Amos Yong is a theologian, not a scientist. This seemingly self-evident statement marks an important entry point to Yong’s work on the intersection of theology and the modern sciences. More precisely, it is Yong’s location in the Pentecostal theological community that motivates and defines his approach to the conversation. Interest in different issues of the debate appears throughout many of the foundational writings of Yong’s early theological, methodological, and hermeneutical program. At the same time, his increasing occupation with the sciences has shaped a unique view of Pentecostalism including both a critical reading of its current sensibilities and a prospect of the potential Pentecostal contributions. Yong’s work in this area displays most clearly his threefold methodological concern that involves Pentecostalism, pneumatology, and the quest for the renewal. In this chapter, I trace his engagement on these three levels of inquiry and argues that Yong’s work shows their inseparability in the conversation of theology and the sciences. Put differently, we might say that Yong’s interest in the religion-science dialogue is the inevitable result of integrating a Pentecostal, pneumatological, and renewalist hermeneutic.

In order to illustrate Yong’s three-fold perspective, I begin by outlining his rationale for engaging in the religion-science dialogue. I then highlight Yong’s perspectives on the implications of the particularities of Pentecostal hermeneutics for the contemporary theology and science conversation. This explanation is followed by an overview of the metaphysical connections Yong employs to bridge the Pentecostal imagination and the language of science. I conclude with a sketch of Yong’s proposal for a pneumatological theology of creation.

1. Yong’s Rationale for Engaging in the Theology and Science Conversation

Interest in the scientific disciplines is not a sufficient motivation for religion to engage in conversation. Theological scholarship has learned to
make use of the humanities and the social and behavioral sciences, yet few scholars have engaged in conversation with the natural sciences to nurture or explain their theological interests. Pentecostal scholarship has had almost no visible interaction with the so-called “hard” sciences. The number of scientists working in laboratories or teaching at schools while professing to be Pentecostal is virtually unknown. The public image of religion and science, in general, and of the Pentecostal and the scientist, in particular, are dramatically antithetical. All the more surprising is Yong’s insistence that religious scholars should engage the natural sciences and that the pursuits of the Pentecostal and the scientific communities have much in common. We can identify four foundational reasons in Yong’s work that explain his interest and that can serve as motivations for others to enter into the discussion.

Yong’s primary rationale for insisting on the theological engagement of the sciences (and vice versa) emerges from a reading of the forces of modernization that have enabled the prospering of both the sciences and Pentecostalism. Yong suggests that it is a mistake to equate Pentecostalism with a pre-modern movement or even anti-modern tendencies. While the emergence of classical Pentecostalism at the beginning of the twentieth century can be interpreted in some sense as a reaction to liberalism and modernization, Pentecostal movements worldwide demand a broader explanation. From his perspective, the globalization of Pentecostalism represents the catalyst for encountering the forces of modernization. Developments in media technology, medicine, and the explosion of the digital revolution have confronted early “romantic” Pentecostal interpretations of the world with the need to offer explanations of God’s presence and activity that do not immediately contradict scientific models. Yong is convinced that “premodern sensibilities seem to be gradually if not inexorably replaced by modern and postmodern habits shaped by the advances of science and technology.” Among these habits is a gradual acceptance of the complementarity of religious and scientific disciplines. If Pentecostalism is also impacted by this gradual replacement, then Pentecostal ways of reading the world should not stand in contrast to scientific proposals as long as we understand both perspectives as different linguistic and cultural outlooks on the natural world that both declare the fullness

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1 See SC, p. 9; SAS, pp. 1–7.
2 SC, p. 9.
4 Ibid., p. 51.