



BRILL

Journal of Pentecostal Theology 22 (2013) 54–76



brill.com/pent

Longing for God: Psalm 63 and Pentecostal Spirituality

Lee Roy Martin*

Pentecostal Theological Seminary, 900 Walker ST NE, Cleveland, TN 37311, USA
lmartin@ptseminary.edu

Abstract

This study approaches Psalm 63 from the perspective of Pentecostal spirituality, a spirituality that is characterized by an integration of orthodoxy (right belief), orthopraxy (right practice), and orthopathy (right affections). The passionate tone of Psalm 63, along with its prominent theme of divine encounter, resonate deeply with the Pentecostal ethos, which values both passion and encounter. The author argues that a holistic interpretation of Scripture (especially the poetic literature) must include attention to the affective dimension of the text and to the affective concerns of the interpreter. The affections have a role in the interpretation of Scripture, and the affections of the interpreter should be formed/transformed by the encounter with the biblical text. After arguing for the affective approach and outlining its components, an affective interpretation of Psalm 63 that intersects with Pentecostal spirituality is offered. The article concludes with implications of the study for Pentecostal discipleship and formation.

Keywords

Psalm 63, Pentecostal spirituality, affections, Pentecostal hermeneutics, Christian formation

I. Introduction

In my first semester at Bible college, I began reading through the entire Bible. As might be expected, a number of Scripture passages made a deep impression upon me, and one of those was Psalm 63, particularly the first two verses: ‘my soul is thirsty for you; my flesh longs for you ... thus I have seen you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and your glory’. I heard in Psalm 63 a passionate prayer, an articulation of deep spiritual inclinations.

* Lee Roy Martin (DTh, University of South Africa) is Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland, TN, USA and Editor of the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*.

I heard an expression of the psalmist's intense desire to encounter God and to experience God's presence. I also recognized the psalmist's commitment to seek after God and to respond to God's gracious acts with praise and with constant loyalty. Because of the content of the psalm and its passionate tone of expression, I memorized the psalm and began to recite it regularly as a part of my own prayers.

The longing for God expressed in Psalm 63 gave voice to the passion for God that was generated by my own Pentecostal spirituality, a spirituality that Steven Jack Land has characterized as 'a passion for the kingdom,' which is 'ultimately a passion for God'.¹ I suggest in this study that Psalm 63 can function as an individual and/or communal prayer that voices the passionate aspects of Pentecostal spirituality. Furthermore, in its function as Holy Scripture, this psalm can guide Pentecostals in their pursuit of an encounter with God and in their longing for God's presence.

In this constructive and integrative study, I examine Psalm 63 through the lens of Pentecostal spirituality; however, before examining Psalm 63, I will describe what I am calling an 'affective approach' to the biblical text. The affective approach calls for the hearer to attend to the affective tones that are present in the text and to allow the affections of the hearer to be shaped by the text. Once I have described the affective approach, I will present an affective Pentecostal hearing of Psalm 63 that emerges from my location within the Pentecostal community.² Then I will suggest ways in which Psalm 63 can contribute to the affective formation of the Pentecostal church of today. On the one hand, therefore, my hearing of Psalm 63 is informed by and shaped by my own Pentecostal experience. On the other hand, my Pentecostal spirituality and experience is influenced by my engagement with Psalm 63.

Before proceeding to the study, I would offer four explanatory comments: 1) Although my work is generated by my Pentecostal spirituality

¹ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), pp. 2, 97, 120, 73-80, 212, 219. Cf. Mark J. Cartledge, 'Affective Theological Praxis: Understanding the Direct Object of Practical Theology', *International Journal of Practical Theology* 8.1 (2004), pp. 34-52 (36).

² Instead of the commonly used term 'reading', I prefer the term 'hearing' because (1) it is a biblical term; (2) it reflects the orality of biblical and Pentecostal contexts; (3) it is relational, presupposing an external voice who is speaking; (4) it suggests faithful obedience since 'hearing' often means 'obeying'; (5) it implies transformation, since faithful hearing transforms; (6) unlike the process of 'reading' Scripture, 'hearing' implies submission to the authority of the text. See Lee Roy Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God: A Pentecostal Hearing of the Book of Judges* (JPTSUP, 32; Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2008), p. 53.

and is aimed at the Pentecostal tradition, I recognize that affective engagement is common to all humans.³ Therefore, all readers of Scripture are invited to ‘listen in’ to the conversation in hope that they too may find this study beneficial. 2) The Pentecostal movement is a global, diverse, and multifaceted tradition; therefore, I do not claim to speak for all Pentecostals. 3) Biblical exegesis and hermeneutics demand the utilization of a variety of methods and approaches. Therefore, within a holistic biblical hermeneutic, the affective dimension of Scripture is only one of the many dimensions of the text that should be investigated as a part of sound exegesis. I would argue, however, that the affective dimension has been overlooked and underutilized in the academic study of Scripture. 4) This article is a provisional proposal that I submit to the community of scholars for a discerning response. I hope that it will generate further conversation about creative engagement with the biblical text.

II. An Affective Approach to Interpretation

The development of my affective approach to the Psalter takes into consideration Walter Brueggemann’s insightful critique of both the precritical and critical approaches to the study of the Psalms. He argues on the one hand that the ‘devotional tradition of piety is surely weakened by disregarding the perspectives and insights of scholarship’ and on the other hand that the critical tradition ‘is frequently arid, because it lingers excessively on formal questions, with inability or reluctance to bring its insights and methods to substantive matters of exposition.’⁴ Brueggemann’s proposal for a postcritical ‘functional’ approach,⁵ in which the critical and pietistic traditions inform and correct each other, places the psalms within the journey of faith and recognizes their value as prayers for the ancient Hebrews and for subsequent faith communities.⁶

³ James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Cultural Liturgies, 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), argues convincingly that human life is shaped largely by the affections.

⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Augsburg Old Testament Studies; Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1984), p. 16.

⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), pp. 3–32.

⁶ Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, pp. 33–66. My approach should not be confused with the resurgent mystical, spiritual, or allegorical approach presented by David C. Steinmetz, ‘The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis’, *Theology Today* 37 (1980), pp. 27–38, or Celia Kourie, ‘Reading Scripture through a Mystical Lens’, *Acta Theologica* 15/Suppl.

Brueggemann's functional approach in its broad parameters makes room for scholarly consideration of the emotive quality of the Psalms. It might be argued that the affective dimension is too 'subjective' to be included in academic study. Expecting objections to the affective approach, Daniel C. Mcguire remarks, 'It is not for nothing that the rationalist is upset by the inclusion of affectivity ... Affectivity imports mystery and depth. We can feel more than we can see or say.'⁷ For this reason, biblical scholarship has given little attention to this affective dimension of biblical poetry in general and of the Psalms in particular. Yet I would argue that the function of poetry is to evoke (and provoke) the passions and to form the affections. The study of the Psalms, therefore, can benefit from a hermeneutic that appreciates the affective dimensions of the text and that takes full advantage of the passions that are brought to the text by the interpreter.

It is well known that the affections played a significant role in the spirituality of Jonathan Edwards⁸ and John Wesley.⁹ Deep affective currents have been observed also in the Eastern Orthodox tradition,¹⁰ a tradition that

(2011), pp. 132-53. I have argued that returning to allegory or the medieval mystics is not an option. See Lee Roy Martin, 'Pre-Critical Exegesis of the Book of Judges and the Construction of a Post-Critical Hermeneutic', *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 88 (2006), pp. 338-53.

⁷ Daniel C. Maguire, 'Ratio Practica and the Intellectualistic Fallacy', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 10.1 (1982), pp. 22-39 (23).

⁸ See, for example, Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* (Works of Jonathan Edwards; New Haven: Yale Univ Pr, 1959); Timothy Hessel-Robinson, 'Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections', in *Christian Spirituality* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 269-80; John E. Smith, 'Testing the Spirits: Jonathan Edwards and the Religious Affections', *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 37.1-2 (1982), pp. 27-37; Roger Ward, 'The Philosophical Structure of Jonathan Edward's Religious Affections', *Christian Scholar's Review* 29.4 (2000), pp. 745-68; Wayne L. Proudfoot, 'From Theology to a Science of Religions: Jonathan Edwards and William James on Religious Affections', *Harvard Theological Review* 82.2 (1989), pp. 149-68, and Iain D. Campbell, 'Jonathan Edwards' Religious Affections as a Paradigm for Evangelical Spirituality', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 21.2 (2003), pp. 166-86.

⁹ See Gregory S. Clapper, 'John Wesley's Abridgement of Isaac Watts' the Doctrine of the Passions Explained and Improved', *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 43.2 (2008), pp. 28-32; *idem*, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Pietist and Wesleyan Studies; Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Pr, 1989); Kenneth J. Collins, 'John Wesley's Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers, and Affections', *Methodist History* 36.3 (1998), pp. 162-75; and Randy L. Maddox, 'A Change of Affections: The Development, Dynamics, and Dethronement of John Wesley's Heart Religion', in *Heart Religion in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001), pp. 3-31.

¹⁰ Cf. Edmund J. Rybarczyk, 'Spiritualities Old and New: Similarities between Eastern Orthodoxy & Classical Pentecostalism', *Pneuma* 24.1 (2002), pp. 7-25, who argues that the Orthodox, like Pentecostals, insist firmly that 'knowledge of God is not limited to the

influenced both Edwards and Wesley.¹¹ Recently, B.I. McGroarty has argued that it was the view of the 14th-Century English mystic Hilton that human wholeness ('health') cannot be attained outside of an affective engagement with God.¹² Dale Coulter has expounded upon the affective dimension in Catherine of Siena,¹³ Bernard of Clairvaux, Richard of St. Victor, Catherine of Genoa, and Martin Luther, concluding that their common theology of 'encounter centers upon affectivity as the point of contact between the divine and human.'¹⁴ And Jeffrey Gros points out the importance of the Franciscan movement's 'concern for direct human experience of Christ.'¹⁵ These studies, among many others, have shown that the concern for the formation of the affections is present in a wide variety of traditions.

Steven Land observes that while Pentecostals accept the necessity of orthodoxy (right doctrine) and orthopraxy (right practice), they see orthopathy (right affections) as the integrating center for both orthodoxy and orthopraxy.¹⁶ Consequently, a Pentecostal approach would recognize the Psalms not only as a witness to right theology and practice, but also as an aide in the formation of the affections. The affections, not to be confused with transitory feelings or emotions, are the abiding dispositions and

intellectual domain of human existence, but that the believer can sense and hear God in visceral and profound ways' (p. 10). See also Edmund J. Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation: Eastern Orthodoxy and Classical Pentecostalism on Becoming Like Christ* (Paternoster Theological Monographs; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004). In the Orthodox writers, the affective dimension of spirituality is usually couched in the language of encountering the presence and mystery of God. See Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, *Encountering the Mystery: Understanding Orthodox Christianity Today* (New York: Doubleday, 1st edn, 2008); Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: J. Clarke, 1st edn, 1957), and Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1966).

¹¹ See, for example, Michael James McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), and S.T. Kimbrough, *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002).

¹² Brendan Ignatius McGroarty, 'Humility, Contemplation and Affect Theory', *Journal of Religion and Health* 45.1 (2006), pp. 57-72.

¹³ Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue* 13 (trans. and intro. Suzanne Noffke, OP; New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1980), p. 48; cited in Dale Coulter, 'Pentecostals and Monasticism: A Common Spirituality?', *Assemblies of God Heritage* 30 (2010), pp. 43-49 (45).

¹⁴ Dale M. Coulter, 'The Spirit and the Bride Revisited: Pentecostalism, Renewal, and the Sense of History', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21.2 (2012), [forthcoming](#).

¹⁵ Jeffrey Gros, 'Ecumenical Connections across Time: Medieval Franciscans as a Proto-Pentecostal Movement?', *Pneuma* 34.1 (2012), pp. 75-93 (75). Gros calls for 'a robust appreciation of spiritual experience' (p. 91).

¹⁶ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, pp. 21, 34, 127-59. See also Cartledge, 'Affective Theological Praxis', pp. 34-52 (36).

passions of the heart that characterize a person's deepest desires.¹⁷ The psalms, therefore, teach us not only what to think (orthodoxy) and what to do (orthopraxy) but also what to desire (orthopathy). To say it another way, the psalms contribute to both intellectual and affective learning: 'Intellectual learning aims at learning facts and their relation and at rational analysis ... In affective learning, on the other hand, feelings and emotions are predominant. With affective learning one aims to develop emotional and moral sensitivities and to achieve a deep commitment to certain values.'¹⁸ Mark Cartledge adds, 'Indeed, one could argue that the affections inform not only believing and action but also the imagination as well, without which significant advances in understanding would be impossible'.¹⁹

The process of affective interpretation requires at least four cooperative moves on the part of the hearer. First, the hearer of the psalm must identify and acknowledge the affective dimensions of the text, an acknowledgement that is by no means automatic or common for scholars, who tend to concentrate their attention upon historical critical concerns. Every psalm includes an affective dimension, which may involve hope or despair, love or hate, trust or fear, admiration or scorn, pride or shame, joy or despondency, to mention but a few examples. The poetic genre demands that the hearer give attention to its emotive content.

Second, the hearer of the psalm must acknowledge his or her own passions that are brought to the interpretive process. It is important that the hearer of the text recognize when his or her affections correspond to the affections of the psalmist and when they do not correspond, because the passions of the hearer can dramatically impact the resulting interpretation.

Third, the hearer of the psalm must be open to the emotive impact of the text. Before the hearer can experience the affective dimension of the text, he or she may be required to enter the world of the psalmist and to enter the emotive flow of the textual stream. Robert O. Baker argues that the reading of the biblical text involves both the mind and the affections of the reader. He insists that 'reading the Bible is not just a

¹⁷ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, p. 34. Cf. Thomas Ryan, 'Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas', *Theological Studies* 66.1 (2005), pp. 49-68 (55-58, 63). The affections, of course, play a key role in the creation of feelings and emotions.

¹⁸ Richard Ognibene and Richard Penaskovic, 'Teaching Theology: Some Affective Strategies', *Horizons* 8.1 (1981), pp. 97-108 (98).

¹⁹ Cartledge, 'Affective Theological Praxis', p. 38. Cf. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, pp. 135, 52.

cognitive experience, but an affective one as well.²⁰ He argues further that seeking

to understand the ideational/rational content of a text without also seeking to experience and reflect upon its emotive effect is to skew the text's message ... By committing to read the text objectively from a critical distance, the professional reader subverts the text's evocative power or is at least unable to express the feeling that the text evokes in him or her.²¹

Fourth, the hearer must allow himself or herself to be transformed by the affective experiencing of the psalm. As the hearer engages the biblical text, his or her affections are shaped by that engagement. 'The affective capacity of the person can be modified and hence grow in sensitivity, intensity, and scope.'²² In its canonical role as Scripture, the book of Psalms makes a significant contribution toward a theology of worship, and part of the message of the Psalms is that right worship begins with rightly oriented affections. Thus, through the hearing of the Psalms the desires of the heart are transformed and redirected toward God so that the affections of gratitude, trust, and love (affections that foster worship) are generated and nourished.

Although I would insist that the third and fourth moves are essential to an affective engagement with the text, I would admit that they are difficult (if not impossible) to accomplish within a written document. They are experiences that may be validated by testimony and description (as in my own testimony that began this article), but the transformative experience itself is outside the bounds of written discourse. Consequently, the bulk of my study will give attention to the first two movements of the affective hermeneutical process.

In what follows, I will offer an affective hearing of Psalm 63. My interpretive location within the Pentecostal community has caused me to appreciate the affective dimension of the Psalms,²³ and I find Psalm 63 to

²⁰ Robert O. Baker, 'Pentecostal Bible Reading: Toward a Model of Reading for the Formation of the Affections', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 7 (1995), pp. 34-48 (46). Cf. Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God*, pp. 70-71. See also W. Dow Edgerton, *The Passion of Interpretation* (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), who agrees that every interpretation involves the passions of the interpreter. See also Cartledge, 'Affective Theological Praxis', pp. 42, 51, and Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), p. 234.

²¹ Baker, 'Pentecostal Bible Reading', pp. 34-35.

²² Ryan, 'Revisiting Affective Knowledge', p. 57.

²³ Lee Roy Martin, 'Delight in the Torah: The Affective Dimension of Psalm 1', *Old Testament Essays* 23:3 (2010), pp. 708-27 (18).

be particularly suited to an affective Pentecostal interpretation. The Psalmist's yearning to encounter God's power and glory is consistent with Pentecostal aspirations, and the passionate prayers and exuberant praises that we find in Psalm 63 are consistent with the ethos of Pentecostal worship.

As stated above, appreciation for the affective dimension of the text is only one aspect of a holistic hermeneutic. The affective elements become clearer and more precise when they emerge from sound exegesis. Therefore, as a foundation for the study, we will overview the text of Psalm 63 and examine its structure and genre.

III. A Translation of Psalm 63

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּהִיטּוֹת בְּמִדְבַּר יְהוּדָה

A psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah

אֱלֹהִים אֵלֵי אַתָּה אֲשַׁחֲרֶךָ²
 צָמְאָה לְךָ נַפְשִׁי
 כְּמַה לְךָ בְּשָׂרִי
 בְּאַרְצֵי-צִיָּה וְעָרֵי בְלֵי-מַיִם
 כִּן בַּקֹּדֶשׁ חֲזִיתִיךָ³
 לְרֹאשׁוֹת עֲזָךְ וּכְבוֹדֶךָ

¹ God, you are my God; I will seek you earnestly;
 My soul is thirsty for you
 My flesh longs for you
 In a dry and weary land without water.
² Thus in the sanctuary I have seen you,
 Beholding your power and your glory.

כִּי-טוֹב חַסְדֶּךָ מִחַיִּים⁴
 שִׁפְתֵי יִשְׁבַּחונֶךָ

³ Because your kindness is better than life,
 My lips will praise you.

כִּן אֲבָרְכֶךָ בְּחַיִּי⁵
 בְּשִׁמְךָ אֲשֹׂא כָפִי

⁴ Thus I shall bless you during my life;
 In your name I shall lift up my hands.

כְּמֹו חֵלֶב וְדָשֵׁן תִּשְׂבַּע נַפְשִׁי⁶
 וּשְׁפָתֵי רִנְנוֹת יְהַלֵּל-פִּי

⁵ Like marrow and fatness my soul will be satisfied,
 And my mouth will offer praise with joyful lips.

אִם-זָכַרְתִּיךָ עַל-יְצוּעֵי⁷
 בְּאֲשֵׁמְרוֹת אֶהְגֶּה-בְּךָ

⁶ Whenever I remembered you on my bed,
 In the night watches I would meditate on you,

כִּי-הָיִיתָ עֲזָרְתָה לִּי⁸
 וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ אֲרַנֵּן

⁷ Because you were my help,
 In the shadow of your wings I would shout for joy.

דָּבְקָה נַפְשִׁי אַחֲרֶיךָ⁹
 בִּי תִמְכָּה יְמִינֶךָ

⁸ My soul has stuck close behind you;
 Your right hand has upheld me.

יְהִימָה לְשׂוֹאֵה יִבְקֶשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי¹⁰
 יִבְאוּ בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת הָאָרֶץ

⁹ As for them who will seek to ruin my life,
 They will go into the depths of the earth.

יִגִּירָהוּ עַל-יַד־חֶרֶב¹¹
 מִנֶּת שְׁעָלִים יִהְיוּ

¹⁰ They will be delivered over to the power of the sword;
 They will be a prey for foxes.

יִתְהַלַּל כָּל-הַנִּשְׁבָּע בּוֹ¹²
 בְּאֵלֵהֶם

¹¹ But as for the king, he will rejoice in God;
 Everyone who swears by him will glory,

כִּי יִסְכַּר פִּי דוֹבְרֵי-שֶׁקֶר
 כִּי יִסְכַּר פִּי דוֹבְרֵי-שֶׁקֶר

Because the mouth of those speaking deception will
 be stopped.

IV. Structure and Genre of Psalm 63

The structure of Psalm 63 is unclear,²⁴ and scholars have divided the psalm in a variety of ways.²⁵ I suggest a four part structure, beginning after the superscription (v. 1):²⁶

1. *Longing for God's Presence* (vv. 2-3).

Verses 2-3 hold together as an introduction that establishes the overall topic of the psalm as the psalmist's intention to passionately and habitually pursue the presence of God.

2. *Praise for God's Kindness* (vv. 4-6).

The second section, like the first, includes an affirmation that is expressed syntactically with a verbless clause ('you *are* my God' and 'your kindness *is* better than life'). The verbless clauses are followed by statements of future intent ('I will seek you' and 'my lips will praise you'). The first two sections each include verses held together by the conjunction 'thus' (כֵּן). The first section begins with seeking God and ends with seeing God. The second section both begins and ends with the mention of praise, and each of its verses (4-6) mentions praise either literally or figuratively. Each verb in this section is a *yiqtol* and should be translated as future tense.

²⁴ Cf. Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms 1–72: Songs for the People of God* (Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), I, p. 222, and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (Word Biblical Commentary, 20; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), p. 125.

²⁵ James Limburg, *Psalms* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1st edn, 2000), pp. 208-10, divides the psalm into three parts: vv. 1-4, body and soul; vv. 5-8, remembering; and vv. 9-11, rejoicing. J.P. Fokkelman, *The Psalms in Form: The Hebrew Psalter in Its Poetic Shape* (Tools for Biblical Study, 4; Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2002), p. 71, finds six divisions made up of the following verses: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-11, 12.

²⁶ I will follow the Hebrew versification. Each of the four sections consists of three bicola except for the final verse, which concludes emphatically with a tricola. Cf. Samuel L. Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Eerdmans Critical Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 460-61, and Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989), p. 18. See also J.W. Rogerson and John W. McKay, *Psalms* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), II, pp. 64-65, who find the same structure, except that they separate the final verse as a separate section.

3. *Remembrance of God's Faithfulness* (vv. 7-9).

The third section (7-9) is held together by a focus upon remembrance of God's actions in the past.²⁷ Verses 7-8 consist of two compound sentences, each of which begins with a *qatal* verb and is followed by a habitual *yiqtol*.²⁸ Verse 9 is made up of two sentences that utilize *qatal* verbs.

4. *Rejoicing in God's Covenant Protection* (vv. 10-12).²⁹

The fourth section turns to the eventual downfall of the psalmist's enemies, and all of the verbs are *yiqtol*s that should be translated as future tense.

The four sections of Psalm 63 are held together by two parallel threads that span the entire psalm. The first thread is the psalmist's affirmations about God that are either stated directly or are implied by the passive voice: God is his God (v. 2); God's covenant kindness is greater than life (v. 3); God will satisfy the psalmist's desires (v. 5); God has been the psalmist's help (v. 7) and support (v. 8); God will destroy the psalmist's enemies (vv. 9, 10, 11). The second thread consists of statements that describe the psalmist's response to God. These responses can be summarized in two categories: seeking God (v. 2) and praising God (vv. 3, 4, 5, 7, 11). We may also infer that the psalmist's past actions are appropriate for the present and future. These past responses are remembering God (v. 6), meditating upon God (v. 6), and sticking close to God (v. 8).

Like the laments, Psalm 63 begins with a direct address to God (v. 2), and it includes other elements that are common to the laments: a mention of enemies (v. 9), a promise to praise God (v. 11), and a statement of trust (v. 7). Consequently, a number of scholars have classified Psalm 63 as an individual lament.³⁰ However, the direct address to God, though common

²⁷ Cf. Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, 'David, Ich Und Der König: Fortschreibung Und Relecture in Psalm 63', in Josef M. Oesch, Andreas Vonach, and Georg Fischer (eds.), *Horizonte Biblischer Texte: Festschrift Für Josef M. Oesch Zum 60. Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), pp. 71-89 (76), and Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (International Critical Commentary; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), II, p. 74, and in ref. to v. 8 as past tense, see Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, p. 17.

²⁸ Cf. Gillmayr-Bucher, 'David, Ich Und Der König', p. 74.

²⁹ Gillmayr-Bucher, 'David, Ich Und Der König', p. 76, agrees that verses 10-12 hold together as a unit.

³⁰ Nancy L. DeClaisse-Walford, *Introduction to the Psalms: A Song from Ancient Israel* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), p. 147; C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Encountering Biblical Studies; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), p. 144.

to the laments, is not confined to them (e.g. Pss. 8.1; 9.1; 18.1; 21.1; 30.1; 65.1; 84.1; 101.1; 104.1; 115.1; 138.1; 145.1), and therefore is not a defining feature of the lament. Moreover, the laments function as a voice of protest and complaint to God, and Psalm 63 does not contain a protest or complaint,³¹ neither does it contain any of the usual indicators of complaint, such as the questions ‘Why...?’ and ‘How long...?’. Enemies are mentioned, but they are not presented as a direct and immediate threat. Instead, they exist as a constant political reality, an everyday obstacle to the king. Furthermore, the lament psalms function as petitions to God for his immediate intervention, but Psalm 63 contains no such plea. Some commentators would translate the verbs in verses 10–11 as petitions, but I suspect that they do so because they are predisposed to classifying the psalm as a lament.³²

The laments normally emerge from the perception that God is absent, distant, and unresponsive. The absence of God is perceived through the presence of troubles, such as enemies or sickness, that plague the psalmist. In the lament psalm, the plea for God’s return and for God’s presence is associated with a petition for deliverance. When God returns to the psalmist, he will intervene to answer the psalmist’s petitions. Psalm 63, however, is different from the lament in that it expresses a plea for God’s presence quite apart from a specific petition for deliverance. The plea for God’s presence is not associated with any other petition. The presence of God is an end in itself. Enemies may be present and will soon be vanquished, but still the petition is focused more directly upon a yearning for God himself.

In light of the above considerations, John Goldingay, along with other scholars, has identified Psalm 63 as a song of trust.³³ The songs of trust or ‘songs of confidence’, as Brueggemann describes them, may have developed as an expansion of the statement of trust that is commonly found in

³¹ Bullock classifies the psalm as a lament even though he admits that it contains no complaint or petition (p. 44).

³² On the difficulties involved in interpreting Hebrew verb tense in poetry, see Alviero Niccacci, ‘Analysing Biblical Hebrew Poetry’, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 74 (1997), pp. 77–93, especially p. 91.

³³ John Goldingay, *Psalms* (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), II, p. 255. Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), classifies it as a song of trust (p. 57), but for him the song of trust is a subcategory of the lament (p. 58). Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, p. 125, insists that ‘the affirmative, testimony-like statements in vv 4–5, 6–8, 9 indicate clearly that this is a psalm of confidence’.

the laments. Within Brueggemann's typology, these songs function to express a 'new orientation' similar to the perspective conveyed by the songs of thanksgiving. The songs of confidence, however, are more 'generalized' and 'more distanced from the crisis and more reflective' than the songs of thanksgiving.³⁴ Offering a new orientation to living in covenant with God, Psalm 63 reflects upon God's past faithfulness, expresses the psalmist's deep longing for God's presence, and affirms the psalmist's lifelong commitment to seek God and to praise God.

V. A Pentecostal Hearing of Psalm 63

Our overview of the text, structure, and genre of Psalm 63 reveals a number of affective components that intersect with Pentecostal spirituality. In the first section of the psalm (vv. 2-3), the suppliant expresses an unquenchable longing for God's presence. A mood of joy and thankfulness permeates the second section (vv. 4-6). The third section (vv. 7-9) expresses thankfulness, but it is a thankfulness that leads to expressions of deep trust and commitment to God. The final section (vv. 10-12) of the psalm registers a mood of confident hope for the future.

A. *Longing for God's Presence* (vv. 2-3)

A passion for God is evident in the first words of the psalmist: 'God, you are my God'.³⁵ The entire psalm, therefore, is grounded upon the certainty of the divine human relationship;³⁶ 'the emphatic "my God" expresses the covenantal bond with all its assurances'.³⁷ God had said to Israel, 'I will be your God and you will be my people' (Lev. 26.12). The relationship is one of covenant.

³⁴ Brueggemann, *Message of the Psalms*, p. 152.

³⁵ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, p. 17, argues that אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי should be rendered, 'God, my God, you—I seek you', so that אֱלֹהֵי functions to add emphasis (Cf. Gen. 49.8). However, it is clear that in its four other occurrences (Pss. 22.11; 118.28; 140.7; cf. also Ps. 31.15), the phrase אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי would be translated 'you are my God', and I would argue that it carries the same meaning here. Cf. Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (trans. Francis Bolton; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1867). In any case, the personal claim ('my God') is clear and striking.

³⁶ Briggs and Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, II, p. 72.

³⁷ John Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: T & T Clark International, 2003), p. 235.

Because God is his God, the psalmist determines that he will seek God 'earnestly' (שׁוֹרֵר). Rather than use the more formal בִּקֵּשׁ³⁸ the psalmist chooses a denominative verb from the word that means 'dawn' and that 'connotes to seek with one's whole heart,'³⁹ to 'seek longingly, wholeheartedly, desperately.'⁴⁰ Thus, the psalmist 'expresses a powerful, longing desire for the near presence of God.'⁴¹

The longing for God is made more concrete through the metaphorical, yearning cry, 'My soul is thirsty for you, my flesh longs for you.'⁴² The language of hunger and thirst 'voices the intensity of emotional intimacy between the psalmist and God.'⁴³ Combination of 'soul' and 'flesh' signifies that the whole person is involved in the longing.⁴⁴ The longing of body and soul speaks of 'a religion that is satisfied with nothing less than God himself and is prepared to wait and wait for him.'⁴⁵

The psalmist's level of yearning is equal to that of 'a dry and weary land without water'. Although the reference to the 'dry and weary land' is probably metaphorical,⁴⁶ it nevertheless provides a vivid image that would be readily identifiable to the original Palestinian hearers of the psalm. It recalls a similar statement found earlier in the Psalter: 'As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God' (Ps. 42.1-2).

³⁸ A.A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms: Based on the Revised Standard Version* (New Century Bible Commentary; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), I, p. 456.

³⁹ Mitchell J. Dahood, *Psalms* (Anchor Bible; 3 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p. 96.

⁴⁰ David J.A. Clines (ed.), *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), p. 456.

⁴¹ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, p. 127.

⁴² The verb בִּמְדָה is a *hapax legomenon* whose meaning, 'long, yearn for', is deduced from Semitic cognates and from the context. See Clines (ed.), *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, p. 178.

⁴³ James L. Crenshaw, *The Psalms: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 15. It is likely that מִמְדָּה in the perfect signifies a state of thirst that began in the past and continues into the present (cf. Judg. 4.19).

⁴⁴ Briggs and Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, II, p. 73.

⁴⁵ John W. McKay, 'The Experiences of Dereliction and of God's Presence in the Psalms: An Exercise in Old Testament Exegesis in the Light of Renewal Theology', in Paul Elbert (ed.) *Faces of Renewal: Studies in Honor of Stanley M. Horton Presented on His 70th Birthday* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), pp. 3-19 (10). In his study of the Psalms, McKay proposes to 'look for a moment beneath the skin of (reconstructed) rituals in an attempt to tap the heartbeat of religious experience in many psalms of lamentation that speak of dereliction and longing for the presence of God.'

⁴⁶ Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 454. Cf. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, p. 127, and Crenshaw, *Psalms*, p. 16.

The psalmist longs, body and soul, for his God. He longs deeply and passionately for God's presence, a presence that he has experienced in the past. The absence of God is even more painful given the memory of previous joyful times in the 'sanctuary', among the people of God.⁴⁷ In God's holy place, recounts the psalmist, 'I have seen you, beholding your power and your glory'. 'Thus' (יַדְּ), 'as his soul thus thirsted for God and longed for him, he was allowed to behold him'.⁴⁸ The psalmist's longing to encounter God in the sanctuary finds echoes in other psalmic texts: 'My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord' (Ps. 84.2); 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever' (Ps. 23.6); and 'that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord' (Ps. 27.4).

The psalmist testifies to having 'seen' (חָזַה) God.⁴⁹ Kraus suggests that the verb probably refers to a theophany,⁵⁰ but Anderson counters that although חָזַה is 'used as a technical term for receiving prophetic visions ... the allusion in verse 2 need not be to a theophany or vision'.⁵¹ Attempting to describe the Psalmist's encounter, Tate writes, 'The visionary experience of the verb חָזַה ("to see/have a vision") is not described in detail, and doubtless differed in form and degree among worshipers.' The psalmist's vision of God may have involved physical rituals and it may included the 'verbal and mental, combined with the rich symbolism of the temple'.⁵²

Whatever form the vision took, it is described here as a manifestation of God's 'power and glory'. The two lines of v. 3 stand in parallel to each other with the second line refining the first. The phrase, 'I have seen you', is restated as 'beholding your power and your glory'.⁵³ God's 'power' is his

⁴⁷ Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, p. 454, claims that the setting for the whole psalm is the sanctuary. Cf. E.W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms* (3 vols.; Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack Publishing, 4th edn, 1972), II, p. 303. I would argue, however, that nothing in the psalm suggests that the psalmist is in the sanctuary. Instead, he is away from the sanctuary, and he 'describes his former times of worship in the sanctuary' (Stephen J. Lennox, *Psalms: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* [Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Pub. House, 1999], p. 197).

⁴⁸ Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, pp. 454-55.

⁴⁹ Clines (ed.), *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, p. 111, indicates that the word means 'see, perceive'.

⁵⁰ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, p. 19.

⁵¹ Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, p. 456.

⁵² Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, p. 127.

⁵³ The infinitive construct here is epexegetical or circumstantial. See Wilhelm Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2d English edn, 1910), §1140; Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §36.2.3e; Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Subsidia Biblica, 14; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991), §1240. Cf. the RSV.

sovereign capacity to choose, to act, and to intervene in the world (for both judgment and salvation). His ‘glory’ is the display of his weightiness, his awesomeness, his majesty, and his holiness. The seeing of God and the beholding of God’s power and glory refer to an encounter with God, an experience of God’s presence which he had enjoyed on earlier occasions and ‘for which the psalmist’s heart thirsts’.⁵⁴ Kraus concludes, ‘This profound high esteem of the communion with God forms the actual center of the profound psalm.’⁵⁵

B. *Gratitude* (vv. 4-6)

Following upon the moving articulation of his unquenchable longing for God’s presence, the psalmist breaks forth in joyous praise. ‘I will praise you’, he declares to God, ‘because your kindness (דַּחַס) is better than life’. Before Psalm 63, human life in its fulness, enjoyed in covenant with God, was understood as the ultimate benefit of God’s דַּחַס, his covenant loyalty.⁵⁶ Now, however, the psalmist suggests that God’s kindness and human life might be envisioned as two separate spheres. Kraus insists that this ‘discrimination between lovingkindness and life was something wholly new’.⁵⁷ Eaton surmises that the psalmist is striving ‘to express the inexpressible wonder of one who experiences’ God’s covenant love.⁵⁸ In agreement with Eaton, Terrien asserts, ‘No other psalmist expresses with such ambiguous and yet convincing overtones his apprehension of the divine embrace’.⁵⁹

In celebration of God’s faithful love, the psalmist pledges to ‘praise’ God, to ‘bless’ God, and to ‘lift up’ his hands to God in worship. Lifting up the hands is the ‘customary attitude of the worshipper in prayer ... a sign of an expectant trust that one’s empty hands will be “filled” with divine blessings.’⁶⁰ This elaborate praise will not be offered briefly or intermittently; it will continue throughout the psalmist’s ‘life’. He promises to bless the Lord ‘in perpetual worship’.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms*, II, p. 65.

⁵⁵ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, p. 21.

⁵⁶ Clines (ed.), *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, p. 126, defines דַּחַס as ‘loyalty, faithfulness, kindness, love, mercy’, a quite broad definition.

⁵⁷ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, p. 20.

⁵⁸ Eaton, *The Psalms*, p. 235.

⁵⁹ Terrien, *The Psalms*, p. 462.

⁶⁰ Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, p. 457.

⁶¹ Briggs and Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, II, p. 73.

The mood of exuberant jubilation is reinforced with the statement, ‘Like marrow and fatness my soul will be satisfied’. ‘Marrow and fatness’ may ‘form a hendiadys meaning “very rich food”’,⁶² or the expression may refer to ‘the sacrificial feasts which characterised seasons of rejoicing before God in the worship of the temple’.⁶³ Either way, the psalmist anticipates a great feast, but not literally; he is instead contemplating a kind of satisfaction that will be ‘like’ the satisfaction of a great feast. Thus, the psalmist again imagines the blessings of God to be distinct from the material world. The lovingkindness of God is like a sumptuous feast that quenches the thirst and satisfies the hunger. Because of God’s kindness, the psalmist can look forward to a full and joyous life; and because he is blessed, his ‘mouth will offer praise with joyful lips’.

C. *Trust and Commitment* (vv. 7-9)

The third section of Psalm 63 continues to express thankfulness, but the tone transitions to a mood of deep trust and commitment to God. While vv. 4-6 declare the present and future value of God’s immeasurable kindness, vv. 7-9 recall the past benefit’s of the psalmist’s relationship to God. The psalmist asserts that just as God has been faithful to him, he has been faithful to God by remembering (זכר) God and meditating (הגה) upon God, two activities that signal deep devotion and commitment.

The psalmist remembers that, with God as his ‘help’, he shouted for joy underneath the covering of God’s ‘wings’, which represent God’s ‘protection’.⁶⁴ He remembers further that he ‘stuck close’ to God and that God supported him. The phrase ‘stuck close’ is difficult to translate into English. The verb דבק means ‘to cling, cleave, stick to’ (cf. Gen. 2.24), but in combination with אחר, it apparently means to ‘pursue or follow very closely behind’.⁶⁵ Metaphorically, it signifies ‘loyalty, affection, etc.’⁶⁶ Israel is commanded to ‘cling’ to Yahweh (Deut. 10.20; 13.5; Josh. 23.8; Ps. 119.31). While the psalmist ‘stuck close’ to God, God ‘upheld’ him with his powerful ‘right hand’. ‘With all the strength of his will he clings to God, to whom he owes

⁶² Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, p. 124. Cf. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, p. 458.

⁶³ Briggs and Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, II, p. 73.

⁶⁴ Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, p. 458.

⁶⁵ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, Study edn, 2001), I, p. 209.

⁶⁶ Francis Brown et al., *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (trans. Edward Robinson; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), p. 179. Cf. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, p. 128.

his outward and inward support'.⁶⁷ This reciprocal relationship 'is almost a definition in personalized language of the *hesed* relationship between God and his people in the covenant'.⁶⁸ Calvin comments that the psalmist would 'follow with unwearied constancy, long as the way might be, and full of hardships, and beset with obstacles'.⁶⁹

D. *Confident Hope* (vv. 10-12)

This final section of the psalm registers a mood of confident hope for the future. The section unfolds through a contrast between the psalmist's enemies and 'the king'. The enemies, who seek 'to ruin'⁷⁰ the psalmist, will 'go into the depths of the earth', and they will become the 'prey of foxes'.⁷¹ The king, however, will rejoice in God, along with all those who swear allegiance to God, because the mouths of the deceivers 'will be stopped'.

The psalmist is confident that justice will prevail, that evil will be punished, and that God's people 'will glory' in their covenant relationship with God. Wicked enemies, struck down by 'the sword', 'will most certainly receive their due punishment ... their dead bodies will be desecrated' by wild animals.⁷² Deprived of a proper burial,⁷³ they will cast down to the 'underworld' of the dead.⁷⁴ In the end, those who seek to ruin God's people will themselves be ruined.

The king,⁷⁵ however, will 'rejoice in God', and those who swear allegiance to 'him' will glory. In the phrase 'swear by him', the antecedent of the pronoun 'him' is God.⁷⁶ All who swear by him is the psalmist's way of

⁶⁷ Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, p. 455.

⁶⁸ Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms*, p. 67. Cf. Stephen J. Lennox, *Psalms: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Pub. House, 1999), p. 198.

⁶⁹ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (trans. James Anderson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 383.

⁷⁰ The Hebrew for 'ruin' is actually a noun, prefixed with a preposition that suggests purpose: 'They seek my life for the purpose of ruin'. See Clines (ed.), *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, p. 450, and Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, II, p. 1427.

⁷¹ Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, II, 1445, define שׂוֹאֵל as 'fox'. So do Brown *et al.*, *BDB*, but they add, 'perhaps also jackal' (p. 1048).

⁷² Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, p. 459.

⁷³ Lennox, *Psalms: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, p. 198.

⁷⁴ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, p. 20.

⁷⁵ Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, p. 459. Contra Eaton, *The Psalms*, p. 235, and Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, II, p. 301, who argues that the reference to the king does not necessarily mean that the psalmist must be the king or that this is a royal psalm.

⁷⁶ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, p. 128; cf. Terrien, *The Psalms*, p. 464; contra Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, I, p. 459.

connecting the psalm to the community of faith.⁷⁷ It 'is a poetic description of the Israelites,'⁷⁸ and the combined reference to the king and all who 'swear' by God's name is 'probably a comprehensive phrase denoting the whole community of the faithful with the king as its head.'⁷⁹ Thus, the king is 'representative or exemplary of the person who seeks God.'⁸⁰

The last section of Psalm 63 is a fitting conclusion to this psalm of reorientation. The psalmist has admitted his sense of separation from God's presence (v. 2) and his need to be satisfied by God's kindness (v. 6). He has remembered (v. 7) times when he needed God's help (v. 8) and God came to his aid. In this final strophe, he acknowledges the ongoing presence of dangerous enemies who threaten his safety. Nevertheless, his past experiences of God's presence (v. 3), God's covenant loyalty (v. 4), and God's tender care (v. 9) have generated a renewed confidence in God's faithfulness. The Psalmist is convinced that God's people will prevail in the end.

VI. Acknowledging Pentecostal Passions

Psalm 63 is a passionate expression of the psalmist's spiritual longings after God. These longings are suggestive of the affective component of Pentecostal spirituality. I find that the Psalmist's 'hunger' and 'thirst' for God is consistent with Pentecostal spirituality and that the desire to encounter God in the sanctuary is consistent with the goals of Pentecostal worship. Chris Green insists that 'Pentecostal spirituality is nothing if not a *personal* engagement' with God.⁸¹ Although I am most familiar with North American Pentecostalism and do not claim to speak for all Pentecostals, my associations with Pentecostals in Latin America, Africa, Australia, Asia, Europe, and the UK lead me to conclude that a passionate affective spirituality is common to all Pentecostals.⁸² Like the Psalmist, the Pentecostal community is hungry and thirsty for God and seeks to behold God's power and glory, to lift up their hands in adoration, to testify of past

⁷⁷ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, p. 128.

⁷⁸ Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, p. 456.

⁷⁹ Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms*, p. 67.

⁸⁰ J. Clinton McCann, Jr., 'Psalms', in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), IV, pp. 639-1280 (928).

⁸¹ Chris E.W. Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper: Foretasting the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), p. 289 (emphasis in the original).

⁸² Regarding Korean spirituality, see Julie C. Ma, 'Korean Pentecostal Spirituality: A Case Study of Jashil Choi', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 5.2 (2002), pp. 235-54, and Myung

blessings, to praise God with joyful lips, to shout for joy, to stick close to God, to rejoice in God, and to live in hope of the coming reign of God.

The psalmist's longing for the manifestation of God's 'power and glory' can be compared to Pentecostalism's 'holy desire for God Himself'.⁸³ This longing for God is described repeatedly in early Pentecostal literature. For example, Alice Flower writes, 'All I seemed to sense was a deep craving for the overflowing of His love in my heart. At that moment it seemed I wanted Jesus more than anything in all the world.'⁸⁴ Reflecting on her passion for God, Zelma E. Argue recalls, 'my whole heart seemed to just one big vacuum craving and crying for God'.⁸⁵ Echoing the words of Ps. 63.6, Alice E. Luce affirms, 'the Lord is our portion. We have had a real taste of the Lord and found out that he is a satisfying portion'.⁸⁶

The Pentecostal longing for God can be described partly as the desire for a personal encounter with God. Albrecht argues that for 'Pentecostals, the entire ritual field and the drama that emerges within the ritual matrix is aimed toward an *encounter*'.⁸⁷ Jaichandran and Madhav agree:

It cannot be denied that the most important value that governs Pentecostal spirituality is the locus of individual experience. Viewed positively, this means that the Pentecostal is not satisfied until he or she has had an experience with God ... A person is not satisfied by hearing about someone else's experience with God; they must experience God themselves.⁸⁸

Of course, as with any revivalist movement, Pentecostalism has generated unwelcomed excesses and unbiblical experiences.⁸⁹ The psalmist's longing

Soo Park, 'Korean Pentecostal Spirituality as Manifested in the Testimonies of Believers of the Yoido Full Gospel Church', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 7.1 (2004), pp. 35-56 (40-41, 44-48, 55). For African spirituality, see David J. Maxwell, 'The Durawall of Faith: Pentecostal Spirituality in Neo-Liberal Zimbabwe', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35.1 (2005), pp. 4-32 (5-6, 21).

⁸³ Daniel Castelo, 'Tarrying on the Lord: Affections, Virtues and Theological Ethics in Pentecostal Perspective', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.1 (2004), pp. 31-56 (53).

⁸⁴ Alice Reynolds Flower, 'My Pentecost', *Assemblies of God Heritage* 20 (Winter 1997-98), pp. 17-20 (18); excerpted from her *Grace for Grace: Some Highlights of God's Grace in the Daily Life of the Flower Family* (Springfield, MO: privately published, 1961).

⁸⁵ Cited by Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer, 'Pentecost in My Soul': *Explorations in the Meaning of Pentecostal Experience in the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub. House, 1989), p. 159.

⁸⁶ Cited by Blumhofer, *Pentecost in My Soul*, p. 136.

⁸⁷ Daniel E. Albrecht, 'Pentecostal Spirituality: Looking through the Lens of Ritual', *Pneuma* 14.2 (1992), pp. 107-25 (110) (emphasis in the original).

⁸⁸ Rebecca Jaichandran and B.D. Madhav, 'Pentecostal Spirituality in a Postmodern World', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6.1 (2003), pp. 39-61 (55).

⁸⁹ Jaichandran and Madhav, 'Pentecostal Spirituality in a Postmodern World', pp. 57, 59.

for God, however, is not a longing for an experience for experience's sake, but it is a longing for God in relation, in covenant; and it is a longing that Pentecostals seek to imitate.⁹⁰

The psalmist's experience of 'seeing' God and 'beholding' the power and glory of God are signs to the Pentecostal that God is open to human encounter. Keith Warrington writes, "Two pertinent words when referring to Pentecostal spirituality are "expectancy" and "encounter". Pentecostals expect to encounter God. It undergirds much of their worship and theology and may even be identified as another way of defining worship."⁹¹ From Azusa Street until now, Pentecostals everywhere have insisted upon the present reality of God's presence to save, sanctify, fill with the Holy Spirit, heal, and reign as coming king.⁹²

VII. Conclusions and Implications for Pentecostal Spirituality

In his article on 'Community and Worship', Jerome Boone argues that the 'single most important goal of any Pentecostal worship service is a personal encounter with the Spirit of God'.⁹³ This encounter will often include the manifestation of spiritual gifts and the worshipers will experience 'the Spirit as transformational power'.⁹⁴ He points to the importance of prayer as a 'divine-human encounter in which burdens are relinquished' to God, who cares and who has the power to eliminate those burdens.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Cf. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., 'The Nature of Pentecostal Spirituality', *Pneuma* 14.2 (1992), pp. 103-106 (105), and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Encountering Christ in the Full Gospel Way": An Incarnational Pentecostal Spirituality', *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 27.1 (2007), pp. 9-23 (11-12). Kärkkäinen explicates Pentecostal worship as the 'longing for meeting with the Lord' (pp. 17-20).

⁹¹ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), p. 219. Cf. Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (JPTSUP, 17; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 226, 38-39.

⁹² *The Apostolic Faith* 1.1 (Sept. 1906), p. 1 and *passim*. Writing in the first issue of *Pneuma*, William MacDonald, 'Temple Theology', *Pneuma* 1.1 (Spring 1979), insists, 'Unless we dare claim that Christianity was fossilized in the first century, we must contend that the Spirit is still speaking to the churches' (p. 48). Cf. Cecil M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2006), p. 132.

⁹³ R. Jerome Boone, 'Community and Worship: The Key Components of Pentecostal Christian Formation', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (1996), pp. 129-42 (137).

⁹⁴ Boone, 'Community and Worship', p. 138.

⁹⁵ Boone, 'Community and Worship', p. 130.

Furthermore, Boone observes the value of personal testimony as a means of honoring God and of forming the faith of the listeners. Boone warns, however, that the Pentecostal movement is in danger of losing its distinctive Pentecostal spirituality. Perhaps we should ask, ‘Has Pentecostalism left its “first love” (Rev. 2.4)?’

If the Pentecostal movement is to maintain its vitality from generation to generation, it must periodically reclaim the spiritual passion that we find demonstrated in Psalm 63. The biblical text functions as a vehicle of spiritual formation that can inform Pentecostal spirituality and practice. I would suggest the following ways in which Psalm 63 can help to shape the spirituality of the Pentecostal movement both now and in the future. These implications are only suggestive, and they (along with the article in its entirety) are meant to promote dialogue and creative engagement with the biblical text.

1. The Pentecostal approach to spiritual formation should include the nurture and development of the affect. Opportunities for affective engagement and expression should be offered. These opportunities include affective expressions through worship, prayer, testimony, and waiting upon God.

In a recent article, Johnathan Alvarado elaborates on the distinctive characteristics of Pentecostal worship. He writes, ‘Spirit-filled worship is marked and characterized by a vivid awareness of the presence of God and the activity of the Holy Spirit within the lives of the saints and within the context of the worship experience.’⁹⁶ Alvarado argues that Spirit-filled leadership in worship requires three things: 1) the ‘skillful handling of the biblical text’ as the Word of God, 2) ‘an understanding of the Spirit’s presence’ and influence, and 3) ‘the intentional involvement of the congregation.’⁹⁷ After looking at Psalm 63, I would suggest a fourth requirement (perhaps as an expansion of number 2): the worship leader must possess a deep longing to encounter God through the Holy Spirit and to lead others into that encounter. Worship leaders must conceive of their ministry as formative, for ‘in worshipping God we come to behold the object that orients and disposes us properly. One learns to love God by beholding Him and communing with Him.’⁹⁸

2. The Pentecostal church must provide frequent and open-ended opportunities for prayer. Psalm 63.2-9 is a sustained direct address to God, in

⁹⁶ Johnathan E. Alvarado, ‘Worship in the Spirit: Pentecostal Perspectives on Liturgical Theology and Praxis’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21.1 (2012), pp. 135-51 (143).

⁹⁷ Alvarado, ‘Worship in the Spirit’, pp. 146-47.

⁹⁸ Castelo, ‘Tarrying on the Lord’, p. 38.

which the psalmist uses the second person address, 'you', 18 times. The spiritual life cannot be nurtured without times of deep communion with God in prayer. Pentecostal spirituality is formed and expressed through regular and intensive times of prayer and fasting.⁹⁹ Christian formation can not be accomplished quickly and without struggle. Discipleship consists of more than just right thinking, right teaching, and right doctrine; it must include right 'feeling', that is, rightly oriented affections.

When we read Psalm 63, we are overhearing the prayers of the psalmist, and in so doing we are being shaped to follow the psalmist's example. Similarly, our prayers should be overheard by others,¹⁰⁰ who will learn from us that honest expressions of pain and struggle are acceptable to God and that a passion for God's presence is commendable.

3. In our practice of the Pentecostal life and ministry, we must become hungry and thirsty for God, desperate for God's presence. The psalmist expresses dependence upon God as a 'help' and as a 'support'. The psalmist feels that he will die of hunger and thirst unless God appears with his refreshing presence. In many cases, however, our desperation for God's presence and help has been supplanted by structures of our own invention, substitutes for the power and glory of God. We can do 'church' without God. Consequently, prayers of desperation are rarely heard because we have back up plans, safety nets, and formal structures that can exist without God's help.

4. Pentecostalism must reaffirm its eschatological hope. I observe that verses 10-12 point to the future and could even be considered eschatological in focus: The wicked will be punished; those who are faithful to God will rejoice in God's protection; and the kingdom of God will manifest itself as a kingdom of justice and righteousness.

5. Pentecostals face the danger of seeking out experiences rather than seeking God for God's sake. In the past, Pentecostals called this kind of shallow emotionalism 'wild fire'. On the one hand, it is all too easy for worship to become no more than entertainment or self-gratification. On the other hand, genuine encounter with God results in a dramatic experience. It is an experience that cannot be manipulated by ministers and worship leaders who prompt and prod the congregation until they are worked up into a frenzy. The disciples' encounter with God through the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 was powerful and moving, but it did not occur as a result of their

⁹⁹ Ma, 'Korean Pentecostal Spirituality', p. 238 and *passim*.

¹⁰⁰ Gerald T. Sheppard, 'Theology and the Book of Psalms', *Interpretation* 46 (1992), pp. 143-55 (143).

own artificial efforts. In response to their prayer, their worship, and their waiting, the Holy Spirit came upon them as an external force sent from heaven. Similarly, the focus of Psalm 63 is upon the relational quality of the encounter between the psalmist and God.

6. Pentecostalism must recover the practice of testimony. Psalm 63 is directed to God, but it is a song that is meant to be heard by the congregation, and as such, it functions as testimony. The psalmist testifies to the experience of seeing God's glory in the sanctuary, and to the many times when God has been a help and a support. This testimony includes aspects of the psalmist's spiritual journey, such as times of praise, meditation, and sticking close to God. The recounting of the psalmist's own longing for God is an implicit challenge to the hearer to pursue God with the same fervent intensity and with the same unreserved yearning.