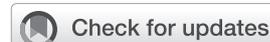


Theology and science as a Pentecostal hermeneutical approach to the Genesis creation narrative

**Author:**Mookgo S. Kgatle¹ **Affiliation:**

¹Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, Faculty of Humanities, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:Mookgo Kgatle,
kgatls@unisa.ac.za**Dates:**

Received: 22 Mar. 2025

Accepted: 15 Apr. 2025

Published: 06 June 2025

How to cite this article:

Kgatle, M.S., 2025, 'Theology and science as a Pentecostal hermeneutical approach to the Genesis creation narrative', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 46(1), a3497.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v46i1.3497>

Copyright:

© 2025. The Author.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Two hermeneutical methods inform the Pentecostal reading of the Bible: the fundamentalist literalist reading and the Pentecostal hermeneutics of experience. These two positions in Bible reading among Pentecostals have contributed to the literal and experiential reading of the Genesis creation narrative in tracing human origins and somehow caused a rejection of other scientific approaches. This article proposes the theological and scientific approach to the Genesis creation narrative on human origin to play a meaningful role on this subject rather than become suspicious of science. To achieve this, the hermeneutical methods of Pentecostal reading of the Bible are introduced and discussed accordingly. The Genesis creation narrative is reflected upon using literature review in qualitative research and exegesis of Genesis 1:26–27 (first narrative) and Genesis 2:7 (second narrative). The aim is to generate the Pentecostal understanding of this narrative within the context of Pentecostal hermeneutics. In addition, the gaps that exist in the Pentecostal hermeneutics are highlighted. The theology and science approach is introduced to fill these gaps; and to demonstrate that it is relevant for challenging existing creationist theories.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This article suggests that the Pentecostal hermeneutical approaches to the Genesis creation narrative on human origins within theological studies can be enhanced by other scientific approaches in an interdisciplinary way.

Keywords: Pentecostal reading; Pentecostal hermeneutics; literalist reading; hermeneutics of experience; human origins; theology; science; Genesis creation narrative.

Introduction

Pentecostals around the world believe in a direct relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal movement has come to be known as the movement of the Spirit because of its emphasis on the theology of the Spirit, also known as pneumatology. This is the same rationale for the emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal movement. It is the fundamental teaching of the belief in the Holy Spirit that informs the hermeneutics of experience when it comes to the reading and interpretation of the Bible. Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit is active in helping the believer to read and understand the Bible. Therefore, the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal tradition is helpful not only in the life of the believer but also in Pentecostal hermeneutics. This brings the connection between the hermeneutics of experience and the theology of the Spirit, which translates into the understanding of the Bible through the experience with the Holy Spirit. Nel (2021a:4) points out that Pentecostals 'believe that the word of God cannot be heard if the Spirit does not work in the minds of the believers'. Furthermore, Pentecostals believe in the authority of the Bible, which makes them take every word of the Bible in the literalist sense without cognisance of its grammar and history. This article argues that in complex matters such as the creation narrative in Genesis, the Bible cannot only be read through experience and in a literal manner. Hence, a need to consider the theological and scientific understanding of the same.

So much has been written on the Pentecostal reading of the creation narrative (Nel 2021a; ed. Yong 2009, 2011a, 2011b). However, the gap exists in the Pentecostal reading of the Genesis creation narrative about tracing human origins. Tenneson and Badger (2011) attempted to articulate the diverse views that Pentecostals have on human origins. However, this was not

directly on human origins but rather the 'origins' in general terms. Therefore, there is still a need to research the intersections of Pentecostal hermeneutics and human origins. However, this article does not delve into the whole creation narrative, but into the section of the narrative that only deals with human origins. This article seeks to demonstrate that the theological and scientific understanding of the creation narrative is necessary in addition to the hermeneutics of experience and the fundamentalist literalist reading of scripture in tracing human origins.

The article begins with introducing the Pentecostal hermeneutical approaches, which include the hermeneutics of experience and the fundamentalist literalist reading. This is followed by the introduction of the creation narrative in the book of Genesis. Next, the article demonstrates how the Pentecostal hermeneutical methods have been used in the understanding of the creation narrative in Genesis. Thereafter, the article illustrates the research gaps that exist in the Pentecostal understanding of the creation narrative in Genesis. Finally, the article proposes a theological and scientific reading of the creation narrative in Genesis in addition to the fundamentalist literalist reading and the hermeneutics of experience. The aim is to demonstrate that a theological and scientific approach is necessary to support the Pentecostal understanding of the creation narrative on human origins.

Pentecostal hermeneutical approaches

As highlighted in the introduction, two hermeneutical methods determine the Pentecostal reading of the biblical text. This is because Pentecostals around the world are more experiential rather than theoretical (Warrington 2008). However, in Pentecostal scholarship, the experiences of believers at the grassroots level are translated into theological dispositions. While the Pentecostal movement prides itself on being more experiential than theoretical or even more theological, there is a need for a grounding in theological discourses. Hence, biblical scholars within the Pentecostal tradition have already begun that journey of establishing a Pentecostal hermeneutical approach to biblical reading and interpretation (Martin 2013:3). It is within the context of this journey that they established the fundamentalist literalist and experiential reading of the biblical text within Pentecostal hermeneutics. However, it is widely accepted that these hermeneutical approaches to the Bible are not necessarily new, but have been in existence since the inception of the Pentecostal movement (Martin 2013:3). "Therefore, it is correct to point out that Pentecostal practices precede theological discourses particularly when considering early Pentecostalism. The hermeneutical approaches to the biblical text are also informed by the pneumatological experiences, which have also been around for a while. The main teaching of the Pentecostal movement on spirit baptism has a contribution to the Pentecostal hermeneutics. Hence, Pentecostals' approach to the Bible is based on the encounters that

believers have with the person of the Holy Spirit. It is these experiences with the Holy Spirit, together with the Pentecostals' love and respect for the Bible, that have produced the literalist and experiential reading of the Bible.

The literalist reading of the Bible refers to the approach that takes the words written in the biblical text in the literal sense without questioning their meaning or even historicity or context. Therefore, in adopting this approach, the Pentecostals have extended the gap that exists between the real reader of the Bible today and the context in which the Bible was written (Martin 2013:3). This is based on the love that the Pentecostals have for the Bible, which is perceived as the word of God. Given this position by Pentecostals around the world, it is, therefore, easy for them to take every word written in the Bible in the literal sense (Lysik 2001:158). In addition to the love and respect for the Bible, many Pentecostals take the Bible as an authoritative text. Therefore, they perceive it wrong to critique the Bible; hence, some Pentecostals are sceptical about doing biblical criticism (Archer 2004:17). Fundamentalist literalist reading, according to Lysik (2001:159), 'also places undue stress upon the inerrancy of certain details in the biblical texts, especially in what concerns historical events or supposedly scientific'. Similarly, Pentecostals do not want to engage in the criticism of the text that is inerrant. Therefore, these three, where the Bible is perceived as the 'word of God', 'inerrancy of scripture' and the 'authoritative role of scripture', are all causative factors for the literalist reading of the scripture. It is the same that has contributed towards a smaller role in critiquing the Bible among Pentecostals. It has contributed to reading the biblical text without the consideration of the historical-critical method that is meant to take the historical background of the biblical texts seriously. It has contributed to the ignorance of the history and the grammar of the biblical text, which are all important towards biblical interpretation. As highlighted earlier on, the literalist reading of the biblical text has also contributed to creating the gap between the context of the text and the real reader in the 21st century.

The second hermeneutical method among Pentecostals is the experiential one, or what others call the hermeneutics of experience, where the biblical interpretation is informed by personal experiences with the Holy Spirit. This makes the second hermeneutical method highly pneumatological, where the theology of the Spirit plays a vital role in helping the believer to read and understand the text (Yong 2017:1). It is for the very same reason that the encounter with the Holy Spirit is important in Pentecostalism. The Holy Spirit does not only help the believer to pray and worship but also to read and interpret the Bible. In addition, the Holy Spirit is present in the believer not only for the pneumatic experiences such as speaking in tongues and prophesying but also to read the Bible. This method, just like the one discussed precedingly, has the potential to ignore the other scientific methods or approaches to the Bible in the

name of the Spirit. While the Holy Spirit is important in Pentecostal hermeneutics, it is equally important to use scientific methods in addition to the presence of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics. In simple terms, the role of the Holy Spirit does not replace scientific methods but should be combined with the latter. This is a possibility of listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit in biblical hermeneutics while being engaged in scientific inquisitions. Therefore, the Holy Spirit cannot be used in the expanse of form criticism, redaction criticism, social scientific criticism and others (Archer 2004:17). Pentecostal hermeneutics, therefore, is expected to be experiential and scientific. This is possible when scientific methods are taken seriously in the Pentecostal tradition. In the following section, I discuss the Genesis creation narrative regarding Pentecostal hermeneutics using literature review in qualitative research and exegesis.

Genesis creation narrative on human origins

This article does not aim to exhaust the debate on human origins in the Genesis creation narrative but rather to highlight the Pentecostal hermeneutical contribution to the same. However, to do so, it is important to briefly introduce the Genesis creation narrative on human origins. The Genesis creation narrative included other creatures that were created by God in the beginning. The narrative can be summed up in the creation of the light, the creation of the sky, the creation of the earth, the seas and the vegetation, the creation of the sun and the moon, and the creation of animals in the air and the sea. Lastly, the creation of land animals and human beings (Andrews 2000). It is from this summary of the creation narrative that Christianity in general and Pentecostalism in particular acknowledge God as the creator of the universe and everything in it. For Pentecostals, it was not only God the creator but also the Spirit of creation that was involved in the creation narrative (Studebaker 2012). Pentecostals' interpretation of experience and theology is influenced by the Spirit. However, in this article, I concentrate on the Genesis creation narrative of human origins. Therefore, the Genesis creation narrative is introduced here through an exegetical analysis of the specific biblical texts on human creation as opposed to the whole text in Genesis 1–2.

In the first narrative, human beings are created in the image of God in Genesis 1:26–27:

Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'. God created human beings in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Verse 26 uses the verb 'עָשָׂה' which means to 'make'. However, the word 'עָשָׂה' can also refer to 'produce', which supports Crouch's interpretation of the parental aspect of Genesis 1:26 (Crouch 2010:1–10). This means that God produced

human beings in a parent-child relationship, as argued by Crouch (2010) in what he calls the divine parentage in human origins. However, in Genesis 1:27, the word בָּרָא means 'to create', which correlates with the word תְּצַלֵּם, which means image. This would be interpreted as God shaping or creating human beings in his image as opposed to Genesis 1:26. Therefore, Genesis 1:27 refers to forming something to the likeness of God rather than producing it from God. The word תְּצַלֵּם has also been a subject of debate. Luther says that Augustine used this word to refer to the spiritual, intellect, soul, memory, and from a theological perspective (Luther 2021; Oliver 2016). In this kind of interpretation, man does not resemble God in terms of physical appearance but rather in their soul and spirit. Whereas others, such as Karl Barth in Hutabarat (2015:122–128), have used the word תְּצַלֵּם as directly referring to the physical image of God. Thus, Genesis 1:27 would be interpreted as God creating man in his physical likeness in anthropological terms.

In the second narrative in Genesis 2:7, human beings are formed as opposed to being 'created' as per the first narrative: 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul'. This is also in contrast with the first narrative, particularly Genesis 1:26, where human beings are produced. In Genesis 2:7, human beings are not produced as in a parent-child relationship but are formed from the dust of the ground. The word יָצַר, as used here, has the same meaning as בָּרָא in Genesis 1:27. Both Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:7 have the implications of the originality of human creation. The word בָּרָא also refers to the preordination or even predetermination of human beings, which also supports Genesis 1:27 that God predetermined the purpose of humanity before he could create them. In addition, the word בָּרָא means to mould into a form, especially as a potter; figuratively, to determine their purpose or functionality. This places human beings as clay in the hands of God as the potter. However, human beings exceeded the level of clay when God himself breathed his breath upon human beings to become living souls. Thus, Genesis 2:7 is necessary for the separation of human beings from the rest of creatures, including animals, as highlighted in the first creation narrative. Therefore, the second creation narrative, in tracing human origins, is necessary for demonstrating the essence of human beings in comparison to the rest of creation.

Pentecostal understanding of the Genesis creation narrative

Pentecostals interpret the Genesis creation narrative, particularly about human origins as informed by the hermeneutics of experience and the fundamentalist literalist reading. Yong (2011a) explains that:

Insofar as Pentecostals consider conservative evangelicals their allies and agree with them about the authority, infallibility, and even inerrancy of the Bible, to the same degree, Pentecostals also presume a concordist hermeneutic along with the accompanying young-earth view of the world. This explains, at least in part, why Pentecostals are creationists who are suspicious, at best, about the theory of evolution. (p. 3)

Yong is not alone in asserting that most Pentecostals are creationists, particularly the Young-earth creationism, as Tenneson and Badger (2011) also agree on the same and summarise the Young Earth creationist position as follows:

(1) God created the physical realm and life, (2) by speaking things into existence, (3) out of nothing, (4) in six consecutive 24-hour periods, (5) about 6,000–15,000 years ago, (6) reject other evolution theories, and (7) reject the earth that is billions of years old. (p. 149)

This again is based on the Pentecostal's belief in the Bible as the word of God and God speaking things into existence. The Young Earth creationism differs from the Old Earth creationism because the latter holds that the Earth is billions of years old (Heaton 2009; cf. Mortenson 2011). The Evolutionary Creationists (EC) accept the earth as being billions of years old and other biological evolutionary theories but argue that God guided all these evolutions. Deistic Evolutionists (DE) perceive God as not being involved in the physical realm. And the atheistic evolution denies the existence of God and rejects the Bible as the word of God (Tenneson & Badger 2011:150). It must be pointed out that although Pentecostals are creationists, they can be considered Young Earth creationists, which is different from creationists' approaches such as Old Earth creationism, evolutionary creationists, deistic and atheistic evolution.

A literal interpretation of the Genesis creation narrative enables Pentecostals to believe that human beings were created by God on the sixth day. This position reads and interprets the Genesis creation narration in terms of the literal six days as per Genesis 1 (Averbeck 2013:7–34). Therefore, the human origins are confined to these 6 days of creation. Pentecostal reading of the Genesis creation narrative takes both the first and second narratives of creation as historical truth because of a literalist reading founded on the truth, authority and reliability of the Bible (Nel 2021b:4). The literalist reading follows the pattern of creation as God first forming the cosmos, filling the cosmos and creating human beings to occupy the cosmos. However, the literalist reading does not necessarily follow the theological interpretation that is necessary for understanding the Genesis creation narrative for the reader today. There is no theological or scientific basis for such a conclusion on human origins. Whereas a hermeneutics of experience reads the Genesis creation narrative on human origins as per the experiences of individuals with the Holy Spirit (Nel 2021b:4), the knowledge and the revelation about human origins and history depend on an individual's understanding without theological and scientific inquisitions. Yong (2017) calls the Holy Spirit a hermeneutical Spirit responsible for helping the believer to read and understand the Bible. Therefore, Pentecostals, through the work of the Holy Spirit, expect to find truth in the Biblical text as revealed by the same Spirit. The Holy Spirit becomes the centre of understanding the human origins as described in the Genesis creation narrative.

There is a gap between the Pentecostal reading of the Genesis creation narrative and the theology and science approach in the tracing of human origins. While we cannot undermine or even underestimate the role of the Holy Spirit in the understanding of the biblical text, the challenge remains in the theological and scientific evidence in this understanding. Pentecostals, because of the fundamentalist literalist reading and the hermeneutics of experience, are interested in the biblical account and not concerned about the theological and scientific account. This is because Pentecostals, and to a certain extent, evangelicals, are sceptical of the evolutionary theories, particularly about the tracing of the human origins. Yong (ed. 2009:xii) explains that 'Pentecostals are suspicious of any scientific advances that threaten to undermine belief in the reality, power, and personality of God and the Holy Spirit'. Pentecostals are not entirely wrong in their defence of the tradition's fundamental teachings on the Bible and the role of the Holy Spirit in its interpretation. The argument is that the intersections of theology and science can enhance this position of the Pentecostal tradition not only on human origins but on other contentious matters within the movement.

Theology and science approach

The intersections of theology and science, which others refer to as religion and science, can be traced back to the beginning of the 19th century. According to Numbers (2007:3), 'prominent 19th-century scholars such as Andrew Dickson White (1832–1918) and John William Draper (1811–1882) assured their readers that science and religion existed in a state of perpetual opposition'. These scholars, particularly White (1869), demonstrated how religious groups struggled with the scientific inquisition. White likened the battle of religion with science to the battles of Alexander, Caesar and even Napoleon. Scholars such as Draper (1811–1882) demonstrated how the Roman Catholic Church engaged with the acceptance of science in their theology. Numbers (2007:3) continue to say that the battle between religion or theology and science continues despite efforts to address it from an intellectual angle. Therefore, the Pentecostal tradition was not the first to engage in the battle between theology and science, as this battle started as early as the beginning of the 19th century.

The debate carried on until the middle of the 20th century (Bowler 2010). According to Russell (2003:37–42), early scholars were concerned about the tension that exists between science and religion. Whereas other scholars such as Ian Barbour (1966) and Torrance (1969) challenged this view on the tension between theology and science (Russell 2017; cf. Barbour 1966; Torrance 1969). Therefore, they developed methodologies and theories to study the differences between theology and science on one hand and the similarities between theology and science on the other (Brooke 1991). There were also contextual issues that were raised about the intersections of theology and science. At the end of the 20th century, scholars such as Harrison paid attention to the harmony that existed between theology and science (Harrison 1998; cf. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2017).

The proponents of this harmony argued that theological concepts can help enhance the scientific understanding of the relationship between theology and nature. At the beginning of the 21st century, scholars such as Bowler (2010) sought to reconcile evolutionary theories with theological beliefs. The goal was to integrate theological concepts with modern scientific understanding. Mooney (1991) quoted Pope John Paul II, who during the 1988 Vatican stated:

Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutism. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish. (p. 289)

For the Pope, there is an intersection between theology and science where each can contribute meaningfully to the other. In this article, the contribution of each in the Genesis creation narrative on human origins is examined. This is what Yong (2011a:14) calls complementarity in the intersections of theology and science, which refers to 'the idea that each provides valid insights into the one world which we inhabit, and which should at least be noncontradictory, if not also convergent in some respects'.

The theology and science approach is helpful in the intersections of theological discourses and scientific inquiry (Ferngren 2022). The theology and science approach can contribute to the evaluation of the Genesis creation narrative from both theological and scientific angles. The theology and science approach is popular in theological concepts but also makes a valuable contribution to other sciences (Polkinghorne 2009). Because the Genesis creation narrative is an important theological discourse, the theology and science approach can contribute meaningfully to the subject through scientific reflections. Lastly, the theology and science approach is helpful to understand theological discourses on human origins beyond Pentecostalism. Therefore, this approach is important in understanding the concept of the Genesis creation narrative in the Pentecostal tradition not only from literal and experiential perspectives but also from the scientific perspective.

The theological and scientific contribution to the Genesis creation narrative

This article is not necessarily dismissive of the Pentecostal hermeneutical approaches, such as the hermeneutics of experience and the fundamentalist literalist reading. But argues that when it comes to the Genesis creation narrative in tracing human origins, the literalist reading approach must be complemented with both theological and scientific evidence for the primary purpose of defending the Pentecostal faith. I do not here propose the recognition of evolution theories but rather, as Yong (2011a:4) suggests, 'the idea that scientific evidence can be marshalled in support of the biblical account'. Yong (2011a:4) suggests the possibility of acknowledging the biblical account of the creation narrative while at the same time acknowledging the scientific

perspective. This is the possibility that when the biblical account of the creation narrative is juxtaposed with the scientific evidence, it will benefit the Pentecostal reading of the Bible. In other words, instead of being dismissive of other sciences, including evolutionary theories, the Pentecostal reading can use a theology and science approach to engage the same. This is necessary as it helps in tracing the originality of human beings and their likeness with God (the *imago Dei*). Therefore, the theology and science approach opens up the possibility of the theological understanding of human origins with the use of modern scientific models in Pentecostal hermeneutics.

The biblical and scientific contribution is important in tracing the human origins in the Genesis creation narrative. The scientific inquisition can be of help in this regard instead of only relying on the literalist and experiential interpretation. For example, according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2017:1), 'Sciences coming from disciplines such as geology, palaeoanthropology (the study of ancestral hominins, using fossils and other evidence), archaeology, and evolutionary biology' can help in tracing human origins. However, the findings should be balanced with theological reflection on human origins. This is important not only for the Pentecostal hermeneutics but for African studies also for example:

Genetic and fossil evidence favours a predominantly African origin of our species *Homo sapiens* (as early as 315,000 years ago) with limited gene-flow from other hominin species such as Neanderthals and Denisovans. (p. 1)

This kind of scientific study is important, for example, for the Pentecostal reading of scripture to argue against the tracing of humans to chimpanzees, apes and gorillas. For example, a scientific study in tracing the first man Adam as a human being will immediately dismiss the association of human origins to chimpanzees, apes and gorillas from an evolutionary theoretical point of view or even from Darwinism (Numbers 1992:127–159, 2005:205). Therefore, we should not be quick to celebrate, for example, with the genetic and fossil evidence that support African origins, especially when such links are made with evil intentions of linking black people with chimpanzees, gorillas and apes. The point I am making here is that both a theological and scientific study are necessary for the Genesis creation narrative on human origins. Such a study requires the expertise of both theologians and scientists in different disciplines like biology, palaeoanthropology and so forth.

The debate includes whether humans were created in God's spiritual image, as Augustine and Luther asserted, or in God's physical image, as Karl Barth opined, or even both, that is, human beings created in both the physical and spiritual image of God. This debate on the *imago Dei* is part of the Genesis creation narrative on human origins. To conclude this debate, it is imperative to engage in both theological and scientific inquisitions rather than being dismissive of science. In other words, the literalist and the

hermeneutics of experience fall short of unpacking the rationale behind the likeness of humanity with divinity. On the theological part, it is possible to make correlations between the appellations of God in the biblical texts and compare the same with the godly character of human beings. However, the resemblance of human beings with the physical image of God remains a scientific task that cannot end with literal and experiential interpretations. Even to conclude that God created human beings in His image in a trinitarian way, that is, body, soul and spirit, will require a theological and scientific study. In other words, the theology and science approach allows us to merge the spiritual image and the physical image into one. Therefore, to defend the position of the Pentecostal tradition or any other Christian tradition on the *imago Dei*, the literalist and experiential hermeneutical approaches fall short of this task. There is, therefore, a need for the juxtaposition of theology and science for the very task of the correlation of human beings with the image of God.

Most importantly, the theological and scientific inquisition on the Genesis creation narrative is important for allowing the scientific approach to the text to speak rather than interpreting the text from other Pentecostals' experiences (Noel 2010:7). The Pentecostal reading is expected to revisit the human origins in the creation narrative from a theological and scientific inquisition (Oliverio 2012:53). For this to happen, scientific methods and theological perspectives on human origins should be merged to produce a viable Pentecostal reading of the creation narrative instead of only interpreting the text in literal and experiential ways. Oliverio (2022) explains that:

[A]ncient historical and cultural contexts should be merged with the present so that the text presents a theological, even eschatological, narrative of human history. More sophisticated use of historical-critical methods, especially redaction criticism. (p. 153)

is necessary in this regard. Other scientific methods of reading and interpreting the text, such as lexical-syntactical analysis, historical and/or cultural analysis analysis, contextual analysis, theological analysis and special literary analysis, are also important in the understanding of the Genesis creation narrative on human origins. In simple terms, the biblical text can no longer ignore the historical and the grammatic; otherwise, the quest to trace the human origins using Pentecostal hermeneutics would become futile. Therefore, the intersections of theology and science are important, such as approaching theology from scientific biblical hermeneutical methods.

Challenging the creationist approaches

To deal with the creationist approaches such as deistic evolution, atheist evolution and the Old Earth creationism, the literalist and experiential approaches are not adequate.

This task requires scientific evidence. Therefore, the intersection of theology and science is necessary for the very purpose of critiquing these creationist approaches. As much as atheists, for example, use science to prove the non-existence of God, Pentecostals can also use science to prove the existence of the deity. Thus, by moving away from science and proper theological exposition, Pentecostals are robbing themselves of properly engaging these approaches for theological grounding on human origins. This is important because the proponents of these creationist approaches do so by claiming scientific evidence. Therefore, a Pentecostal reading of the Genesis creation narrative on human origins should also be based on both theological and scientific evidence. It does not only help in tracing human origins but also in engaging the creationist approaches that are inconsistent with the biblical account. The point is that Pentecostals are expected to move beyond the literalist and experiential hermeneutical approach to participate in these debates.

Conclusion

This article acknowledged the Pentecostal approaches to the understanding of the creation narrative in Genesis, particularly the main hermeneutical methods: the hermeneutics of experience and the fundamentalist literalist reading. The article acknowledged the hermeneutics of experience as informed by the fundamental teaching of the Pentecostal movement on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The fundamentalist literalist reading of the scripture is the reading of scripture without taking into cognisance its history and grammar. This is shaped by the Pentecostals' love for the Bible and the inerrancy of scripture. The fundamentalist literalist's reading of the Bible is established by the acknowledgment of the Bible as the word of God. Pentecostals around the world believe in the authority of the Bible. The article argued that in complex matters such as the Genesis creation narrative, the Pentecostal hermeneutics should go beyond the hermeneutics of experience and the fundamentalist literalist reading. Therefore, this article proposes the incorporation of both theological and scientific methods in the Pentecostal understanding of the Genesis creation narrative that will enhance both the hermeneutics of experience and the fundamentalist literalist reading. The findings are that the theology and science approach will help in distinguishing between producing human beings and forming or creating human beings. The theology and science approach is important in the debate around whether human beings are spiritually or physically like God. Theology and science approach is important for the use of biblical scientific methods rather than relying on other people's experiences. Lastly, it is important to challenge the existing creationist approaches such as Old Earth creationism, deistic evolution and atheistic evolution. It changes the way we study Pentecostal hermeneutics as we are expected to go beyond literalist readings and experiences by incorporating theological and scientific approaches.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology for the support provided in conducting this research.

Competing interests

The author reported that they received funding from the University of South Africa which may be affected by the research reported in the enclosed publication. The author has disclosed those interests fully and has implemented an approved plan for managing any potential conflicts arising from their involvement. The terms of these funding arrangements have been reviewed and approved by the affiliated university in accordance with its policy on objectivity in research.

Author's contribution

M.S.K. is the sole author of this article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This study was financially supported by the University of South Africa.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and are the product of professional research. The article does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder or agency, or that of the publisher. The author is responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

References

- Andrews, T., 2000, *Dictionary of nature myths: Legends of the earth, sea, and sky*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Archer, K., 2004, *A Pentecostal hermeneutic for the twenty-first century: Spirit, scripture and community*, vol. 28, A&C Black, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Averbeck, R.E., 2013, 'A literary day, inter-textual, and contextual reading of Genesis 1-2', in N.J. Chambers (ed.), *Reading Genesis 1-2: An Evangelical conversation*, pp. 7-34, Duke University Press, Durham.
- Barbour, I.G., 1966, *Issues in science and religion*, Vantage, New York, NY.
- Bowler, P.J., 2010, *Reconciling science and religion: The debate in early-twentieth-century Britain*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Brooke, J.H., 1991, *Science and religion: Some historical perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Crouch, C.L., 2010, 'Genesis 1: 26-7 as a statement of humanity's divine parentage', *Journal of Theological Studies* 61(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flp185>
- Ferngren, G., 2022, 'Science and religion', in T.W. Kneeland (ed.), *The Routledge history of American science*, pp. 200-214, Routledge, Abingdon.
- Harrison, P., 1998, *The Bible, protestantism, and the rise of natural science*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Heaton, T.H., 2009, 'Recent developments in young-earth creationist geology', *Science & Education* 18, 1341-1358. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11191-008-9162-6>
- Hutabarat, R.M., 2015, 'Exploring Karl Barth's view on the image of god', *International Journal* 3(1), 122-128. <https://doi.org/10.15640/ijpt.v3n1a17>
- Luther, M., 2021, *Commentary on Genesis, Vol. 1: Luther on the Creation*, Litres, New York, NY.
- Lysik, D.A. (ed.), 2001, *The Bible documents: A Parish resource*, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL.
- Martin, L.R. (ed.), 2013, *Pentecostal hermeneutics: A reader*, Brill, Leiden.
- Mooney, C.F., 1991, 'Theology and science: A new commitment to dialogue', *Theological Studies* 52(2), 289-329. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056399105200205>
- Mortenson, T., 2011, 'The young-earth creationist view is summarized and defended', *Answers Research Journal* 6, 1-16.
- Nel, M., 2021a, *Creation and Pentecostals: Hermeneutical considerations of Genesis 1-2*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Cambridge.
- Nel, M., 2021b, 'Comparison between the respective views of John Calvin and classical Pentecostals on the role of the holy spirit in reading the Bible', *HTS Theological Studies/Theological Studies* 77(4), a6327. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6327>
- Noel, B.T., 2010, *Pentecostal and postmodern hermeneutics: Comparisons and contemporary impact*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR.
- Numbers, R.L., 1992, 'Creation, evolution, and Holy Ghost religion: Holiness and Pentecostal responses to darwinism', *Religion and American Culture* 2(2), 127-158. <https://doi.org/10.1525/rac.1992.2.2.03a00010>
- Numbers, R.L., 2005, 'Experiencing evolution: Varieties of psychological responses to the Claims of science and religion', in J. Proctor (ed.), *Science, religion, and the human experience*, p. 205, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Numbers, R.L., 2007, *Science and Christianity in the pulpit and pew*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Oliver, S., 2016, 'Augustine on creation, providence, and motion', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18(4), 379-398. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijst.12171>
- Oliverio, L.W., 2012, *Theological hermeneutics in the classical Pentecostal tradition: A typological account*, vol. 12, Brill, Leiden.
- Oliverio, L.W., 2022, *Pentecostal hermeneutics in the late modern world: Essays on the condition of our interpretation*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR.
- Polkinghorne, J., 2009, *One world: The interaction of science and theology*, Templeton Foundation Press, West Conshohocken, PA.
- Russell, C., 2003, 'The conflict of science and religion', in A. Fyfe (ed.), *The history of science and religion in the western tradition*, pp. 37-42, Routledge, Abingdon.
- Russell, R.J., 2017, 'Ian Barbour's methodological breakthrough: Creating the "bridge" between science and theology', *Theology and Science* 15(1), 28-41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2016.1265224>
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017, *Religion and science*, Stanford University press, redwood.
- Studebaker, S.M., 2012, *From Pentecost to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian theology*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Tennessee, M. & Badger, S., 2011, 'Perspectives on origins: How diverse are Pentecostals?', in *Proceedings of the inaugural faith & science conference*, pp. 149-155.
- Torrance, T.F., 1969, *Theological science*, Oxford University Press, London.
- Warrington, K., 2008, *Pentecostal theology: A theology of encounter*, A&C Black, London.
- White, C.A., 1869, 'A trip to the Great Red Pipestone quarry', *The American Naturalist*, 2(12), pp.644-653.
- Yong, A. ed., 2009, *The spirit renews the face of the Earth: Pentecostal forays in science and Theology of creation*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR.
- Yong, A., 2011a, 'Reading scripture and nature: Pentecostal hermeneutics and their implications for the contemporary evangelical theology and science conversation', *Perspectives on Science & Christian Faith* 63(1), 1-15.
- Yong, A., 2011b, *The spirit of creation: Modern science and divine action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic imagination*, vol. 4, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Yong, A., 2017, *The hermeneutical spirit: Theological interpretation and scriptural imagination for the 21st Century*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR.