are not seeking information from the Bible. They are seeking to encounter truth. The second motivation is more compelling- the love of God, His Word and His people. The love for God ignites a deep longing to know Him in His Word and make Him known to others as he has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. Correct hermeneutics is, therefore, the convergence centre for truth and love, two fundamental Christian elements. Kostenberger concludes that correct hermeneutics is based upon the conviction that the Word of God is the most precious commodity there is and every effort must be applied to extract the true gems of God’s truth therefrom.²³ This demands a regenerate Christian life, hermeneutical humility and careful attention to the Word of God.

The importance of hermeneutics is also found in its necessity. Terry, elaborates this well by supplying the four necessities of correct hermeneutics namely, the diversities of minds and cultures among men; the difficulty of understanding writings of those who differ from us in language and nationality; the complexity of the Bible written at different times in many parts and modes and using many different forms of literature; and the priority of Hermeneutics in sustaining other parts of theology including revealed theology; practical theology (Apologetics, Polemics and Ethics); effective homiletics; and Christian life and holiness.²⁴

Pentecostal Hermeneutics

In a study of the Distinctives of Pentecostal theology at the University of South Africa, M. S. Clark addresses the Pentecostal hermeneutic and identifies three hermeneutical parameters they employ.²⁵ Foremost among them is the open or reader-based approach to the Bible (as against the closed approach which the primacy of Scripture entails). In this approach, the reader of Scripture can identify with the author of a Bible text by virtue of common spiritual experience. The emphasis placed on Old Testament hermeneutics, for example, is in a quest to highlight shared spiritual experiences and as such, the possibility of doctrine founded on the Old Testament always exists. The Bible, to a Pentecostal interpreter is not used as a primary source book for Christian doctrine. The role of Scripture is to confirm and guide the dynamic of the Spirit. Experience takes precedence over authority of Scripture according to the supposed theological content.

²³ Andreas J. Kostenberger, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature and Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2011), 59

²⁴ Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1985), 20-22

²⁵ M. S. Clark, *What Is Distinctive about Pentecostal Theology?* (Pretoria: Unisa Institutional Repository, 1983), 103. <http://www.uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle> (Accessed July 24, 2018)

Second, the tension between doctrine and experience theology is constructed in such a way that it does not contradict valid experience. By implication, a Pentecostal believer's sincere and unique spiritual experience fits into the domain of revealed theology. Revealed truth is not limited to the Canon of Scripture but the encounters of spiritual men with the Spirit. Theology is subjective and not objective.

Thirdly, Pentecostal hermeneutics results in an experiential theology wherein the true must always work for the good of the believer. The good is evidenced in health and wealth. Therefore, divine intervention is expected in daily life and any opposition is countered by fervent warfare prayers. Beneath this hermeneutic is the literal interpretation of Scripture texts with a clear historical-cultural context, especially the Old Testament. In summary, the Pentecostal hermeneutic resonates well with African Traditional Religion (ATR) and makes sense to an ordinary African mind, thus the Pentecostalization of the Church in Africa.

Toward a Baptist Hermeneutic

The Baptist hermeneutic finds its roots in the Reformation which offered a shift from the Patristic and Medieval periods. Most Reformers adopted the grammatical-historical method that eventually emerged as the leading approach to biblical interpretation. The allegorical and accumulated ecclesiastical tradition (Catholic hermeneutic) approaches fell and the grammatical-historical approach set fresh hermeneutical boundaries. The Baptist hermeneutic evolves around the grammatical-historical approach but takes exception to the radical reader-response approach advocated by the Pentecostals. As Johnson contends:

The Bible teaches, and the history of hermeneutics confirms, that sin's noetic effects are such that human interpreters cannot be trusted to submit our thinking to the meanings that Scripture conveys, apart from a norm outside our own experience and perspective to which we are held accountable.²⁶

This truth first demolishes the foundations of the subjective reader-response approach advocated by Pentecostalism. Secondly it anchors correct hermeneutics on an objective pedestal.

The hermeneutical principles that the grammatical-historical approach include, the principle of faith; the Christological principle; the principle of intended meaning; the principle of grammatical analysis; the historical principle; the principle of criticism; the theological principle and lastly, the principle of progressive revelation.

Baptists have oscillated between two basic objective approaches to biblical interpretation. One school of thought argues that the text is that objective element that conveys meaning. The approach sees the completed text "as taking on a life of its own-

²⁶ Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2007), 152

containing meanings beyond the intent, and possibly contrary to the desire of, the original composer.”²⁷ According to this approach, knowing the historical context becomes unnecessary. However, this approach fails on the premise that texts are inanimate and have no capacity to construct meaning. The second school of thought (to be preferred by Baptists) places the objective value on the Author’s intent. This approach holds that the author inferred meaning upon the text understood within his cultural context. This approach, therefore, requires a study of the author’s historical setting and the text parameters to arrive at meaning. The reader’s role, then, is to discover the author’s consciously-intended purpose and meaning.²⁸

Among traditional Baptists, this approach assumes a higher object when the doctrine of inspiration is taken into account. The doctrine of inspiration presupposes divine authorship and a higher authorial intent. God’s highest passion is His glory. God gets the most glory in the work of redemption (2 Pet. 3:9). As Johnson suggests, as Bible interpreters examine the author’s intent in a text, the meaning should interlock with “diverse texts of diverse genres and ages, around a central theme: God’s redemptive, restorative, recreative agenda for world history.”²⁹

The Scope of Hermeneutics

The Authorial intent approach to biblical interpretation demands that an interpreter grasps the context, content and concepts being conveyed in a text by the author. Kostenberger, classifies these as the hermeneutic triad of history, literature and theology and avers that getting to the core of meaning requires that the reader applies himself to these three inescapable elements.³⁰ The study of the historical context of the many Bible historical periods is a priority in hermeneutics. This study unlocks to the Bible reader cultural perspectives that may be at variance with contemporary culture but serve as the locus for the meaning of the text as the author intended. Therefore, a Bible interpreter must be conversant with leading sources of biblical history available for each biblical era. The science of Archaeology has aided this area of study as was the case in the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in the mid-twentieth century.

Secondly, the Bible interpreter must attend to biblical literature itself with sobriety, sincerity and depth. Bible literature is complex, diverse and of a wider historical expanse that would encompass the evolution of certain terms. The Bible interpreter must commence his literature studies by first coming to it with underpinning affirmation of the completeness and primacy of the Canon of Scripture. Baptists hold to a Canon comprising 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament books. We see no basis for the inspiration of the Apocryphal books as is the practice of some Christian groupings and

²⁷ Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2010), 129

²⁸ *Ibid*, 130

²⁹ Johnson, 238

³⁰ Kostenberger, 67

neither should we ascribe inspirational worth to the writings of our great Bible scholars such as Charles H. Spurgeon.

Beneath the layer of the Canon of Scripture lies the importance of mastering the genre content and classifications of the Old and New Testaments. The 39 books of the Old Testament are classified into four (4) genre groupings- the Law, Historical-narrative, Wisdom Literature and Prophecy. The New Testament books are classified under four (4) genre categories as well, namely, the Gospels, History, Epistles and the Apocalypse. Each of these genres possesses a unique interpretive approach that must be understood and respected by the reader.

At the core of literature study is language analysis. This is also called the lexical-syntactical analysis. "Lexical-syntactical analysis is the study of individual words (lexicology) and the way those words are combined (syntax), in order to determine more accurately the author's intended meaning."³¹ It is premised on the conclusion that although words may convey a variety of meanings in different contexts, they only have one intended meaning in any given context. Several principles apply in the study of Words. Foundationally, the interpreter must identify the general literary form (such as poetry, prose etc) in which the word occurs; trace the author's theme and discover how the passage or text under consideration fits into the larger context; identify the natural divisions in the text and identify the use of conjunctions within the paragraph and sentences. When the reader is ready, he must then determine what the individual words in a text mean; understand their grammatical form and then package the findings into more fluid and easy to read words that clearly convey the author's intended meaning.

After the hard work of discovering the historical context and carrying out the lexical-syntactical analysis, a Bible interpreter must now draw out the author's theology conveyed in the text. Theology or doctrine is not a list of rules, creed or confessions of faith. Kostenberger, rightly considers doctrines as nuggets that nurture and stabilize faith in a believer.³² Doctrine must derive from the text as intended by the author rather than the reader. This approach to theology derived from the Bible is also called biblical theology and is based upon sound exegesis. Biblical theology entails that there will be an Old Testament theology and the New Testament theology. If as earlier stated, redemption is the central theme in the Bible, it follows that Old Testament theology promises redemption while New Testament theology fulfils and proclaims redemption and the two Testaments must be broadly understood in that context. This in turn results suggests that Bible application be drawn from biblical theology. With much prayer, reading of Scripture and consolidation of biblical theology, the Baptist Bible interpreter should be able to defy and challenge any application of Scripture emanating from the experiential hermeneutic.

³¹ Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 94

³² Kostenberger, 694

Conclusion

It can be seen from the above presentation that the Pentecostal hermeneutic is a flawed hermeneutic. It has also been established that some Baptists have drifted away from the fundamentals of authentic biblical interpretation to an approach that places a premium on individual experience and presuppositions rather than on the human and divine author's intent. The charismatic manifestations observed in most Baptist churches in Africa are due to a flawed hermeneutic that does not hold to the primacy of Scripture but the individual experiences and to lack of addressing the deep-rooted beliefs of African Traditional Religions (ATR), by all of us involved in teaching and preaching.

The return to our Baptist heritage will not succeed where we legalistically restrict charismatic manifestations. Instead it will be possible through deliberate efforts by our seminaries and the pastors in local churches, to return to a more authentic and objective biblical interpretation. Time has come for Baptist seminaries to unite around a common hermeneutical centre and bias. Authorial intent- rooted objectivity together with a resurgence on biblical theology and a deliberate retraining of Bible interpreters must insulate the Baptists from drifting into Pentecostal interpretation of the Scripture. Accordingly, a return to the grammatical-historical approach of Biblical interpretation will save our churches from drifting into theological error.

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