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Hearing the Book of Judges: A Dialogue with Reviewers

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Abstract

This response to the reviews of Rickie D. Moore, Walter Brueggemann, and Robert Pope seeks to answer their questions regarding Pentecostal hermeneutics and to expand the conclusions of my book, *The Unheard Voice of God*. I gratefully acknowledge both the positive reception of my book and the collegial tone of the reviews. The response to Pope revolves around the role of Scripture in the lives of Pentecostals and elements of the Pentecostal approach to the Bible. I address Brueggemann's suggestion that I extend the results of my study to include the entire Deuteronomistic History. Finally, a dialogue with Rickie Moore considers more closely the nature of 'hearing' the voice of God through the biblical text.

Keywords

book of Judges, hermeneutics, literary criticism, theological interpretation, possibility

Introductory Word of Thanks

I am grateful to Rickie D. Moore, Walter Brueggemann and Robert Pope for their willingness to engage in dialogue around my book, *The Unheard Voice of God: A Pentecostal Hearing of the Book of Judges*.¹ I was introduced to Robert Pope only recently, but for many years both Moore and Brueggemann have exercised a profound impact upon my study of Scripture. In 1983 Rickie Moore provoked my interest in literary interpretive methods, and he continued to inform my hermeneutical approach as we taught together, worshiped

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¹ Lee Roy Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God: A Pentecostal Hearing of the Book of Judges* (JPTSup, 32; Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2008).

together and prayed together at the Church of God Theological Seminary from 1992–2008. Professor Brueggemann (as evidenced by my numerous citations of his works) has also served as a most helpful resource and catalyst for theological reflection. In many ways, his innovative and groundbreaking approach has made my work possible.

The positive reception of my book is quite satisfying and encouraging. Rickie Moore has presented an excellent overview; Walter Brueggemann has identified and clarified many of the key components of my interpretation; and Robert Pope has affirmed the results of my study in a number of ways. I appreciate as well the collegial tone with which the reviewers have expressed even their challenges, questions, and suggestions. I have chosen to respond first to Robert Pope's concerns regarding the hermeneutical task. I will then address Walter Brueggemann's question about the place of Judges within the Deuteronomistic History. Finally, I will enter into dialogue with Rickie Moore about what constitutes a Pentecostal 'hearing' of the biblical text.

Response to Robert Pope

For more than one reason, I have found it quite difficult to respond to Robert Pope's review. First, his methodological questions are so numerous and important to the current academic community that one could easily devote an entire book to addressing them.² Therefore, I will attempt to narrow my response in a way that will clarify my positions and advance the conversation. Second, his review reflects an interpretive context that is very different from mine. I am confident, however, that if we will continue to testify to one another honestly out of our own experience, the Holy Spirit will mediate understanding.

My story (testimony) may serve as a starting point for the dialogue. The intersection between the biblical text and a reading community involves many levels of engagement. In some cases the connection between text and community is quite obvious even to those outside the community. In other cases the connections are more subtle and may not be discernable to those outside the particular tradition. In my first attempt to study Judges from a Pentecostal perspective I took the most obvious approach—I aimed to offer a fresh study of the passages where the Spirit of the Lord appears. After a good deal of work, however, I decided that the role of the Spirit in Judges was not prominent

² A task, however, that is unnecessary in light of Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009).

enough (or diverse enough) to justify a doctoral thesis. Therefore, I channeled that research into a journal article.³ My second attempt centered on issues of purity and power that have surfaced in relation to the judges. The relationship between purity and power is a crucial one among Pentecostals, who value both purity and power and who find it difficult to account for the immoral behavior of the Spirit empowered judges. Again, I chose not to pursue this obviously ‘Pentecostal’ topic, and I wrote another journal article.⁴ After many hours of reading Judges, meditating on its stories, and praying about the most prominent themes of the book, I was unable to discover anything that I deemed worthy of an entire thesis. My hope for writing a ‘Pentecostal’ interpretation of Judges was fading away. Then suddenly and surprisingly, my focus on Judges was redirected through a charismatic event, a Pentecostal experience, in which I was pointed to the *Shema*: ‘Hear O, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength’ (Deut. 6.4-5). Through this charismatic experience I realized that I had been *reading* Judges but not *hearing* Judges, and I determined that the terminology of ‘hearing’ captured concisely my hermeneutical goal as a Pentecostal. Later, while discussing my approach with a colleague, he asked me if the term ‘hearing’ was used in the book of Judges. Upon investigation, I discovered in Judges the repetition of the phrase, ‘you have not heard my voice’ (Judg. 2.2; 2.17, 20; 6.10), and I realized that Israel’s failure to hear the voice of Yahweh was fundamental to the narrative. I discovered further that Yahweh speaks three times directly to Israel and that these three speeches occur at crucial points in the narrative. Follow-up research showed that these three speeches of Yahweh had received little attention in published studies, and therefore my work would constitute original research. My proposed interpretation was affirmed by my faith community as I studied Judges with my church congregation and as I discussed my work at length with seminary colleagues.

I trust that my testimony reveals something of my interpretive approach and my Pentecostal context. The difference between my context and that of Robert Pope is illustrated by his manner of referring to Scripture as ‘a’ word of the Lord, while we Pentecostals usually speak of Scripture as ‘the’ Word of the

³ Lee Roy Martin, ‘Power to Save!?: The Role of the Spirit of the Lord in the Book of Judges’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16.2 (2008), pp. 21-50.

⁴ Lee Roy Martin, ‘Judging the Judges: Searching for Value in these Problematic Characters’, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 29.1 (2008), pp. 110-29. While there is no shortage of material for developing a thesis around the topic of purity and power, I realized that further pursuit of the subject would carry me too far away from Judges itself and into theology and Christian ethics.

Lord. Accordingly, we would not speak of the Bible as a text 'in which can be found God's word'. Neither would I characterize my approach as a method by which a word 'can be discerned'. Nor would I speak of 'the process of identifying what can be considered to be God's word'. We believe that the whole Bible is God's Word, that 'all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching' (2 Tim. 3.16). We would not say that it is a 'means' of divine address; instead we would say that it 'is' divine address. It is divine address even if we do not hear it. It is God's Word whether we find it or not and whether we discern it or not (Isa. 6.9-10). That is not to say that the Bible is the sum total of God's Word, only that it is his inscripturated Word. There remains (1) the unrecorded words of God and his prophets; (2) Jesus the incarnate Word; (3) the preached Word (1 Thess. 2.13); and (4) the present charismatic Word. Furthermore, the fact that we can identify the Bible as Word of God is not intended to make the Bible an 'object' because as 'living' Word (Heb. 4.12) it is 'subject' that engages the hearer in direct address and in continuous dialogue. The Word of God, therefore, speaks not a universal, fixed, timeless, static message, but rather it speaks a particular, contextual, adaptive, and dynamic prophetic message through the Holy Spirit to each generation, to each interpretive community, and to each new situation. Also, as 'living' Word the Bible does not become an idol because the Word of God (speech) is not equated with the person of God (speaker). The relationship between God and the Pentecostal believer is not confined to the sphere of the biblical text, rather the primary sphere of existence is life in the Spirit, although the Spirit and Scripture are interrelated. Furthermore, it is the dialogical nature of the divine encounter coupled with the relationality of God that invites human critique of the text. In fact, the Bible itself includes a number of paradigms for the exercise of faithful questioning, including the story of Abraham and Sodom (Gen. 18. 16-33), Moses' intercession for Israel (Exod. 32.7-14), and Israel's laments.

While Robert Pope's way of speaking about Scripture reveals our different contexts, most of his questions relate more directly to methodology. Regarding my choice to employ narrative criticism, Pope writes:

This is pursued under the conviction that careful exposition of the text, an assessment of the grammatical, semantic and literary tools used in the book, will direct the reader towards certain themes and principles through which the 'word of the Lord' can be 'heard'. This, in some ways, is the crux of Dr Martin's argument.

Two responses come to mind. First, my appeal to narrative criticism is not the 'crux' of my argument. In my chapter on hermeneutics, I argue that Pentecostals practice a distinctive approach to Scripture and that the process and goal of that approach might be described as 'hearing' rather than 'reading'. Narrative

criticism is simply the method that I find most conducive to a Pentecostal hearing and most appropriate for the book of Judges, a book which is recorded in narrative form.⁵ Second, to clarify my use of critical methods, I do not believe that the use of narrative criticism (or any other method for that matter) guarantees that the voice of God will be heard in the text. Hearing the Word of God is an ongoing process that involves the text, the hearing community, and the Holy Spirit. The text in all of its historical particularity, its internal constraints, and its literary artistry contributes to the conversation, and I encourage the use of any methods that will clarify these aspects of the text. In other words, the communicative event can be deepened by methods that enhance the listening competence of the hearers. Faithful hearing of the text, therefore, is made easier when the hearers learn how to listen actively by closely and carefully attending to the biblical text.⁶

Methodology, however, is only one part of the hermeneutical equation. More important than methodology are two other factors—namely, the attitude of the hearer and the work of the Holy Spirit.⁷ My chapter on hermeneutics is not so much a defense of any methodology as much as it is a description of the Pentecostal attitude toward Scripture. The worldview, presuppositions, purposes, context, ideology, and listening stance of the interpreter are more determinative than the methodology. Regarding the hearer, Dr. Pope asks, ‘Can the act of hearing be properly described in a passive way? Does not receipt of a message involve in some ways careful and expectant listening?’ I agree entirely that hearing is not passive. While I could have said more about the active role of the hearer, I thought it sufficient to write, ‘when taking on the attitude of a hearer, the interpreter is not passive’.⁸ It could also be argued that my employment of literary criticism and theological reflection are *de facto* active engagements with the text. The hearer listens and responds to the text both individually and in community.⁹

⁵ Cf. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, pp. 225–33.

⁶ Dr. Pope infers further that I have attempted to make narrative criticism ‘a Pentecostal method, a strictly *Pentecostal* hearing’ (concluding question 4, emphasis his), but I tried to make clear that to my mind there is no ‘Pentecostal methodology’ (Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, pp. 59–60) and that my approach is but one among many viable options for Pentecostals.

⁷ It should be noted that fundamentalists continue to reach fundamentalist conclusions even when they utilize historical critical methodologies. More than the method, it is the interpreter’s presuppositions and goals that determines the outcome of exegesis.

⁸ Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, p. 74.

⁹ Pope’s second concluding question points to the importance of the reader and asks that I consider reader-response criticism. Clearly, my approach values the place of the reader and incorporates the essential elements of reader-response theory but within the framework of the

As for the work of the Holy Spirit in interpretation Dr. Pope suggests that I consider ‘the way in which the Spirit might awaken the critical and cognitive faculties and thus enable the person who “hears” the word to understand it’. I must admit that I was a bit surprised to find the suggestion that I had not paid enough attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation as my section entitled “‘Hearing” and the Holy Spirit’ is devoted solely to the topic.¹⁰ I affirm that the Word of God is heard when the attentive listener is encountered by the Holy Spirit (Heb. 3.7-4.2). The Holy Spirit speaks, making explicit what was implicit and making obvious what was unnoticed. The Holy Spirit forms the character of the interpreter (sanctification) and creates the interpretive community (the Church). The Holy Spirit works in the world and in the community in ways that challenge the old interpretations and that prompt us to search the Scriptures for an explanation of our experiences. The Holy Spirit brings the ancient Word to bear on new contexts, fusing the horizons of text and hearer in what Steven Land calls a spiritual ‘time machine’.¹¹

Another question presented by Robert Pope relates to my assumption of a certain unity among Pentecostals:

Is the Pentecostal community ... so homogeneous that it can be described in such a way? Are there not differences in belief, practice and *ergo* understanding within that community to make the assertion of a single Pentecostal hermeneutic an over-generalisation?

Dr. Pope’s question is certainly appropriate, but it is a question that I thought I had sufficiently addressed in the book when I wrote:

When I speak of a Pentecostal approach, I do not claim to speak for everyone in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, a movement that is worldwide and diverse ... Furthermore, I am not arguing that approaches other than mine are invalid, nor would I insist that Pentecostals will use only one method.¹²

I have not argued for ‘a single’ Pentecostal hermeneutic; I have presented only one possibility for Pentecostal hermeneutics. Notwithstanding the diversity in the Pentecostal tradition, I am convinced that the central theme of ‘hearing’ the voice of God is a universal theological assumption, a *sine qua non* of Pentecostal community. Without the immediate charismatic experience of

Pentecostal faith. I insist that the text, the reader, and the Holy Spirit are integral to the process of hearing the Word of God.

¹⁰ Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, pp. 73-74. See also pp. 67, 72, 78, and 79.

¹¹ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (JPTSUP, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 98.

¹² Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, p. 59.

the divine Word there can be no Pentecostal community. Furthermore, the work of God in the Pentecostal community is universally experienced in terms of the Five-fold Gospel, which forms the ‘Central Narrative Convictions’ of the Pentecostal way of life.¹³

Dr. Pope also questions the way in which I describe the distinctiveness of the Pentecostal tradition’s approach to Scripture. He asks:

And even if there is widespread agreement, is any of this really any different from what Christians of all persuasions might claim, at least ideally? ‘[T]he Pentecostal worldview places God at the center of life’, for example. Why would this help to construct a specifically *Pentecostal* hermeneutic?

I might ask how any claim to a distinctive interpretation can be justified. How are feminist readings defined? Asian readings? African readings? They (like my Pentecostal hearing) are not *entirely* different from every other reading. I do not claim that every part of my approach is uniquely Pentecostal, for to be unique in every part would place Pentecostals outside of Christianity. It is rather the unique *combination* of elements that generates a distinctively Pentecostal approach. The Pentecostal understanding of the Five-fold Gospel and its attendant practices of praying for the sick, footwashing, tongues-speaking, passionate prayer and worship, deliverance ministry, crisis experiences, and a passion for the kingdom may be claimed by other Christians, but the totality of expression is unique. Having grown up in the Reformed tradition and having later joined Pentecostalism, I can testify that Pentecostals use many of the same words as other traditions, but they speak a different language.¹⁴ My chapter on hermeneutics was an attempt to translate the Pentecostal language for a broader audience, but perhaps I have fallen somewhat short of the mark.

Even though I affirm the uniqueness of Pentecostalism, I do not suggest that other traditions cannot ‘hear’ the Word of God or that the terminology of ‘hearing’ is appropriate for Pentecostals alone. I have argued only that ‘hearing’ aptly describes the Pentecostal approach to Scripture; I cannot speak on behalf of other traditions. My concern is not to prescribe a hermeneutic

¹³ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, p. 160. Jesus is savior, sanctifier, Spirit baptizer, healer, and coming king. While those who speak of the ‘Four-fold Gospel’ omit sanctification from this formulation, they continue to teach sanctification as a vital doctrine. On this Pentecostal ‘Full Gospel’ see Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), pp. 21–22, 31, 173; Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 48.

¹⁴ Cf. the experience of John W. McKay, ‘When the Veil is Taken Away: The Impact of Prophetic Experience on Biblical Interpretation’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5 (1994), pp. 17–40.

for all Pentecostals but to give witness to my own approach as a practicing Pentecostal. I would encourage Pentecostals to integrate their faith with their scholarship, allowing their identity to inform their interpretation. I encourage other traditions to do the same. The only profitable way forward, it seems to me, is for every interpretive tradition be heard as they to give witness to *what* they hear in the Scripture and *how* they go about hearing it.

Still addressing methodological issues, Pope suggests that in my approach ‘some methods are dismissed ... Ideologists, for example, might well claim to discover the prophetic through deconstruction rather than careful and critical reading of the text’. However, rather than dismiss any methods, I wrote:

I embrace the thoroughness of critical methods and the appropriation of critical discoveries that include the historical (human) dimensions of the text. My approach claims the freedom to wrestle with difficult texts; to examine the narrative qualities of the text, and recognize the divergent voices within the text, utilizing an integration of multiple interpretive approaches.¹⁵

I agree that deconstruction is helpful in bringing to the surface both the ancient ideology of the text and the ideology of the reader. However, it should be noted that ideological and deconstructionist approaches do not constitute ‘methods’. In fact, their most common methodology is literary criticism, and they usually demand a careful reading of the text. Rickie Moore has pointed to the

ultimate deconstructionist, Yahweh, whose word (דבר) deconstructs all of our ‘final’ forms—even the enterprise of deconstruction itself, which makes an idol of the smashing of idols (cf. Jehu in 2 Kgs 10).¹⁶

I would add that Derrida’s deconstructionism leaves us at Babel, where communication is frustrated,¹⁷ but Pentecost heals the confusion through tongues of fire. Ironically, glossolalia is also the ultimate deconstruction of human language, demonstrating that learned language is ultimately insufficient to express the highest praise (Acts 2.11) and the deepest prayer (Rom. 8.26).

Moving beyond questions of method, Dr. Pope seems to suggest that experts are a necessity in the hermeneutical process and that the scholar and the preacher function as intermediaries between text and hearer:

[Martin’s] method of narrative criticism, as employed here, is really the work of a specialist ... his voice becomes an interlocutor between the text and any other

¹⁵ Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, p. 52. See also p. 47.

¹⁶ Rickie D. Moore, ‘Canon and Charisma in the Book of Deuteronomy’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992), pp. 75-92 (92).

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, ‘Des Tours de Babel’ *Semeia* 54 (1991), pp. 3-34.

reader who is not blessed with the knowledge he possesses ... In one sense ... the word is 'heard' when it is proclaimed ... The bare text and the willingness to encounter it, though vitally significant, are not enough. An explanation of the text is also required.¹⁸

I believe that Pentecostals would describe the process differently. I would submit the following proposals: (1) experts are helpful but not necessary; (2) the scholarly hearing of the text must be submitted to the community for validation just like anyone else's hearing;¹⁹ (3) non-expert readers often hear the Word of God with greater clarity than experts; (4) hearers of a sermon often hear a message that is substantially different from the message that the preacher intended; (5) the preacher is one prophet among many, and in the Pentecostal church s/he may have received no more training in hermeneutics than other members of the congregation; and (6) preaching is only one element in the worship experience. Therefore, the Word of God can be heard in a song, a prayer, a testimony, a prophetic word, even in a greeting.²⁰

Regarding the study of Judges itself, Pope insists that I should have given more attention to the violence in the book of Judges. He writes:

what if the problem is that the book of Judges states explicitly that it is God's word to do violence to other ethnic groups? ... one of the fundamental issues raised in any reading of Judges has to be that while God as elector remains faithful to Israel ... there remains, at times, no concern whatsoever for those who are not part of the elect community.

He asks further, 'Can a book about Judges mention its problematic nature only in passing? What effect do the problematic passages have on our ability to "hear" the Word of God?' The book of Judges reports Israel's violence against the Canaanites, the violence of surrounding nations against Israel, the violence of the Israelites against each other, the violence of men against women, the violence of women against men, the violence of a man against his brothers and a father against his daughter. Then there is the psychological violence of Israel against Yahweh in rejecting his affection for them and authority over them. Moreover, there is Yahweh's role behind the scenes as he sometimes orchestrates conflict and at other times refuses to intervene in the conflict. I would argue that in order to be profitable, any discussion of violence must occur in relation to particular texts. I have addressed the violence

¹⁸ See also his concluding question 5.

¹⁹ Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, p. 72.

²⁰ Note my section on orality (Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, pp. 64–68. See also p. 61, 71–73). See also R. Jerome Boone, 'Community and Worship: The Key Components of Pentecostal Christian Formation', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (1996), pp. 129–42.

when it was directly related to my study,²¹ but the three texts that I presented (Judg. 2.1-5; 6.7-10, 10.6-16) do not include a command to do violence. Instead, they affirm God's fidelity while reprimanding Israel for infidelity. Of course the election of Israel and the command to conquer Canaan are presuppositions of the story, but the command to conquest is not repeated in Judges. Instead it is part of the setting, the background of the narrative that is carried over from texts found earlier in the canon. The hearer of Judges knows from the earlier texts that the conquest is an act of divine judgment against the wickedness of the Canaanites (Deut. 9.4-5; 18.9-14) and if the Israelites adopt the evil ways of the Canaanites they too will be exposed to judgment—election is not immunity (Lev. 18.3; Deut. 28.20). It would seem more appropriate to discuss the command to conquer Canaan within a study of Deuteronomy where the command is given or in a study of Joshua where the command is carried out.²² Furthermore, the command to do violence in other parts of Judges are commands to defend and liberate an oppressed Israel.²³ Finally, the violence in Judges is tied to a particular situation and is never presented as ongoing command or as a continuing part of Israel's way of life, a point that intersects with Robert Pope's next concern.

Regarding the question of how Judges can function as a divine Word to present readers of the text, Dr. Pope asks:

the word, especially as found in the three speeches of God, is addressed not directly to the reader, but to the Israelites ... How is the transition to be made to suggest that those who read the book will also 'hear' a word from the Lord in any sense other than as listening to that word as it is spoken to an other?

²¹ Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, pp. 24, 27-29, 87, 89-91, 108, 163-64, 201-202, 215, 223-25.

²² In the book of Exodus, the conquest is described as a 'driving out' (not total destruction) of the wicked inhabitants of Canaan (Exod. 23.28; 33.2; 34.11, 24), but see also Deut. 9.3 and 18.12). The language of driving out is picked up in Judges 1.19-33; 2.21; 11.24.

²³ I agree in substance with Terence E. Fretheim, 'God and Violence in the Old Testament', *Word & World* 24.1 (2004), p. 18-28, who argues that all violence has its genesis in human sin, that God uses violence for both judgment and salvation, that God's ultimate purpose is the elimination of all violence, and that God uses violence to critique human violence. Perhaps the violence in the Bible should cause us to examine our own patterns of violence. 'Civilization' has not diminished violence from the social fabric of humanity. Civilized people have learned new and more creative ways to abuse their neighbors and to wreak physical, mental, and economic havoc. Furthermore, the Church is tempted to accommodate itself to these more acceptable modes of oppression. I am thankful for a God who takes the side of those who are oppressed and who will, if necessary, lead them into liberation from tyranny, whether that tyranny be spiritual, political, economic, or ideological.

Dr. Pope's question, of course, applies not only to Judges but to the entire Bible, all of which was written to specific ancient audiences. Even the original hearers of the book of Judges were required to bridge the temporal gap, given that they were generations removed from the time of the judges. In any case the question is virtually meaningless to Pentecostals because when they read the Bible, they read it as if it were spoken directly to them. No 'transition' is necessary because when they read about Noah, they imagine themselves to be Noah. When they read about Abraham, they imagine themselves to be Abraham. When they read about Israel, they imagine themselves to be Israel.²⁴ The entire Bible is the Word of God to all ages, revealing God through his words and actions. Intuitively, however, Pentecostals filter the Old Testament's particularities through a New Testament lens, so that commands of violence, requirements of the Old Covenant, ancient rituals and customs, and so forth are excluded from contemporary application. The contemporary meaning of each text is determined on its own merits with the whole Bible as canonical context and with the present work of the Holy Spirit in the community as the contemporary context.

A final point deserves comment. I observed that in Scripture 'hearing' implies obedience, and thus I argued, 'We might say that the most crucial element in the study of the Bible is not the need for better understanding of the text, rather it is the need for willing obedience to the text. Gordon Fee remarks that the problem with the biblical text" is not with understanding it, but with obeying it"'.²⁵ Dr. Pope, inferring that I have set obedience over against understanding, writes, 'I want to agree; but I suspect that God's word is obeyed only when it is received and understood'. My intent was not to create an opposition between understanding and obedience but to emphasize the Pentecostal concern for obedience to God. Dr. Pope wants to make understanding a prerequisite to obedience but I would propose the opposite—that understanding is unlikely to occur when the hearer is unwilling to obey.²⁶ I certainly would not deny the importance of understanding, and I realize that many texts defy easy explanation, but perhaps Pope's definition of 'understanding' is different from mine. Any good Bible translation makes a large part of the Bible generally understandable; nevertheless, 'the fear of the Lord

²⁴ Cf. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 98.

²⁵ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2nd edn, 1993), p. 15.

²⁶ For another perspective on the question of understanding, see Andrew Davies, 'What Does it Mean to Read the Bible as A Pentecostal?' *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18.2 (Oct. 2009), forthcoming.

is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction' (Prov. 1.7). Obedience must not be postponed or avoided under the guise of seeking deeper understanding.

The relationship between understanding and obedience is part of the context for Jesus' Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10.24-37). An expert in the law who questioned Jesus acknowledged the importance of the commands to love God and to love one's neighbor. However, wanting to 'justify himself', he asked, 'But who is my neighbor?' The lawyer asked for more 'understanding' before he would comply with the commandment, but the narrator's comment suggests that the man had no intention of obeying the commandment in the first place. Elsewhere Jesus says, 'Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God' (Jn 8.47); and 'Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own' (Jn 7.17). Thus the character of the interpreter (obedience or lack thereof) has an impact on his/her ability to understand truth.

Response to Walter Brueggemann

Walter Brueggemann's very generous review requires little response on my part. His most important suggestion is that I broaden the study in two directions, by reflecting on 'these speeches in the larger context of the book of Judges' and by showing how 'these texts serve and function in the Deuteronomic corpus'. Professor Brueggemann's perceptive comments are appreciated, and I am still in the process of assessing the implications of the three speeches of God in Judges. More recent studies have recognized the intricacies and subtleties woven into the fabric of Judges, but they have not yet acknowledged the nuanced presentation of God in the book. The character development of Yahweh in the narrative of Judges depicts his interior struggles as he is faced with Israel's offenses against his graciously offered covenant. On the one hand, he obligates himself to comply with his previous pronouncements—his promise to the patriarchs and his vow to keep covenant. On the other hand, he is angered by the Israelites' affronts to the covenant and is compelled to punish their transgressions. Yahweh's inner conflict is heightened further when his compassion is awakened by the cries of the Israelites, who plead for salvation from the suffering and oppression brought on by Yahweh's judgment. However, the long recognized formula of sin-punishment and cry-salvation is not static, deterministic, or predictable. As the schema begins to unravel, it serves as a platform for displaying a carefully constructed portrayal of

Yahweh's conflicted passions. The typical overly simplistic interpretations that see Judges as a polemic for Davidic monarchy, an explanation for the continued presence of the Canaanites, or as justification for the exile do not take into account the meticulous theological shadings of Yahweh's characterization in Judges.

Similarly, the standard views of the Deuteronomic History do not appreciate Yahweh's role in Judges. While the book of Joshua concludes with Israel settled securely in the land of promise, the book of Judges quickly sets the stage for the eventual expulsion of Israel from the land. The Deuteronomic threat of exile becomes an imminent possibility in Judges 6 when the Midianites invade the land and force the Israelites into mountain refuges.²⁷ Furthermore, 'by making mention of the "exile of the land" (18.30), the narrative makes explicit what is implicit throughout Judges—that the land can be lost'.²⁸ When Israel is finally exiled from the land (narrated in 2 Kgs 17:7-20), the reasons for the exile include at least six phrases from the book of Judges: (1) Israel 'feared other gods'; (2) they 'would not hear'; (3) they did 'evil in the sight of Yahweh'; (4) they 'provoke[d] Yahweh to anger'; (5) Yahweh 'was very angry with Israel'; (6) and he 'delivered them into the hand of spoilers'. The connection to Judges is strengthened by the fact that prior to 2 Kings 17, the command not to 'fear' (ירא) other gods is found only in Judg. 6.10; the pronouncement that Israel was given into the hand of 'spoilers' (שסים) is found in only one other text, namely Judg. 2.14; and the statement that Israel 'provoked' (בעט) Yahweh to anger is used for the first time in Judg. 2.12.

In several ways the speeches of Yahweh in Judges propel the hearer forward towards the exile. In his first speech, he reminds the Israelites that he had delivered them from the land of Egypt and had led them into the land of promise. He reminds them further of his promise never to break his covenant. In the second speech, he again recounts the exodus from Egypt and his driving out of the Canaanites, but he does not reaffirm his covenant obligation. Yahweh's third speech is intensely passionate and quite surprising, and it marks a profound turning point. He mentions the exodus from Egypt and all the other acts of salvation that he has performed on behalf of Israel, but he refuses to save Israel again. In effect, he proposes to break the covenant and abandon his people in contradiction to his earlier promise. It is evident at this point in Judges that a conflicted Yahweh is capable of delivering on his earlier

²⁷ See Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, pp. 161-94.

²⁸ Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, p. 178.

threat to exile the Israelites if they should prove to be unfaithful to the covenant (Deut. 28.36-68). Yahweh's alienation and detachment from Israel continue to be registered all the way to the end of the book of Judges. Even though Yahweh is 'grieved' by Israel's suffering (Judg. 10.16), he does not return to full engagement with his people, a fact that foreshadows the withdrawal of his presence during the time of the exile.

In the first half of the book, Israel 'cried' out to Yahweh in their suffering and he saved them time and again. There is no indication that they ever confessed their sin or that they ever repented of their sin. Over and over Yahweh saved Israel on account of his compassion (as in the exodus). However, in ch. 10 the hearer is faced with a stunning countermove by Yahweh—he refuses to save the Israelites even though they confess their sins, rid themselves of idols, and return to the worship of Yahweh. To the exilic and post-exilic traditionists who advocated the efficacy of repentance, Judges 10 must have been quite a theological challenge, and perhaps was a provocation to deep debate within the community.²⁹ Much more could be said here, but it seems to me that any proposal for a theology of exile (and return from exile) must take into account the deep passions of Yahweh and the interior struggles that he exhibits in the book of Judges.

Response to Rickie D. Moore

I appreciate Rickie Moore's insightful summary of my book and his perceptive evaluation of the work. However, he suggests in his concluding remarks that I have not gone far enough in contextualizing my work. Therefore, my response will explore further the nature of a Pentecostal 'hearing' of the text.

Professor Moore argues that I came up short of my goal of 'hearing' the text, because I did not articulate clearly enough how I and the Pentecostal community have been 'confronted by the divine word of Judges'. This shortcoming was brought to his attention by a comparison of my work with that of Larry R. McQueen.³⁰ In his work on Joel, McQueen 'confesses to how he had been personally confronted by Joel's call to lament', and he addresses 'ways in which current North American Pentecostalism stands in need of re-visioning in the light of Joel's counter-cultural apocalyptic witness'. I concede that my

²⁹ Cf. K.L. Noll, 'Deuteronomistic History or Deuteronomic Debate? (A Thought Experiment)', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31 (2007), pp. 311-45.

³⁰ McQueen's book has been reprinted recently as Larry R. McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009).

interpretation focuses more on Judges and its theology and less on its implications for the Pentecostal hearers, and I will offer several reasons for that focus.

First, I reasoned on the one hand that the points of connection to Pentecostalism should be fairly obvious to Pentecostals; while on the other hand, to biblical scholars outside the tradition, constant references to Pentecostal theology would hold little interest and might prevent them from reading the book. I did not want my work to be an ‘insider’ conversation (or ‘sectarian’ to use Bruggemann’s term). In other words, I did not want to move the discussion away from Judges and toward Pentecostalism or toward myself.

Second, as my testimony above demonstrates, I consider the entire mandate for ‘hearing’ the voice of God to constitute my hearing of Judges. That is, what I hear in the three speeches of Yahweh in Judges is that I must attend to the voice of God (both canonical and charismatic) and that Pentecostalism must continue to do the same. Although I did not frame it in these words, my whole discussion of ‘hearing’ is a way of allowing Judges to speak to me and to the Pentecostal community.³¹

Third, other aspects of what I hear in Judges are not related directly to the three texts that I examine in the book. Moore is correct when he writes, ‘I suspect that Martin has heard more than he has written down’. Thus, I offer only ‘a’ hearing of Judges not ‘the’ hearing or even the entirety of my hearing of Judges. In subsequent publications, I have shared additional facets of my hearing of Judges, especially in relation to the role of the Spirit of Yahweh in Judges, the relationship between purity and power in Judges, and further exploration of the speech of God in Judges.³²

Fourth, McQueen’s dramatic experience (while not at all unusual among Pentecostals) does not represent the routine day-to-day engagement with Scripture that is more common for the Pentecostal community. Hearing the

³¹ Perhaps I did not make clear in my book that when I speak of the Pentecostal community, I most often have in mind the local congregation (consisting of real people with very specific needs), which for 27 years was my context for engaging Scripture as pastor. I rarely approach Scripture with the larger Pentecostal ‘movement’ in mind.

³² Martin, ‘Power to Save’; *idem*, ‘Judging the Judges’; and *idem*, ‘Tongues of Angels, Words of Prophets: Means of Divine Communication in the Book of Judges’, in Steven J. Land, John Christopher Thomas, and Rickie D. Moore (eds.), *Passover, Pentecost & Parousia: Studies in Celebration of the Life and Ministry of R. Hollis Gause* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, forthcoming). It may be that Moore’s comment about Deborah is informed by his editing of the above mentioned article in which I elaborate my interpretation of the Deborah narrative. My home church was founded by a woman pastor who served as a mentor to me. I am very troubled that my denomination, partly influenced by American fundamentalism, has retreated from the initial inclusive nature of the early Pentecostal movement.

text is not always a long, gruelling and dramatic process. Every hearing of the Word of God is an encounter with God through the Holy Spirit, but not every hearing involves a lengthy or confrontational encounter like McQueen's. Hearing the voice of the Lord during our daily reading of the Bible is usually more subtle. The dreams of Abraham, the vision Isaiah, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and the experiences of other biblical characters represent what *can* and *does* happen to Pentecostals on occasion, but hearing the Word of God is normally not so intense.

Furthermore, I'm sure that Rickie Moore would agree when I say that the Word of God addresses us in many legitimate ways. God's Word may confront, challenge, and censure; but it may also comfort, inspire, and encourage. A 'hearing' of Scripture is not always directly confrontational, nor does it always directly call for some type of obedience. Not every Word of God is a command. Many of the most powerful texts of Scripture are words of salvation, healing, deliverance, and promise. It is true that often the Word of God is a fire or hammer that assaults the hearer (Jer. 23.29), but sometimes it nourishes like milk (1 Pet. 2.2) that is sweeter than honey (Ps. 19.11). It can be a sword that cuts to the heart (Heb. 4.12; Acts 5.33) but it can also be a lamp that provides light in a dark place (Ps. 119.105). The Word of God can kill (Isa. 11.4), but it can heal (Ps. 107.20). God thunders from Sinai (Exod. 20.18), but he also whispers in a still small voice (1 Kgs 19.12). God's Word explodes forth like the roar of a lion (Amos 1.2), but it also falls gently like the dew of heaven (Ps. 133.3). The Word seems at times to be hidden or unreachable, but all the while it is very near, in our mouth and in our heart (Deut. 30.11-14). Hearing God's Word may terrify the hearer (Heb. 12.21), or it may bring joy to the heart (Ps. 19.8; Jer. 15.16). In Yahweh's commitment to his covenant, I hear words of hope and assurance.

Fifth, while I concur with Professor Moore's call for more personal confession and with more willingness to confront the community, I would add that not every confession should be public. For confession to be fruitful, it requires a context of caring community, earned trust, and mutual respect. Whenever confessions are aired in public, they must be carefully framed, and some confessions should not be submitted to public discourse at all. There remains a place for 'sectarian' discussions behind the protective walls of the community.

Throughout the book, I elaborated upon the theological disclosures that spoke to me very powerfully (cf. p. 160), and I had hoped that readers would sense the passion of my 'hearing'. I confess that I could have given more attention to explicit contextualization, but I would continue to insist that my work goes beyond a 'reading' and that it constitutes a 'hearing' as I have defined the process. However, I confess further that I have not 'arrived' but that I continue

to strive toward an integrative approach that takes into account the biblical text, the hearing community, and the Holy Spirit.

Expressing my ‘hearing’ of Judges through an academic medium presented me with a difficult challenge. For me, because of my many years in pastoral ministry, there is only a fine line between hearing the text and preaching a sermon. A theological interpretation of Scripture is clearly distinct from a sermon but not very far removed from it. The two are on a continuum that does not include clear lines of demarcation to indicate where one ends and the other begins.

While studying Judges, I have been affected most powerfully by the realization that God is passionate both in his anger and in his compassion. What I heard in the three speeches of God was the suffering of God, his vulnerability, the risk that he accepts when he enters covenant, his desire that his people know him and relate to him. In Judges 10, Yahweh admits to feeling abused and manipulated. Yahweh is not a distant, detached God; rather Yahweh is a responsive, relational God. Pentecostal prayer, preaching, and worship all presuppose this kind of relational God. My years in the pastorate, ministering to wounded people, have taught me the value of God’s relationality.

God at Risk

My final response to Moore’s call for more personal engagement with the text will be to offer a reflection on the passions of God in Judges. Originally written as part of the conclusion to ch. 8, I omitted it from my book because it carries forward my theological conclusions beyond Judges and into the New Testament.

God has chosen to enter into a genuine relationship with his people, and that relationship makes God himself vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and personal injury. As soon as the Lord chose to enter into the covenant, he submitted himself to a position of personal risk.³³ In chapter ten of Judges, God is injured and God is angry. An angry God is a terrible presence, but even more terrible would be an absent God, a detached God, an apathetic God, an indifferent God. He is angry with Israel; nevertheless, ‘his soul is grieved by the misery of Israel’ (Judg. 1.16). He hears their cries and he is moved with intense compassion; he is grieved by their suffering and he

³³ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 271–75. See my theological conclusions regarding Yahweh’s choice to enter covenant in *The Unheard Voice of God*, p. 160.

suffers with them. The grief of Judg. 1.16 is a draining, depleting, diminishing, exhausting compassion.³⁴

The God of Judges is passionate, and references to his affections are not mere figures of speech. The doctrine of impassibility presents serious problems for theology, Christology,³⁵ anthropology, soteriology, and pastoral theology. If God is impassible, then he did not suffer in Christ; and the incarnation is emptied of its significance.³⁶ According to Moltmann, ‘To speak here of a God who could not suffer would make God a demon. To speak here of an absolute God would make God an annihilating nothingness.’³⁷

If God is impassible then human affections must be a result of the fall, and salvation must include deliverance from the affections. Humanity, however, was created in the image of God; and, like God, humanity has the capacity for relating, loving, hating, hurting, grieving, hoping, and caring. These capacities are not the result of the fall, for when the human was first created, it was God’s own judgment that ‘it is not good for the human to be alone’ (Gen. 2.18). As a perfect human, created in God’s image, the human needed companionship, relationship; therefore, God created a companion.³⁸

If God himself is dispassionate and incapable of genuine relationships, then where is our model for community? Where is our model for intimacy? Why should the church concern itself with relationships, family, and care? Community and intimacy are difficult enough as it is, but with an impassible God they become impossible. ‘An apathetic God makes apathetic believers’.³⁹ Steven J. Land has pointed forward theologically by insisting on the value of orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy. His important work shows that

³⁴ Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, pp. 207–13.

³⁵ Divine impassibility was one of Marcion’s foundational tenets, and he carried the doctrine to its logical conclusion in his docetic Christology.

³⁶ The identity of God and the incarnation of Christ are linked powerfully by Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Didsbury lectures; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 56–76. According to Bauckham, after the cross, ‘the sacrificial death of Christ belongs to the divine identity’ (pp. 62, 63). See also Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. x. The biblical view of God as relational and passionate is compatible with the ‘Christus Victor’ model of the atonement, a view in which God is personally and intimately involved during the entire process of the atonement. Cf. Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (trans. A.G. Herber; London: SPCK, 1931).

³⁷ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 274; Cf. also Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 145.

³⁸ The term ‘human’ is used here because gender was irrelevant before Eve’s creation. Cf. David J.A. Clines, ‘דָּם, the Hebrew for “Human, Humanity”: A Response to James Barr’, *Vetus Testamentum* 53.3 (2003), pp. 297–310.

³⁹ Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, p. 48.

orthodoxy is dead without right relationship (Jas 2.19, ‘even the demons believe’); orthopraxy is empty without right motives (cf. 1 Corinthians 13); and orthopathy is attained not through renouncing pathos (*à la* Augustine),⁴⁰ but through embracing the pathos of God.

God in Auschwitz and Auschwitz in the crucified God—that is the basis for a real hope which both embraces and overcomes the world, and the ground for a love which is stronger than death and can sustain death.⁴¹

The possibility of embracing God’s pathos is explored by Samuel Solivan, who declares that the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus ‘serves as a tangible paradigm of correspondence between God’s orthopathos and the possibility of our own’.⁴²

It is true that the affections of God are not equivalent to the affections of humans.⁴³ Human affections, although not sinful, are influenced by sin. Unlike humans, God does not internalize his anger and he is not afraid to display his compassion. God is healthy and whole while humans are often unhealthy and dysfunctional.⁴⁴ Furthermore, it is true that a tension exists between the immutability of God and the passibility of God; but surely it is a tension that can be accommodated within a theological tradition that affirms the trinity (where three equals one), and the incarnation (where God becomes a human and that human possesses two natures simultaneously). Reason and logic cannot always decide questions of biblical interpretation. Moreover, ‘What truly is logic? Who decides reason?’⁴⁵

Finally, the doctrine of passibility/impassibility has serious consequences for pastoral theology. What kind of God should be preached and imitated, the dispassionate God or the God who grieves over the suffering of Israel?⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, p. 17; and Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 83.

⁴¹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 278. For a critique of Moltmann, see Daniel Castelo, ‘Moltmann’s Dismissal of Divine Impassibility: Warranted?’ *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61.4 (2008), pp. 396–407.

⁴² Samuel Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal Theology* (JPTSUP, 14; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 38.

⁴³ Cf. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Overtures to Biblical Theology, 14; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 8; Heschel, *The Prophets*, II, p. 55. For the view of another Pentecostal, see Daniel Castelo, ‘A Crisis in God-talk? The Bible and Theopathy’, *Theology* 110.858 (2007), pp. 411–16.

⁴⁴ Cf. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 271.

⁴⁵ From John Nash’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech in Ron Howard, *A Beautiful Mind*, Universal Studios, 2002.

⁴⁶ Cf. Fretheim, *Suffering of God*, p. 24.

The God of Judges is not a cold and calculating God. He is not a distant and detached God. He is not a God whose essence is pure reason and unaffected logic. He is not the *movens immobile*. He is the God who is ‘an ever present help’ (Ps. 46.1). He is the God who is ‘full of compassion’ (Ps. 78.38). He is the God who is touched ‘with the feelings of our infirmities’ (Heb. 4.15). He is the God who knows every hair on our head and who sees every sparrow that falls (Luke 12). He is the God who invites us to cast all of our ‘care upon him’ (1 Pet. 5.7). He is the God who ‘grieved in his heart’ over the sins of Noah’s generation (Gen. 6.6). He is the God who came down to Egypt to save the Israelites because he ‘heard their cries’ and he knew (עָרַף) ‘their sorrows’ (Exod. 3.7). He is the God who was afflicted when Israel was afflicted (Isa. 63.9). He is the God who roared through Amos and wept through Jeremiah. He is the God who ‘was moved with compassion’ toward the multitude (Mt. 9.36). He is the God who suffers with those who suffer (Heb. 2.18), the God who weeps with those who weep (Jn 11.35), the God who shares the feelings of alienation with those who are alienated, the God who endures hatred with those who are hated (Jn 15.18-19), the God who suffers persecution with those who are persecuted (Acts 9.4, Rev. 12.5-6), the God who is abused along with those who suffer abuse (Zech. 2.12), the God who feels the needs of the orphan and the widow, the God who experiences oppression with those who are oppressed (Mt. 25.45). He is rejected; he is cursed; he is blamed; he is questioned; he is misunderstood; and his heart is broken by it all. God in Christ suffered (Lk. 24.26); he suffered unto death (Phil. 2.8). God has suffered and he has the scars to prove it (Jn 20.27).

Some would have an unscarred God, a God who does not suffer. They want the God of philosophy, the God of ethics, the broadminded God, the reasonable God, the tolerant God, the God who never struggles—not a God with scars. But the scars are there, reach out and touch them. Put your hand in his side. This God with scars is able to sympathize with us. In the dark hour of our hopelessness, when the earth is soaked in blood, when billions of people are broken, alone, helpless, persecuted, forgotten, hated, and oppressed, we cannot be saved by a soft, safe, secluded God. We need the God with scars. The impassible God cannot give courage to the persecuted. He cannot speak to those who hurt. The impassible God has no answer for the wounded, the sick, the dying, the unpitied, the lonely, the poverty stricken, who ask the questions: ‘Does God know what it is to suffer? Did he ever go without bread? Was he ever betrayed? Was he ever abandoned? Was his body ever racked with pain?’ The impassible God has no answer, but the God of Judges, the God of the Bible, the God of the Cross, has suffered pain; he has been betrayed, abandoned, and forsaken. He says to us, ‘Do not fear suffering (Rev. 2.10), because

I suffer with you'. There is pain in the heart of God; there are tears in his eyes. Yet in the end, he will gather his people unto himself, and he will dwell with them; they will be his people, and he will be their God. At that time he will weep no more, and neither will they, for he will 'wipe every tear from their eyes' (Rev. 21.3-4).

Conclusion

My reviewers have contributed richly to the dialogue surrounding Pentecostal hermeneutics and my hearing of the book of Judges. I appreciate their insights and questions, which have caused me to rethink a number of important issues. I trust that my response will clarify the present state of my thinking on these matters and will propel the dialogue forward in positive ways.