

## The presence of the Spirit in the academy

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DOI:

[10.1558/ptcs.30329](https://doi.org/10.1558/ptcs.30329)

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Document Version

Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Vondey, W 2017, 'The presence of the Spirit in the academy: Pentecostal and charismatic studies as an interdisciplinary concern', *PentecoStudies: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Research on the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 85–116. <https://doi.org/10.1558/ptcs.30329>

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# **The Presence of the Spirit in the Academy: Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies as an Interdisciplinary Concern**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The academic discipline of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies represents an interdisciplinary concern because the chief concern of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements is the presence of God's Spirit. This study pursues the modest goal to outline the contours of this interdisciplinarity by mapping the terrain of the recent renaissance of pneumatology with the emergence of Pentecostalism and its pursuit of the Spirit. The essay delineates the interdisciplinary character of the pursuit of the Spirit as an academic concern, offers a definition of Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies in terms of its pursuit of the Spiritual Presence, identifies boundaries and potential forms of this interdisciplinary discourse, and concludes by drafting a course toward a more fully interdisciplinary agenda.

Key words: Pentecostal studies, Spiritual Presence, interdisciplinarity, Spirit, symbol, academia, pneumatology.

## **Introduction**

The study of spirit (Greek, *pneuma*) is called pneumatology. In religious and cultural studies, there exists a plurality of "pneumatologies" speaking to the multiplicity of spirits perceived in the world.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, in Christian theology, pneumatology is that discipline that asks with the words of Psalm 139, "where can I find the presence of God's Spirit?" and answers that the Spirit can potentially be found everywhere. Throughout Christian history, the church has given similar responses to this question always echoing the answers given by the biblical texts.<sup>2</sup> Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, in particular, have rekindled theological discussions about the Spirit today and reformulate pneumatology in often new and different contexts.<sup>3</sup> Driving Pentecostal and Charismatic studies is a "pneumatological imagination" that seeks to provide both a theology of the Spirit and a theology that derives from the Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Kirsten Kim, Amos Yong (eds.), *Interdisciplinary and Religio-Cultural Discourses on a Spirit-Filled World: Loosing the Spirits* (New York: Palgrave, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> See Wolfgang Vondey (ed.), *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: Historical, Interdisciplinary, and Renewal Perspectives*, Christianity and Renewal-Interdisciplinary Studies 1 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> See Michael Welker (ed.), *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Vondey and Martin William Mittelstadt (eds.), *The Theology of Amos Yong and the New Face of Pentecostal Scholarship: Passion for the Spirit*, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

However, Pentecostal and Charismatic scholars and those from the wider academic community engaged in the study of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements (i.e. the contributors to Pentecostal and Charismatic studies) have not used this pneumatological focus to its fullest advantage and in order to engage in interdisciplinary discourse. By interdisciplinarity I refer to the integrative approach of different disciplines for the pursuit of spirit and thus for a diversified understanding of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. Conversations about the interdisciplinary study of Pentecostalism and related phenomena are largely absent from theological debates within the movements, and the diversification of methods and integration of perspectives for an understanding of the movements only gradually influences other disciplines. The reason for this neglect lies in the absence of a comprehensive interdisciplinary agenda and understanding of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies as an interdisciplinary concern.

In this essay, I show that the expansive and interwoven character of pneumatology and Pentecostal/Charismatic studies warrants further examination of one in terms of the other. The pneumatological concerns of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity form the driving energy behind theological contributions of the movements. More precisely, I suggest that, because the chief concern of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements is the presence of God's Spirit, Pentecostal and Charismatic studies represents an interdisciplinary concern for the academy. With this proposal, I pursue no more than the modest goal to outline in programmatic fashion the contours of this interdisciplinarity for Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. I begin by mapping the terrain of the recent renaissance of pneumatology with the emergence of Pentecostalism and its pursuit of the Spirit. From this starting point I then propose the interdisciplinary character of the pursuit of the Spirit as an academic concern, characterize possible forms this interdisciplinary discourse might take, and draft a course toward a more fully interdisciplinary agenda.

### **The Pursuit of the Spirit as an Academic Concern**

The academic interest in the pursuit of the Spirit since the twentieth century emerged along six dominant and overlapping developments: (1) the renaissance of pneumatology; (2) the rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements; (3) the emergence of ecumenical and interreligious dialogues; (4) the effects of globalization; (5) the contextualization of theology; and (6) the rise of interdisciplinary studies. These developments express together that the presence of the Spirit has become a far-reaching concern that extends beyond the traditional interests typically identified by the theological symbol of the Holy Spirit. Since pneumatology invites a kind of inquiry open to multiple confessions, religious, and secular approaches in order to take seriously the universal presence of the Spirit, a broader symbol suitable for comparative and integrative interdisciplinary discourse is necessary. A helpful direction can be taken from the work of Paul Tillich, whose integrative concerns for a correlational method and the widening of theological concerns has shaped the study of the Spirit toward an interdisciplinary agenda.<sup>5</sup> Tillich's work inspired dialogical studies of religion especially with regard to the longstanding discourse on symbolism.<sup>6</sup> The symbol Tillich provides for this universal pneumatological imagination is the Spiritual Presence. "The symbol "Spiritual Presence" uses the dimension of spirit, the bearer of which is man,

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<sup>5</sup> See Mark Lewis Taylor (ed.), *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), pp. 233–310.

<sup>6</sup> See Jonathan Z. Smith, "Tillich['s] Remains," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78.4 (2010), pp. 1139–70

but in order to be present in the human spirit, the Divine Spirit must be present in all the dimensions which are actual in man, and this means, the universe.”<sup>7</sup> Tillich’s symbol of Spiritual Presence rearticulates the biblical symbol of the Holy Spirit and opens the physical, biological, psychological, sociocultural, and other dimensions of life as cooperative dimensions for interdisciplinary discourse on the divine.<sup>8</sup> Tillich allows this symbol to stand amidst two others, the kingdom of God and Eternal Life, as the answers revelation gives to the pursuit of unambiguous life.<sup>9</sup> The particular symbolic material of the Spiritual Presence is significant for interdisciplinary work because it is hospitable to other inquiries of the dimension of spirit: adapting Tillich’s definition, Spiritual Presence denotes a concern for the existential and ontological manifestations of the transcendent sufficiently ambiguous to be the subject of a diversity of academic approaches. As I will discuss later, the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are particularly suitable to function as a catalyst for exploring the ambiguity of the Spiritual Presence, albeit with focus on primary and pervasive theological convictions. Nonetheless, while manifestations of the Spiritual Presence must ultimately be recognizable as experiences of the revelation of Christ, Tillich affirms that “within these limits the Spiritual Community is free to appropriate all symbols which are adequate and which possess symbolic power.”<sup>10</sup> Since an encounter with the Spiritual Presence is in principle possible in any particular religious, secular, non-religious, and other-religious environments, this symbol provides a hospitable focus for narrating the development of pneumatology and Pentecostal and Charismatic studies among the six developments.

(1) The central development underlying the broad academic interest in the Spiritual Presence is the renaissance of pneumatology. The twentieth century has brought a renewed perspective and enthusiasm to the theological conversation, stimulated by a concurrent revival of the doctrine of the Trinity, the emergence of new spiritual movements in the church, interest in pneumatology in the works of important theologians, and new critical questions with regard to God’s Spirit. The renaissance of pneumatology has birthed a reformulation of the classical doctrine of the Spirit,<sup>11</sup> biblical, historical, philosophical, and contemporary perspectives on the doctrine of the Spirit,<sup>12</sup> the personhood of the Spirit,<sup>13</sup> the advance of Spirit-Christology,<sup>14</sup> the experiences of God’s Spirit,<sup>15</sup> the theology of creation,<sup>16</sup> anthropological and cultural concerns,<sup>17</sup> the work of the Holy Spirit in social justice and ministry,<sup>18</sup> ecological perspectives on a theology of nature,<sup>19</sup> the intersection of theology and

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Life and the Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 108.

<sup>8</sup> See Wolfgang Vondey, “Spirit and Nature: Pentecostal Pneumatology in Dialogue with Tillich’s Pneumatological Ontology,” in Nimi Wariboko and Amos Yong (eds.), *Spiritual Presence and Spiritual Power: Pentecostal Readings of and Engagement with the Legacy of Paul Tillich* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), pp. 30–44.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, *Paul Tillich*, p. 235.

<sup>10</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 123–24.

<sup>11</sup> See Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, 3 vols. (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> See Bradford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney (eds.), *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> See Heribert Mühlen, *Der heilige Geist als Person: In der Trinität, bei der Inkarnation und im Gnadenbund: Ich-Du-Wir*, 5th ed. (Münster, Aschendorff, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> See Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> See Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> See Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> See Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 11–282.

<sup>18</sup> See Bradford E. Hinze (ed.), *The Spirit in the Church and the World*, College Theological Society Annual 49 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).

science,<sup>20</sup> the media appropriate to pneumatological discourse,<sup>21</sup> and a more comprehensive understanding of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity.<sup>22</sup> These and other developments form the general platform for interdisciplinary academic pursuit of the Spiritual Presence. The normativity of the theological approach is necessary for Pentecostal and Charismatic studies, even though it is not normative for pneumatology. Theology then means, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the pursuit of the revelation of God as the ultimate concern of all knowledge, so that theology can be interdisciplinary in the attempt to utilize all forms of knowing as a means to that end. Pneumatology can be seen as a particular form of academic pursuit of spirit penetrating the theological and non-theological disciplines.

(2) A dominant development in the renaissance of pneumatology is the rise of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, which have gathered much attention for a global pursuit of the Spiritual Presence. The emphasis on “Pentecost” at the heart of these movements shows the significant interest in the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit.<sup>23</sup> Contemporary Pentecostal theology has moved from restatements of biblical narratives to the consideration of spiritual disciplines in theology to a further articulation of a thoroughly Spirit-oriented theology and eventually pneumatological methodology.<sup>24</sup> In so doing, Pentecostalism has become a global movement that can be seen as “an emerging theological tradition through which to explore the possibilities and challenges confronting the development of Christian theology for our late modern world.”<sup>25</sup> This perspective has elevated not only Pentecostalism as a religious movement but also the academic development of the movement and its focus on the Spirit. The new spiritual movements have raised the awareness for the interconnectedness of Pentecostal, charismatic, and pneumatological concerns. The broad extent of these interconnected affairs has been identified with the term “renewal” as a succinct reference to the transformation of Pentecostal scholarship that has taken the movement beyond its own theological, sociocultural, historical, and institutional boundaries to the global, ecumenical, and multidisciplinary concerns of the contemporary Christian agenda.

(3) The emergence of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is a third stream that has contributed to the growing attention given to the Spirit. The ecumenical movement, the World Council of Churches, and a myriad of local, national, and international ecumenical dialogues have increasingly emphasized the transforming and renewing work of the Spirit of God.<sup>26</sup> Pentecostal and Charismatic groups have entered into ecumenical conversations with

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<sup>19</sup> See Sigurd Bergmann, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature*, trans. Douglas Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> See Philip Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit: God, World, Divine Action*, ed. Zachary Simpson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> See Raniero Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit: Meditations on the Veni Creator* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> See Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostalism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), pp. 29–47; Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 187–205.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Christopher A. Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out*, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), pp. 98–104.

focus on the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> The charismatic renewal became the focus of the assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1975, and the Consultation on the Significance of the Charismatic Renewal for the Churches began significant work on Pentecostal and pneumatological concerns in the 1980s.<sup>28</sup> The rise of ecumenical ecclesiology, particularly the emphasis on fellowship (*koinonia*), begun with the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue in 1985–89,<sup>29</sup> has contributed to “a growing consensus that the church is a ‘communion in the Spirit.’”<sup>30</sup> The rise of interreligious conversations has broadened this theme considerably to an emphasis on the universal presence of the Spirit and a pneumatological theology of religions.<sup>31</sup> Pentecostal and Charismatic theologies are again closely intertwined with these developments, although the ecumenical documents possess no formal authority among Pentecostals and interreligious dialogue is viewed critically by most. Acknowledging the Spiritual Presence arguably offers a central motivation for engaging in dialogue and collaboration.

(4) The expansion and shift in Christianity, from the northern hemisphere and the West to the East and the global South, made evident by the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, has further contributed to renewed perspectives on the Spirit. The unprecedented growth of spiritual movements in Africa, Latin America, and Asia has invited a cultural diversity, religious plurality, and Spirit-oriented theology into an emerging mix of multidisciplinary quests for a possibly global Spiritual Presence.<sup>32</sup> The globalization of Christianity has furthered an increasing awareness of the worldwide interconnectedness of spiritual experiences and reflections.<sup>33</sup> These global Christian perspectives and their unique blend of mobility, independence, and innovation affect not only the shape of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements but also of pneumatology. The different cultural, sociopolitical, economic, and religious heritage of what constitutes world Christianity today tends to direct the attention to a variety of new and complementary dimensions of God and the Spirit. Pneumatology, pentecostal, charismatic, and other renewal concerns have become part of a global Christian culture.<sup>34</sup> The pursuit of the Spiritual Presence today can avoid neither the interests nor the tensions caused by this global Christian agenda.

(5) The contextualization of theology, especially in the two-thirds world, but also the rise of new contexts in the West, has further contributed to a renewed interest in pneumatology.<sup>35</sup> The global character of the Christian landscape depends heavily on local and contextual forms. Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are a particular manifestation of the emerging tensions between the mutual reliance of the local and the global.<sup>36</sup> This interdependence is frequently described with the term “glocalization” as a reference to the

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<sup>27</sup> See Wolfgang Vondey (ed.), *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity*, vol. 1, *Ecumenical Documents and Critical Assessments* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Vondey, “Pentecostals and Ecumenism: Becoming the Church as a Pursuit of Christian Unity,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11.4 (2011), pp. 318–30.

<sup>29</sup> See Vondey, *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity*, pp. 133–58.

<sup>30</sup> Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, p. 104.

<sup>31</sup> See Tony Richie, *Speaking by the Spirit: A Pentecostal Model for Interreligious Dialogue* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2011); Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

<sup>32</sup> See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (ed.), *The Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> See Gordon L. Heath and Steven M. Studebaker (eds.), *The Globalization of Christianity: Implications for Christian Ministry and Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Karla O. Poewe (ed.), *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> See Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, pp. 147–74.

<sup>36</sup> Vondey, *Pentecostalism*, pp. 9–27.

eradication of “distance” between global and local pursuits in order to find the global images *in* the local and vice versa.<sup>37</sup> For the renaissance of pneumatology this development has led to a number of significant contexts, which offer new or alternative interpretations of the Spiritual Presence. The context of liberation theology in Latin American communities advocates the idea of the Spirit as the pathos of God.<sup>38</sup> African images of the Spirit emerge from a unique blend of traditional religion, local customs, and rituals.<sup>39</sup> Feminist theology in North America has pursued pneumatology in terms of the maternal spirit.<sup>40</sup> Ecological and feminist concerns have combined to create a unique interdisciplinary approach to the Holy Spirit.<sup>41</sup> Other contexts question the correlation of spirit and power.<sup>42</sup> In the twenty-first century, the ideas of the Spiritual Presence have become as broad as the contexts constituted by those engaged.

(6) The culminating development contributing to the renewed interest in the Spiritual Presence is the rise of interdisciplinary studies. The 1960s and 70s dramatically shaped the idea of what is today called interdisciplinarity.<sup>43</sup> The studies of religion and theology are by their very nature open to such diverse concerns and have frequently utilized philosophy, psychology, languages, the arts and sciences.<sup>44</sup> This openness includes the intersection of faith-based and secular studies as well as ecumenical and interfaith conversations. The focus on Pentecostal and Charismatic movements has shaped the study of the Spirit particularly in cooperation with theology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, and the natural sciences.<sup>45</sup> The renaissance of pneumatology, the rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, the emergence of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, as well as the effects of the globalization and contextualization of theology are all shaping the rise of interdisciplinary studies. At this point, pneumatology in the academy is still transitioning from a study in the traditional disciplines to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary concerns. The driving force toward the full realization of this interdisciplinarity is the concern for the transforming and renewing dimensions of the Spiritual Presence in all realms of life.

### **The Pursuit of the Spirit as Interdisciplinary Concern**

In the framework of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies, interdisciplinarity may be defined as the method of pursuing ideas, answering questions, or resolving a problem broadly related to the transforming dimension of the Spiritual Presence that are otherwise too complex to be adequately treated by a single discipline and that unfold in those disciplines with the intention

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (London: Sage, 1995), pp. 25-44.

<sup>38</sup> See Samuel Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos, and Liberation*, JPT Supplement 14 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Allan H. Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit from an African Perspective* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> See Rosemary Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon, 1983); Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon, 1973).

<sup>41</sup> See Elizabeth Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> See Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, trans. John W. Diercksmeyer (New York: Crossroads, 1985).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), pp. 35–39.

<sup>44</sup> See Sarah E. Fredericks, “Religious Studies,” in Robert Frodeman *et al.* (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 161–73.

<sup>45</sup> See Allan Anderson *et al.* (eds.), *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

to integrate their insights in the construction of a more unambiguous understanding of the work of God in the world.<sup>46</sup> From this perspective, theological and religious studies may appear to override the concerns of other disciplines. However, the religious concerns underlying the pursuit of the Spiritual Presence are by necessity already connected to different kinds and modes of thought and experience and thus invite ideas and methods from different disciplines and fields. The traditional theological disciplines of biblical, historical, and systematic theology encourage description and critical reflection beyond isolated studies. This appreciation of disciplines is the most common form of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. We regularly cross over into the other disciplines of the sociology of religion, philosophy of religion, literary studies, or ethics.<sup>47</sup> For the most part, our efforts in these disciplines and subdisciplines remain individual pursuits albeit with often significant integration of methods and results.<sup>48</sup> A concern for developing further integrative approaches is to identify the potential boundaries of this interdisciplinary exercise. Delineating attempts at integrating the various disciplines are the multidisciplinary approach, on the one hand, and the transdisciplinary vision, on the other.

*Multidisciplinary:* In the young field of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies, the goals and history of interdisciplinarity show at times no more than the placing side by side of insights from different points of view. This approach is satisfied with showing parallel interpretations and different or similar perspectives without drawing critical or integrative conclusions. Although these kinds of proposals do not function immediately as integrative or even interactive participations in a mutual pursuit of ideas and questions, multidisciplinary work often constitutes an initial phase toward full interdisciplinarity.<sup>49</sup> We might say that multidisciplinary work is an indispensable starting point on the way to the full cooperation among disciplines that contribute to Pentecostal and Charismatic research. This groundwork for interdisciplinarity needs to be invited and expected in order to develop and organize more fully the terminology, data, concepts, and methods necessary for discerning the Spiritual Presence. Nonetheless, multidisciplinary presentation establishes relationality among disciplines without utilizing their full potential, relying on the internal power and capital of each discipline rather than the influence of the surrounding fields.

*Transdisciplinarity:* At other times, we reach a correlation and integration of disciplines that points beyond the means and intentions of all individual fields of study. The transdisciplinary approach overlaps with multi-disciplinary work only insofar as several disciplines are involved yet goes far beyond those attempts by seeking a single overarching theory that transcends all disciplines.<sup>50</sup> While the pursuit of the Spiritual Presence invites a principal theory that moves across and beyond disciplinary boundaries, such is not the immediate goal of interdisciplinary work. Transdisciplinarity requires multidisciplinary

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<sup>46</sup> This definition is adapted from Allen F. Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> See especially the early decades of *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* and *The Journal of Pentecostal Theology*. Multi- and inter-disciplinary concerns entered only during the first decade of the twenty-first century, also with the publication of *PentecoStudies: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Research on the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* since 2002. The first book series with explicit interdisciplinary focus is *Christianity and Renewal-Interdisciplinary Studies* since 2014. Other examples include the advent of the social, behavioral, and natural sciences on the agenda of academic research of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements; see Allan Anderson, Michael Bergunder, Andre F. Droogers, Cornelius Van Der Laan (eds.), *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> See Julie Thompson Klein, "A Taxonomy of Interdisciplinarity," in Frodeman *et al.* (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, pp. 15–30.

<sup>49</sup> For this distinction see Klein, *Interdisciplinarity*, pp. 56–63.

<sup>50</sup> Klein, *Interdisciplinarity*, pp. 63–73; Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research*, pp. 20–21.



approaches; yet while the latter protects the disciplinary system, the former seeks to overcome it. Pneumatology may be seen as an overarching but still contested theory proposed to explain Pentecostal, Charismatic and related phenomena. Yet, a valid concern is that the legitimacy of any participating discipline may be restricted, misrepresented, or even dissolved by a single dominant explanation. Interdisciplinarity is therefore defined at once both by the necessity of cooperation among various disciplines and a dynamic process that moves beyond those disciplines but protects each perspective. Multidisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity can here be seen as the boundaries of interdisciplinary studies that do not exclude each other even if they redefine the original intentions of any participating discipline.<sup>51</sup>

The distinction of disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches is necessary in order to delineate the boundaries of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. The persistence of power relations between two or more disciplines demands a bi-directional and symmetrical communication system in order to avoid dominance of particular disciplines.<sup>52</sup> The focus on the Spiritual presence can provide such a discourse with both the particularity of disciplinary concerns (i.e. spirit) and a transcendent goal for communication across disciplines (i.e. pneumatology). The pursuit of the Spiritual Presence does not dissolve the boundaries of each discipline, since God's Spirit does not invalidate the other but allows the other to participate in the integrative effort as distinctively other.<sup>53</sup> Put differently, interdisciplinary perspectives on the Spiritual Presence do not speak with a single voice but with the many tongues of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. The primary boundaries of interdisciplinarity therefore remain the boundaries of the participating disciplines and their epistemologies and methodologies that cannot be undone without dissolving their integrity as other. Nonetheless, not to open these boundaries is to remain within the disciplinary or multidisciplinary agenda, while to ignore them leads to the elusive ideal of a transcendent discipline of all disciplines. The goal of interdisciplinarity is not the dissolution but the crossing of boundaries toward values that allow for new processes and structures to work with existing disciplines.<sup>54</sup> The pursuit of the Spiritual Presence as the intellectual product of all disciplines suggest the construction of shared "value narratives."<sup>55</sup> Pentecostal testimonies, songs, ethnographies, rituals, anthropological, and cultural studies provide the kind of thick narrative that can inspire common values. These values may include: (1) conceptual clarity with regard to the Spiritual Presence; (2) a firm basis in the disciplines engaged particularly with regard to the study of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements; (3) competence in a particular discipline; (4) distinction of interests, values, and epistemologies among disciplines; (5) intellectual rigor; and (6) practical values.<sup>56</sup> A few scenarios may illustrate the possible forms these interdisciplinary values can inspire.

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<sup>51</sup> See Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research*, pp. 16–21.

<sup>52</sup> See Peter van den Besselaar and Gaston Heimeriks, "Disciplinary, Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary: Concepts and Indicators," *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Scientometrics and Informetrics*, (Sydney: ISSI, 2001), pp. 705–16.

<sup>53</sup> See Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008).

<sup>54</sup> See Allan Blackwell *et al.*, *Creating Value across Boundaries: Maximising the Return from Interdisciplinary Innovation* (London: Nesta, 2010).

<sup>55</sup> Blackwell *et al.*, *Creating Value*, p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> See Henry H. Bauer, "Barriers against Interdisciplinarity: Implications for Studies of Science, Technology, and Society," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 15.1 (1990), pp. 105–19; Thomas C. Benson, "Five Arguments against Interdisciplinary Studies," *Issues in Integrative Studies* 1 (1982), pp. 38–48.

## Forms of Interdisciplinary Pursuit of the Spirit

Many forms of the interdisciplinary pursuit of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies will likely be particular faith-based accounts of the Spiritual Presence offered parallel to other disciplines.<sup>57</sup> This basic form of interdisciplinarity can include alternative accounts without attempts at reconciliation but rather to define problems, to show the scope of disciplinary concerns involved, to identify relevant disciplines or to stimulate and invite involvement, and to identify existing tensions and disagreements. There exists for the study of the Spiritual Presence a certain necessary comfortableness with (i.e. normativity of) a plurality of voices, a hermeneutics of many tongues and disciplines and practices that mark the path of interdisciplinarity in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.<sup>58</sup> The outcome may not always be identified as a successful integration of disciplines but rather as a step toward that goal, a form of hospitality toward other disciplines, modes of thinking, conflicting insights, and common ground. The ground and mandate for such hospitality from a theological perspective of interdisciplinarity is precisely the transforming, transcending, integrating and uniting presence of God's Spirit (see Eph. 4:3). That the symbol of the Spiritual Presence represents a normative theological assumption (of the Spirit's presence in the world) is both the greatest opportunity and challenge of interdisciplinary engagement. Particularly challenging remains the distinction one can observe between Pentecostal and Charismatic studies and the academic study of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. The former focuses primarily on the biblical, historical, and theological motivations and developments underlying the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements; its methodological choice is inherent in the faith-based commitments of the movements to the encounter with God symbolized by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The focus of the academic study of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity is on the broader psychological, cultural, social, ethnic, economic, political, or religious factors contributing to an understanding of the movements; its methodological choices are directed by the presuppositions and terms of a particular discipline. While these distinctions are somewhat artificial, they do suggest that the way to interdisciplinarity is challenged by different commitments pertaining to the principal reason for and outcome of study of the Spirit. The theological normativity, especially the importance of experience, assumed by Charismatic and Pentecostal studies is largely absent from the academic study of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. If this distinction is valid, the concrete development of an interdisciplinary agenda depends on the extent to which the different sides can commit to a shared interest in the Spiritual Presence.

A second form of interdisciplinarity is more directly hospitable to the use of both faith-based and secular approaches to the Spiritual Presence.<sup>59</sup> The current debate on the need for insider experience or faith-based knowledge, on the one hand, and objective study, on the other, shows that both theology and religious studies are in transition—towards each other and to other disciplines. Pneumatology is indebted in many contexts to a commitment to the beliefs and practices of Christianity and more often to that of a particular confessional tradition. At the same time, the understanding of religious diversity has significantly changed with the advent of religious studies as a form of “academic,” “objective” or “social scientific”

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<sup>57</sup> See Steve Fuller, “Deviant Interdisciplinarity,” in Frodeman *et al.* (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, pp. 50–64.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 109–11.

<sup>59</sup> See Linell Elizabeth Cady and Delwin Brown (eds.), *Religious Studies, Theology, and the University: Conflicting Maps, Changing Terrain* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2002).

research.<sup>60</sup> The concern whether the transforming dimension of the Spiritual Presence “should be theological, social scientific, or a new critical, constructive, intercultural method of inquiry demonstrates another way in which religious studies is inherently multidisciplinary.”<sup>61</sup> Pentecostal and Charismatic studies will continue to be shaped by this discussion. Even without successful integration at this point, a hospitable multidisciplinary approach will help dismantle stereotypes and existing prejudice, clarify boundaries, develop methodologies, and increase the resources for a joint study and shared knowledge. Interdisciplinarity here refers also to the experience of the different approaches and the shared struggle between dissonance and acceptance for the sake of understanding (and experiencing) the Spiritual Presence.

A third form of interdisciplinary studies relevant to exploring the Spiritual Presence is the deliberate use of ecumenical and interfaith approaches. The influence of the ecumenical movement and interfaith dialogues has significantly shaped the landscape of interdisciplinarity through similar structures, aims, demands, and methods.<sup>62</sup> These similarities are made apparent most of all in a shared experience of the Spiritual Presence across denominations and religious traditions: the different approaches to and experiences among Pentecostals and the charismatic movements in the traditional churches, for example, have opened up the beginning of an ecumenical interest in the renewing work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>63</sup> Although presuppositions, doctrines, histories, rituals, and methods differ, the experience of renewal offers a shared agenda and activity that includes the prospects of cooperation, comparison, and reconciliation.<sup>64</sup> The pneumatological approach has also opened up possibilities for the deepening and transforming of Christian theology in the pluralism of the religious lives of the twenty-first century.<sup>65</sup> A theological and religious pluralism represents a normative position for an interdisciplinary agenda concerned with the Spiritual Presence (so that even disagreement is normative). Working together in these contexts of interdisciplinarity does not always immediately focus on the disciplines involved but on the opportunity to solve a common problem.<sup>66</sup> Ecumenical collaboration and interreligious conversations thus serve as stimuli for further interdisciplinary research.

Finally, interdisciplinary studies require research that offers insights into varieties, taxonomies, and definitions of the Spiritual Presence from different disciplines, including identifying differences and agreements among traditional, essential, and normative approaches. The result may be reformulations of historiography,<sup>67</sup> an extension of the scope of studies to the larger spectrum of religious ideas and practices,<sup>68</sup> exposure of exogenous

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redefining the Public Study of Religion* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2001).

<sup>61</sup> Fredericks, “Religious Studies,” p. 167.

<sup>62</sup> See Fredericks, “Religious Studies,” pp. 161–73.

<sup>63</sup> See for example Kilian McDonnell (ed.), *Presence, Power, Praise: Documents on the Charismatic Renewal* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980).

<sup>64</sup> See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1989)* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1998).

<sup>65</sup> Amos Yong, *Pneumatology and the Christian-Buddhist Dialogue: Does the Spirit Blow Through the Middle Way?* *Studies in Systematic Theology* 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Christian Pohl and Gertrude Hirsch Hadorn, *Principles for Designing Transdisciplinary Research* (Munich: Oekom, 2007).

<sup>67</sup> See Jörg Haustein, *Writing Religious History: The Historiography of Ethiopian Pentecostalism* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011).

<sup>68</sup> See Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

causes and consequences that influence the interpretation of the Spiritual Presence,<sup>69</sup> correlating the religious sense of the Spiritual Presence with social, economic, and political manifestations,<sup>70</sup> integrating the study of Christianity and renewal in the natural sciences,<sup>71</sup> or showing the contributions of pentecostal and charismatic Christianity to other fields and disciplines.<sup>72</sup> These and other results of interdisciplinary research are driven by the shared interest in what is identified by the Spiritual Presence.

Starting with the Spiritual Presence (in its symbolic representation of the universal presence of the dimension of spirit) provides a specific (yet not necessarily theological or religious) rationale for interdisciplinary studies. The interdisciplinary concerns of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies constitute a “transcendental” method where “the results envisaged are not confined categorically to some particular field or subject”<sup>73</sup> but exceed each discipline by virtue of the universal possibility to encounter the Spiritual Presence. Interdisciplinary research does not follow an autonomous trajectory nor projects an exclusive alternative to other disciplinary pursuits but is always marked by integrative efforts identified as much by confessional location and personal beliefs as by pneumatological (and hence transcendental) concerns. Nonetheless, the shared pursuit of the Spiritual Presence drives ultimately toward transformation at the core of any disciplinary, multidisciplinary, or interdisciplinary work. A fully interdisciplinary approach to Pentecostal and Charismatic studies is thus a “journey by way of the Spirit into and transcending the full range of classical expressions and core symbols of the faith toward their transformation.”<sup>74</sup> From the perspective of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, at least, the transforming work of the Holy Spirit renews what and how we know as we open our disciplines to the possibility to comprehend and participate in the work of God in the world.

### **The Pursuit of the Spirit as a Path to Full Interdisciplinarity**

Full interdisciplinarity demands the dedication and transformation of disciplines, methodologies, institutions, communities, and individuals for the sake of scholarship. The complex array of disciplinary pursuits seeks more than the parallel or integrating portrayal of individual theories. Interdisciplinary studies require a rather “thick description,” to use the iconic phrase coined by Clifford Geertz, a thickness that needs “to stay rather closer to the ground than tends to be the case in sciences more able to give themselves over to imaginative abstraction.”<sup>75</sup> Although Pentecostal scholars sometimes tend to emphasize the dimension of power as the chief explanatory function to clarify the existence and growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, functional or reductionist theories of religion have been widely neglected in Pentecostal and Charismatic scholarship particularly because they seek

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<sup>69</sup> See Nimi Wariboko, *The Charismatic City and the Public Resurgence of Religion: A Pentecostal Social Ethics of Cosmopolitan Urban Life*, Christianity and Renewal-Interdisciplinary Studies 2 (New York: Palgrave, 2014).

<sup>70</sup> See Bernice Martin, “The Pentecostal Gender Paradox: A Cautionary Tale for the Sociology of Religion,” in Richard K. Fenn (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 52–66.

<sup>71</sup> See Amos Yong (ed.), *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009).

<sup>72</sup> See James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*, Pentecostal Manifestos 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

<sup>73</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> Vondey and Mittelstadt, *The Theology of Amos Yong*, p. 17.

<sup>75</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 24.

explanations outside of the normative theological motivations of the movements.<sup>76</sup> Substantive theories have been marginally employed, especially the work of Rudolph Otto, whose emphasis on religious experience and the holy resonates with Pentecostal sensitivities, and Mircea Eliade, with his emphasis on the experience of the sacred in history, yet without giving concrete implications for interdisciplinary research or explicit links to pneumatology.<sup>77</sup> Geertz, on the other hand, has been prominently used by Pentecostal and Charismatic scholars and scholars of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity for developing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the religious movements.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, Geertz' influential definition of culture opens up links to Tillich's symbol of the Spiritual presence, since both are concerned with expressions of meaning as the fundamental quest of religion.<sup>79</sup> While for Tillich meaning is created in the human being as the bearer of the spirit, Geertz provides a broad definition of religion that can be applied to Pentecostal and Charismatic studies as a pursuit of the Spiritual Presence. In turn, Tillich presses beyond an anthropological analysis of religion and culture toward the spiritual boundaries of meaning.<sup>80</sup> Both seek to define religion in the realm of the symbolic. Borrowing from his designation of religion, and linking it with Tillich's symbol of the Spiritual Presence, we can advance the following definition:

Pentecostal and Charismatic movements represent (1) a system of symbols of the Spiritual Presence which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting affections and motivations in human beings and the world by (3) integrating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the affections and embodiments appropriately represent the system and thereby (5) direct to a transforming encounter with God.<sup>81</sup>

The similarities and differences between this definition of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and Geertz's definition of religion are perhaps not immediately apparent. Geertz has been criticized for endorsing the notion of symbolic meaning but omitting to clarify the

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<sup>76</sup> See, however, the use of Durkheim in Mark Jennings, "An Extraordinary Degree of Exaltation: Durkheim, Effervescence and Pentecostalism's Defeat of Secularization," *Social Compass* 62.1 (2015), pp. 61–75, and of Weber in Margaret M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989). On the Pentecostal position cf. Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 132–34.

<sup>77</sup> See Mark Jennings, "Breaking Free to the Limit: Playing with Foucault, Otto, and Pentecostal Experience," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 29.1 (2014), pp. 33–45; Karin Horwatt, "The Shamanic Complex in the Pentecostal Church," *Journal of the Society for Anthropological Sociology* 16.2 (1988), pp. 128–45.

<sup>78</sup> See Peter Althouse and Robbie Waddell, "Pentecostalism, Cultural Analysis, and the Hermeneutics of Culture," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 37.3 (2015), pp. 313–16; Joel Robbins, "Anthropology of Religion," in Anderson *et al.* (eds.), *Studying Global Pentecostalism*, pp. 156–78; Wilma Wells Davies, *The Embattled But Empowered Community: Comparing Understanding of Spiritual Power in Argentine Popular and Pentecostal Cosmologies*, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 15–62; Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality*, JPT Supplement 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), chapter 3; Amos Yong, "'Tongues,' Theology and the Social Sciences: A Pentecostal-Theological Reading of Geertz's Interpretive Theory of Religion," *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 1 (1997), available at <http://www.cyberj/cyberj1/yong.html> (accessed 1 June 2016).

<sup>79</sup> See John Morgan, "Religion and Culture as Meaning Systems: A Dialogue between Geertz and Tillich," *The Journal of Religion* 57.4 (1977), pp. 363–75.

<sup>80</sup> Morgan, "Religion and Culture", pp. 369–70.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 90.

relationship between symbols, experience, and concepts, thereby reducing religion to functional categories and creating a relativist and positivist account of the religious perspective.<sup>82</sup> While Geertz has responded to much of this criticism, a critical evaluation of Geertz' definition is beyond the scope of this essay.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, I hope to show on the remaining pages how his definition offers a perspective on the interdisciplinary character of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies, even if it has to be adjusted to accommodate the particularity of these movements. With the help of Geertz' definition, the study of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements can be seen as an interdisciplinary pursuit because the understanding of the movements is embedded in a plurality of "fields," to follow a complementary approach by Pierre Bourdieu, which cannot be understood only with reference to itself but requires the points of reference that create and narrate the Spiritual Presence as a whole.<sup>84</sup> Pentecostal and Charismatic studies therefore engages the fields of (1) symbols; (2) affections; (3) conceptions; (4) reality; and (5) the divine.

### *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies engage a System of Symbols*

Identifying Pentecostal and Charismatic movements as a system of symbols means simply that the movements function as an object of research, and that we can define, discuss, analyze, compare, contrast, or critique in a specified study their shape and concerns.<sup>85</sup> Academic study as engagement of cultural systems represents "a piece of the real world"<sup>86</sup> that can be identified and studied within a particular domain. The demand for a "thick description" avoids a possible misreading of the symbolic as some kind of universal abstraction from the concrete realities on the ground. At the same time, the symbolic reference world of certain disciplines must be included in the possibility of interdisciplinary study. The symbolic thickness of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity can be studied only through its diverse representations as, what Geertz calls, "tangible formulations of notions, abstraction from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiment of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs."<sup>87</sup> The minimalist account of symbol, for which Geertz has been criticized, might obscure the ontological realism held by most Pentecostals.<sup>88</sup> At the least, Tillich's notion of the Spiritual Presence demands a more realist notion of participation made possible by the symbolic.<sup>89</sup> The tangible observation of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies gathers symbols of the Spiritual Presence, which can be studied through the symbolic world of a particular discipline. These disciplinary symbols, as Tillich might add, do not merely represent the system from a particular point of view, but symbols always act as representations of a system for all other disciplines.<sup>90</sup> Moreover,

<sup>82</sup> See Nancy K. Frankenberry and Hans H. Penner, "Clifford Geertz's Long-lasting Moods, Motivations, and Metaphysical Conceptions," *The Journal of Religion* 70.4 (1999), pp. 617–40; see also Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz," *Man* 18.2 (1983), pp. 237–59.

<sup>83</sup> Arun Micheelsen, "'I don't do systems': An interview with Clifford Geertz," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 34.1 (2002), pp. 2–20.

<sup>84</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993). See Yannick Fer, "The Holy Spirit and the Pentecostal Habitus: Elements for a Sociology of Institution in Classical Pentecostalism," *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 23.2 (2010), pp. 157–76.

<sup>85</sup> See Kline, *Conceptual Foundations*, p. 16.

<sup>86</sup> Kline, *Conceptual Foundations*, p. 18.

<sup>87</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 91.

<sup>88</sup> See Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 87–125.

<sup>89</sup> See Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 42.

<sup>90</sup> See Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), pp. 41–54.

symbols participate in the larger world of the system that must be grasped as a whole if we “pierce through the network of symbols that are operative”<sup>91</sup> in each particular discipline. From the perspective of participation, Pentecostal and Charismatic studies of a system of symbols can become indicative of the Spiritual Presence. In other words, we can interpret the Spiritual Presence through the study of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and understand the movements through the lens of the Spiritual Presence. Yet, while this mutual reading of symbols is “open,” so to speak, to the realms beyond the immediate tools of our academic inquiry, and the idea of the Spiritual Presence may escape to the realm of inaccessible transcendental symbols, the system of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements always maintains its thickness and thusness (Geertz), a mixture of objective and subjective factors (Bourdieu), united in stories of the divine presence (Tillich) that operate among the affections and motivations of human beings.<sup>92</sup>

### *The Symbolic Presence and the Affections and Motivations of Human Beings*

The thick symbols we encounter in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity—the images, feelings, practices, rituals, liturgies, spiritualities, behavioral aspects, charismatic dimensions, physiological manifestations, communities, churches, social institutions, and other manifestations of the Spiritual Presence—function both as representations and motivations of the movements. The critique that for Geertz religion is a purely conceptual scheme neglects the immediate emphasis of his definition on religion’s affective and embodied means to experience the world.<sup>93</sup> If symbols in general are invoked by image and affections rather than logic,<sup>94</sup> then the symbolic world of the Spiritual Presence evident in Pentecostalism always “evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.”<sup>95</sup> This notion should not be misunderstood as if to imply that objective academic study of the Spiritual Presence is impossible. Rather, the desire for objectivity is itself an affection and motivation. We can say that feelings, affections, emotional dispositions, and desires function as catalysts for the symbols of the Spirit, and through them Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians not only “understand” but participate in the world as a form of affective and social comprehension.<sup>96</sup>

In Pentecostal and Charismatic studies, these affections and motivations inspire a particular imagination rather than general conceptual constructs.<sup>97</sup> At the heart of this imagination stands the Holy Spirit who infuses our various disciplines by directing them toward each other and ultimately to God. The Spirit, who always directs attention to the other, eliminates the distance between the symbols we label as “Pentecostal” or “Charismatic” or “pneumatological.” It is thus the character of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies precisely to deflect from itself to the Spiritual Presence. As a result, the affections and motivations underlying the Pentecostal/Charismatic/pneumatological imagination expose not only the distance we inhabit to God and the other, they also illuminate the common world we

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<sup>91</sup> Yong, “Tongues.”

<sup>92</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>93</sup> See Donald Davidson, “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophy Association* 47 (1973), pp. 5–20.

<sup>94</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 66.

<sup>95</sup> Lonergan, *Method*, p. 64.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), pp. 29–100.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism*, pp. 16–46.

share and to that extent invite us “to engage the other not only as other, but as oneself.”<sup>98</sup> Pentecostal and Charismatic studies, in this sense, must always direct us to a thick description of the Spiritual Presence that invites all disciplines and fields of comprehension into participation without favoring one particular epistemology. The pneumatological imagination leads us potentially to a discovery of the Spiritual Presence as a gift bestowed by God on the multidimensional realities of this world, a divine self-giving that ultimately solicits a response as the ground for our own transformation and coming to ourselves.<sup>99</sup> In this way, Pentecostal and Charismatic studies can function as an integrative system for different disciplines without threatening to dissolve the Spiritual Presence among dissecting disciplinary interests.

### *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies as Conceptions of Existence*

I have argued that the study of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements deflects from itself to an ultimate concern (another term from Tillich) for the Spiritual Presence. That means the Spiritual Presence cannot be seen as merely one potential element (*habitus*) among a selective disciplinary concern, but it transcends Pentecostal and Charismatic studies by representing a larger methodological concerns for understanding the general order of existence.<sup>100</sup> As Bourdieu emphasizes: “the principle of position-takings lies in the structure and functioning of the field of positions.”<sup>101</sup> This methodological emphasis corresponds to the larger claim that our religious symbols function as cosmic symbols or representations of a transcendent truth. Hence, the study of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements as a system of symbols is not identical with religious studies. It exists, rather, as a field at the boundaries of religion—as much as these are open, dynamic, and arbitrary and thus overlap with other systems.<sup>102</sup> More precisely, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity manifests the current boundaries of the field of religion that allow for integrative conceptions with other disciplines about the general order of existence.<sup>103</sup> As a result, Pentecostal and Charismatic studies issues an inherent invitation to aggregate systems of symbols for the interdisciplinary production of knowledge and the shared comprehension of the Spiritual Presence.

The openness of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies to aggregate systems recognizes the limited analytical capacity of any one particular field of knowledge, whether theology, religious studies, or the social, natural, and formal sciences. With the words of Clifford Geertz, isolated disciplinary pursuits of the Spiritual Presence lead to a “chronic failure of one’s explanatory apparatus.”<sup>104</sup> Instead, the more extensive task of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies lies in formulating integrative conceptions that give voice not only the many tongues and interpretations of the movements but that let those voices speak to one another, interpret one another, and when possible bring their cacophony into some form of harmony. Since the Spiritual Presence penetrates both the big and the small, the Spirit-oriented imagination of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements is always both foundational and universal and the pursuit of the Spiritual presence identifies the desire to comprehend the

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<sup>98</sup> Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), p. 197.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Ralph Del Colle, “The Holy Spirit: Presence, Power, Person,” *Theological Studies* 62.2 (2001), pp. 322–40.

<sup>100</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 98.

<sup>101</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 35.

<sup>102</sup> See Cho and Squier, “Religion as a Complex and Dynamic System,” pp. 367–72.

<sup>103</sup> Vondey, *Pentecostalism*, pp. 1–8.

<sup>104</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 100.



existential potential of all things. Here, Pentecostal and Charismatic studies shifts its position from the horizon or object of study to the *modus operandi* or methodology of inquiry for discovering the Spiritual Presence. Pentecostal and Charismatic studies becomes an instrument of pursuing the Spiritual Presence commensurate with the academic objective to represent the entire system of symbols.

### *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies as Representation of Reality*

The interdisciplinary representation of the Spiritual Presence is necessarily confronted with the limitations of our particular epistemologies and the ability of the human mind to engage directly in an encounter with the divine. Pentecostal and Charismatic studies remains in the first place an attempt to study the symbols of that presence, and it is imperative that we clothe our conceptions of the symbolic with such an aura of factuality that the affections and motivations appropriately represent the entire system.<sup>105</sup> If our academic study points to the entirety of the various symbols of the Spiritual Presence, then the sciences and disciplines that are able to participate in Pentecostal and Charismatic studies must ascertain the compatibility between their respective representations of the system and the system itself. In other words, the task is not only to define but also to represent the system appropriately.<sup>106</sup> As Geertz reminds us, our task requires that we “put aside at once the tone of the village atheist and that of the village preacher.”<sup>107</sup> The overarching goal is to ascertain that the objects of our study are indeed symbols of the Spiritual Presence. Since the Spiritual Presence is not immediately and completely accessible to each of our respective scholarly methods, the task of accurately representing the entire system belongs both to each discipline and to all disciplines together. The current stage of interdisciplinarity can be seen as no more than an attempt to map the environments of the Spiritual Presence and to identify how they can be studied.<sup>108</sup>

The vision of interdisciplinary Pentecostal and Charismatic studies begins with the expansion of all symbols of the Spiritual Presence to an integrative system of symbols that allows for the integration of all disciplines.<sup>109</sup> This notion is problematic as long as integration is understood as the compromise of disciplinary integrity, authority, and conceptual variability. One difficulty of this idea of the open system, especially for the theological character of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, is the resistance of the movement to systems thinking, in principle.<sup>110</sup> Another challenge is the still dominant perception of theological systems in terms of parts within a whole rather than of a unified system and its environments.<sup>111</sup> Yet another is that the increasing complexity of the environments of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, exposed by our interdisciplinary studies, increase the complexity of the system.<sup>112</sup> The paradox of complex systems, however, is the blindness of the system to its own symbols, their construction, demarcation, and

<sup>105</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 109–23.

<sup>106</sup> Kline, *Conceptual Foundations*, pp. 280–81.

<sup>107</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 123

<sup>108</sup> For the idea of systems mapping, see Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research*, pp. 152–59.

<sup>109</sup> See Sytse Strijbos, “Systems Thinking,” in Robert Frodeman *et al.* (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 453–70.

<sup>110</sup> Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism*, pp. 16–46.

<sup>111</sup> For this distinction see Luhmann, *Social Systems*, pp. 176–209.

<sup>112</sup> Luhmann, *Social Systems*, p. 182.

validation.<sup>113</sup> When Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are understood as an evolving system of increasing complexity that includes as its primary function the integration of conceptions of the Spiritual Presence, then the actual practices of integration can take place only in the environments where the pursuit of this presence is repeatedly reinforced. For Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians, the ultimate concern for this reinforced pursuit of the Spiritual Presence is not mere representation but the confrontation of the system of symbols through encounter with the reality of God. This normativity of the theological perspective is the greatest challenge for the realization of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies as academic and interdisciplinary. On the one hand, the composite nature of theology makes any form of tight amalgamation of disciplines undesirable. On the other hand, an integrative system depends precisely on the different systemic components not exclusively as autonomous disciplines in their own right but always as parts in relation to the system and its purpose as a whole. That the meaning of the system is determined by the normativity of the theological symbol of the Spiritual Presence cannot be avoided, since the encounter with God identifies the ultimate concern of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.

### *Interdisciplinary Studies and the Encounter with God*

Although it is not part of Geertz' classic definition of religion, a definition of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements without reference to the encounter with God would fail to recognize the normativity of theological reference dominating the pneumatological imagination of the movements. I have suggested that Pentecostal and Charismatic studies is not self-referential but transcendental and that "the results envisaged are not confined categorially to some particular field or subject."<sup>114</sup> Its interdisciplinary study can be identified as unrestricted and comprehensive attempts to grasp the whole reality of the Spiritual Presence in the world by neglecting any one particular interest for the sake of the whole.<sup>115</sup> However, the thick symbols comprising Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity are not merely representative but participatory phenomena that belong to the realm of spirit. The inevitable normativity of the theological approach within the movements does not cancel out a pluralism of tongues, voices, and disciplines, although it does highlight the normative consequences of choosing the Spiritual Presence as the object of inquiry and hence the demand for representational methods, perspectives, and goals. The symbols of the Spiritual Presence observed in the movements ultimately point to the transforming work of the Spirit of God, who in turn always directs us to Jesus Christ and to the Father (Eph. 2:18). This explicitly theological transcendence should not be mistaken for the stipulation that scholars of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies "have one of two options relative to their object of study: Either one engages in reductive explanations of religion and deconstructs the category itself, or one consents to the theological proposition that religion is true."<sup>116</sup> Nonetheless, the academic pursuit of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies is confronted with the movements obsession with a divine encounter. Unless we endeavor to escape the thickness of Pentecostal and Charismatic symbols of the baptism in the Spirit, the anointing with the Spirit, the empowerment by the Spirit, or spiritual warfare into the imaginary world of the researcher's

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Michael King and Chris Thornhill, "'Will the Real Niklas Luhmann Stand up, Please.' A Reply to John Mingers," *The Sociological Review* 51 (2003), pp. 276-85.

<sup>114</sup> Lonergan, *Theological Method*, p. 14.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism*, pp. 1-8.

<sup>116</sup> Francisca Cho and Richard K. Squier, "'He Blinded Me with Science': Science Chauvinism in the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76 (2008), pp. 420-48 (426).

neutral distance, the study of the Spiritual Presence from any disciplinary perspective “remains an open-ended and ceaseless task in the Spirit”<sup>117</sup> and of the Spirit who directs all things to God. Although Pentecostal and Charismatic studies allows neither for unqualified reductionism and simplistic deconstruction of the divine nor for uncritical fideism (both can be found in the study of the movements), the unavoidable challenge of interdisciplinary pursuits is participation in the symbolic world of the movements.

Pentecostal and Charismatic studies as an interdisciplinary pursuit of the Spiritual Presence demands conscious and self-critical participation. Participation is the unavoidable challenge of the Pentecostal and Charismatic claims of manifesting the Spiritual Presence, since the symbols of that presence are not mere signs that refer to something other than themselves. Representation is necessary in order to observe (by common sense), to interpret (via theory), and to assign meaning (via interiority) to our symbols. However, the thickness of Pentecostalism shows that our symbols do not simply point to something other; they are “conduits” that introduce us to a realm to which they themselves belong.<sup>118</sup> Since Pentecostalism claims to participate in the Spiritual Presence, all Pentecostal and Charismatic study is an introduction to that participation, a possibility of encounter with God that despises no form or method of approach, no discipline, no worldview, and no ideology. Faith is no hindrance to the study of the Spirit, and for some faith represents the actual entrance to Pentecostal and Charismatic studies. Nonetheless, although intellectual, moral, and religious conversion can lead to new horizons, faith is neither the requirement nor the outcome of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies as interdisciplinary.<sup>119</sup> Instead, encounter with the Spiritual Presence through study of the movements tests our faith, whether it is faith in God or in our religion or our instruments of study, and thus measures the maturity and endurance of our methods and convictions. For the person of faith, the encounter with God validates the claim that Pentecostal and Charismatic movements represent the Spiritual Presence. For those of other faiths, such validation may direct them to the Spiritual Presence in their own religions. For the person resisting faith, the encounter with the Spiritual Presence may remain hidden amidst the disciplinary tools of inquiry.

## Conclusion

In many ways, the preceding characterization of Pentecostal and Charismatic studies as an interdisciplinary concern is more a plea than a fact. A particular problem in realizing its full interdisciplinary potential is both the continuing resistance of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements to academic study and the complex reasons for neglecting the movements in the wider academy. Interdisciplinarity can bridge the isolation of the academy, not only the separation of thick experiences on the ground from the often thin empirical observations of research, particularly evident with regard to the Spiritual Presence, but also the isolation of disciplines. The powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting affections and motivations in human beings and the world that shape the phenomena of global Pentecostal and Charismatic movements urge interdisciplinary participation from historians, theologians, philosophers, social scientists, natural scientists, behavioral scientists, and all those whose work contributes to conceptions of a general order of existence. This kind of collaboration would undoubtedly increase not only the quantity but also the quality of research output. Only together can the academy clothe its conceptions of Pentecostal and Charismatic life with such an aura of

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<sup>117</sup> Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, p. 244.

<sup>118</sup> See Edmond Ortigues, *Le Discours et le symbole* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2007), pp.66–79.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 235–66.

factuality that the affections and embodiments appropriately represent the system. Whether interdisciplinary Pentecostal and Charismatic studies direct the whole to a transforming encounter with God is not the place for the academy to decide. Yet, it seems, that the potential of interdisciplinary study is limited only by our imagination of the presence of the Spirit.

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