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Jewish Scriptural Interpretation and Early Christian Pneumatic Reading: Reconsidering PaRDeS for Christian–Jewish Relations

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1. Introduction

Contemporary discussions of Christian hermeneutics are often shaped by post-Reformation exegetical traditions, historical criticism, philology, and modern textual analysis. These approaches have contributed significantly to biblical studies by clarifying the historical, linguistic, and literary dimensions of Scripture. However, they can also obscure the fact that Jesus and the earliest Christian communities read Israel's Scriptures within a Jewish hermeneutical world—one marked not by a single flat mode of reading, but by layered, intertextual, communal, and theologically charged forms of interpretation.[1] The question, therefore, is not whether early Christian interpretation departed from Judaism, but how it emerged from within Jewish scriptural practices while reorienting them around the Christ event and the work of the Spirit.

The present study proposes *PaRDeS Pneumatikon* as a retrospective and constructive analytical model for describing continuity and transformation. The term *PaRDeS* refers to the later Jewish fourfold schema of *peshat* (plain or contextual sense), *remez* (hint or allusive sense), *derash* (interpretive, homiletical, or argumentative exposition), and *sod* (mystery or hidden meaning). The adjective *Pneumatikon* identifies the early Christian reorientation of these layered interpretive tendencies through the work of the Holy Spirit. It should be emphasized at the outset that this article does not claim that PaRDeS existed as a formal hermeneutical system in the first century. Rather, it uses PaRDeS retrospectively as a heuristic lens—that is, as a conceptual tool for identifying and organizing interpretive tendencies—already visible in earlier Jewish practices: attention to textual sense,

[1] James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 14–23; Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 1–6; Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 1–17.

intertextual allusion, communal exposition, and the disclosure of divine mystery.[2] In this limited and cautious respect, the discussion refers to "proto-PaRDeS" patterns, not to a fully developed medieval system operative in the time of Jesus.

Such caution is necessary because the historical forms of Jewish interpretation were diverse. *Midrash*, *pesher*, allegorical interpretation, apocalyptic disclosure, and inner-biblical exegesis were not identical methods, nor did the same communities always practice them. Qumranic *pesher*, for example, read prophetic texts as speaking directly to the community's eschatological situation, while Philo's allegorical exegesis interpreted the Torah through philosophical categories. Early rabbinic and proto-rabbinic traditions developed other modes of legal and homiletical reasoning. These practices should not be collapsed into PaRDeS. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that Jewish scriptural interpretation was already capable of layered meaning, rereading, communal application, and theological depth before PaRDeS was later codified.[3] The value of PaRDeS in this study is therefore classificatory and heuristic, not genealogical in a strict historical sense.

A necessary distinction also affects the role of inner-biblical exegesis. Inner-biblical interpretation belongs to an earlier stage of Israel's scriptural tradition and should not be identified with PaRDeS. Its relevance is more modest but still important: it shows that Scripture's own formation already involved rereading, reapplication, and theological recontextualization of earlier traditions.[4] This provides a broader context for understanding why later Jewish and early Christian interpreters could treat Scripture as a living, future-oriented voice rather than merely a record of past revelation.

Within this broader Jewish hermeneutical world, Jesus and the apostolic community did not invent interpretation ex nihilo. Historical Jesus scholarship has rightly emphasized that Jesus must be read within Second Temple Judaism, not as an outsider to it.[5] At the same time, the early Christian movement reconfigured inherited Jewish interpretive practices around a new theological center: the crucified and risen Messiah. The Gospels portray Jesus not merely as one interpreter

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[2] Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1972), 1–30; Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar, Vol. 1* (Oxford: Littman, 1989), 1:33–60; Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 9th ed. (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2011), 1–15. The term "proto-PaRDeS" is used here cautiously. It does not suggest that the medieval acronym was operative in the first century, but that later Jewish classification helps identify earlier interpretive tendencies already present in diverse Jewish communities.

[3] James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 102–8; Timothy H. Lim, *The Pesher Habakkuk Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 32–45; George J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in Its Jewish Context*, JSOTSup 29 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 92; Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Philon d'Alexandrie: Un Penseur En Diaspora* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 145–62.

[4] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel,* 1–20; Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1–25.

[5] E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 10–22; Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 1–15; David Flusser, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2007), 1–12; Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), 1–20.

among others, but as a figure whose authority (exousia) itself becomes a hermeneutical event. Likewise, the apostolic writings read Israel's Scriptures through the lens of fulfillment, typology, intertextual argument, and the revelation of the *mysterion*. These patterns remain intelligible only when viewed within Jewish interpretive culture, yet they also disclose a distinct Christological and pneumatic reorientation.[6]

The adjective *Pneumatikon* further clarifies the nature of this reorientation. This term is not intended to introduce a new hermeneutical method, but to describe the mode in which early Christian interpretation was understood within its own theological horizon. In early Christian interpretation, the Holy Spirit is not merely an affective or devotional presence but an epistemological agent who enables remembrance, discernment, proclamation, and communal understanding. The Spirit does not replace the text, tradition, or disciplined interpretation; rather, the Spirit reorients the reading of Israel's Scriptures toward Christ and toward the life of the messianic community.[7] Thus, *PaRDeS Pneumatikon* does not designate a new method imposed on ancient texts, but a conceptual vocabulary for describing how early Christian interpretation remained rooted in Jewish scriptural habits while being transformed by Christological confession and pneumatic discernment.

The contribution of this article is therefore threefold. First, it clarifies the relationship between later PaRDeS terminology and earlier Jewish interpretive plurality by distinguishing formal PaRDeS from proto-PaRDeS tendencies. Second, it situates early Christian interpretation within Jewish hermeneutical worlds without reducing it to either simple continuity or supersessionist rupture. Third, it offers a constructive model for Christian–Jewish dialogue by showing how Christian pneumatic interpretation may be understood as a refiguration of Jewish scriptural practices rather than a rejection of them. In doing so, the article seeks to contribute to Jewish–Christian relations, biblical hermeneutics, and Pentecostal theology by proposing a historically cautious and dialogically responsible account of Spirit-led interpretation.

2. PaRDeS as a Retrospective Heuristic: From Later Formalization to Proto-PaRDeS

This study does not reconstruct a historical PaRDeS system in the first century but employs the later schema as an analytical heuristic to identify interpretive tendencies.

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[6] Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 1–17; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1–20; Markus Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 1–15.

[7] Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 90–92; Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 1–9; Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 8–10.

PaRDeS is commonly known as a Jewish fourfold model of scriptural interpretation: *peshat* (plain or contextual meaning), *remez* (hint or allusive meaning), *derash* (interpretive, homiletical, or argumentative exposition), and *sod* (mystery or hidden meaning). As a systematic acronym, however, PaRDeS does not belong to the technical hermeneutical vocabulary of the first century. It reflects a later conceptual codification within medieval Jewish and Kabbalistic traditions. Recognizing this historical distance is essential, since the purpose of this article is not to retroject a medieval system into the world of Jesus and the apostles.

Nevertheless, the later codification of PaRDeS should not be understood as an isolated medieval invention. While scholars such as Gershom Scholem and Isaiah Tishby situate PaRDeS within later Kabbalistic developments, the present study does not treat their work as evidence for a first-century system. Rather, it draws on their analyses as conceptual resources for identifying earlier interpretive tendencies without implying direct historical continuity.[8] The later schema may instead be read as a classification of interpretive instincts already visible in earlier Jewish scriptural practices.

During the Second Temple period, Jewish interpreters frequently engaged Scripture through literal attention to the text, intertextual allusion, argumentative exposition, and openness to mystery or eschatological disclosure. These tendencies do not amount to a formal PaRDeS system, but they do indicate that the layered logic later summarized by PaRDeS had earlier antecedents.

For this reason, this article uses the term *proto-PaRDeS* as a descriptive and heuristic category. The term *proto-PaRDeS* does not imply that first-century Jewish interpreters consciously employed the fourfold PaRDeS schema. Rather, it refers to a constellation of interpretive tendencies—textual, allusive, expositional, and revelatory—that later Jewish tradition would organize more explicitly under the categories of *peshat*, *remez*, *derash*, and *sod*. PaRDeS is therefore used here not as a strict historical claim, but as a retrospective analytical lens for mapping continuity and transformation between Jewish and early Christian modes of scriptural reading.[9]

This distinction is crucial to the article's argument. If PaRDeS is treated as a fully formed first-century method, the argument becomes historically anachronistic. If, however, PaRDeS is used as a retrospective heuristic for identifying proto-PaRDeS tendencies, it becomes a useful conceptual tool for describing how early Christian interpretation emerged from within Jewish hermeneutical plurality while reconfiguring that plurality around Christ and the Spirit.

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[8] Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 1–30; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 1, 1–15.

[9] Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism,* 1–30; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar, Vol. 1,* 1:33–60; Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch,* 1–15. The term "proto-PaRDeS" is used cautiously. It does not imply that the medieval acronym was operative in the first century, but that later Jewish classification helps identify earlier interpretive tendencies already present in diverse Jewish communities.

3. Jewish Interpretive Plurality before PaRDeS

3.1 Major Interpretive Practices: Midrash, Pesher, and Allegory

This plural hermeneutical environment manifested itself in several distinct interpretive trajectories, each shaped by particular communal and intellectual contexts. These practices should not be treated as components of a unified system, but as historically situated modes of engaging Scripture. In this respect, the analysis aligns with scholars such as Günter Stemberger and George J. Brooke, who emphasize the diversity of Jewish interpretive practices and caution against reducing them to a single hermeneutical framework.[10]

The Qumran community, for example, developed *pesher* as a distinctly prophetic mode of interpretation. As Devorah Dimant has shown, the pesher tradition also reflects a distinctive understanding of time, in which scriptural prophecy is reread within an unfolding eschatological horizon.[11] Biblical texts were read as encoded revelations whose full meaning became manifest within the community's own historical moment. Formulae such as *pesher ha-davar* ("the interpretation of the matter is…") express the conviction that ancient prophecy directly addressed contemporary realities, thus collapsing temporal distance between text and fulfillment.[12]

In a different intellectual context, Philo of Alexandria employed allegorical interpretation to articulate the Torah's philosophical depth within a Hellenistic framework. While drawing on Greek philosophical categories, Philo remained within a fundamentally Jewish assumption: that the divine text contains layers of meaning that transcend its literal sense without negating it.[13]

Early rabbinic and proto-rabbinic traditions likewise developed modes of interpretive reasoning characterized by textual analogy, thematic association, and dialectical argumentation. As Daniel Boyarin has argued, midrash operates through a deeply intertextual logic in which Scripture is read in dialogue with itself across textual and historical boundaries.[14] Although more fully systematized in later rabbinic literature, these forms of reasoning likely circulated in nascent forms during the first century. As Jacob Neusner observes, Scripture functioned as the primary arena for theological reasoning within these communities.[15]

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[10] Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 15–30; George J. Brooke, "Qumran Pesher: Towards the Redefinition of a Genre," *Revue de Qumran* 10 (1980): 483–503.
[11] Devorah Dimant, "Exegesis and Time in the Pesharim from Qumran," *Revue des Études Juives* 168, nos. 3–4 (2009): 399–412.
[12] Lim, *The Pesher Habakkuk Commentary*, 32–45; VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today,* 102–8; Brooke, "Qumran Pesher," 483–503.
[13] Hadas-Lebel, *Philon d'Alexandrie: Un Penseur en diaspora*, 145–62; D. T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 233–40.
[14] Daniel Boyarin, "Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash." *Prooftexts* 10, no. 1 (1990): 1–23.
[15] Jacob Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 15–28; Günter Stemberger and Markus Bockmuehl, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 7–18.

It is crucial to emphasize that these practices—*pesher*, allegory, and early forms of midrash—are not simply "examples" of PaRDeS, nor should they be retroactively mapped onto its fourfold structure. They belong to distinct historical settings and were not necessarily practiced by the same interpreters. Nevertheless, they reveal a shared hermeneutical orientation: Scripture was authoritative, polyvalent, and dynamically engaged with the life of the community.

These interpretive trajectories may be described in terms of distinct but overlapping hermeneutical orientations. Qumranic *pesher* reflects a prophetic and contemporizing mode of reading, in which scriptural texts are understood to speak directly to the present historical moment. Philo's allegorical interpretation, by contrast, operates within a philosophical register, seeking to articulate the Torah's universal and conceptual dimensions. Early rabbinic and proto-rabbinic forms of midrash display a different orientation, characterized by argumentative, legal, and homiletical reasoning grounded in textual interconnection and thematic association. Alongside these, emerging attention to the plain sense of Scripture anticipates what would later be more fully articulated as *peshat*.

These modes of interpretation should not be treated as direct equivalents of the later PaRDeS categories. Rather, they exhibit a range of hermeneutical instincts—prophetic, philosophical, legal, and textual—that, when viewed retrospectively, help illuminate the interpretive dynamics that would later be systematized within the PaRDeS framework.

In this limited sense, these practices may be viewed as exhibiting *proto-PaRDeS* tendencies. They demonstrate that Jewish interpretation before and during the time of Jesus already operated with layered meanings, intertextual connections, and openness to divine disclosure—features that would later be classified within the PaRDeS framework without being reducible to it.[16]

3.2 Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Scripture as a Living Voice

The roots of Jewish layered interpretation extend even earlier, within the Hebrew Bible itself. This observation must be stated carefully: inner-biblical exegesis is not PaRDeS, nor does it imply the existence of a conscious fourfold system in ancient Israel. Its relevance lies elsewhere. It shows that Israel's Scriptures already contain practices of rereading, reapplication, and theological recontextualization before later Jewish interpretive traditions were formally developed.

Ezra's reconfiguration of Israel's royal history provides one example of this phenomenon. His reshaping of the Samuel–Kings tradition is not a departure from Scripture but an instance of inner-biblical hermeneutics. Historical memory is preserved, selectively reshaped, normatively interpreted, and oriented toward a

[16] Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now,* 14–23; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel,* 350–52. The use of "proto-PaRDeS" is heuristic rather than historical, indicating interpretive tendencies rather than a formally articulated fourfold system.

disclosed theological horizon. In a cautious and functional sense, this may be described as exhibiting proto-PaRDeS tendencies: attention to narrative, allusive reshaping, theological exposition, and openness to divine purpose.

Inner-biblical exegesis should not be seen as proto-PaRDeS in a strict sense, but as evidence of a broader hermeneutical culture in which layered rereading was already operative. This description does not suggest that Ezra consciously employed PaRDeS categories, but only that later hermeneutical classifications help illuminate earlier patterns of scriptural rereading.[17]

Closely related to this dynamic is the conviction, widespread in Second Temple Judaism, that Scripture speaks beyond its original historical horizon. Texts were not treated merely as records of past revelation but as living vehicles of divine communication. In apocalyptic traditions, as John J. Collins observes, revelation often invites rereading in light of unfolding history, with meanings becoming more fully intelligible in later periods.[18] Hindy Najman captures a similar dynamic through the concept of "Seconding Sinai," in which interpretive traditions extend the authority of the original revelation into new historical contexts.[19]

This hermeneutical horizon provides an important background for early Christian interpretation. When New Testament authors reread Israel's Scriptures in light of their convictions about Jesus, they did not invent the idea of renewed significance. Rather, they participated in a long-standing Jewish tradition that regarded Scripture as a communicative and unfolding reality. The distinctiveness of early Christian interpretation lies not in the abandonment of this Jewish scriptural world, but in the way that world was reoriented around Christ and the Spirit.

4. Jesus and Hermeneutical Refiguration

The interpretive practices outlined in the previous sections provide the necessary background for understanding Jesus' hermeneutical activity. His ministry did not emerge in isolation, nor did it represent a rejection of Jewish scriptural traditions. Rather, it should be understood as a hermeneutical refiguration: a reorientation of inherited Jewish interpretive practices within a new Christological and eschatological horizon.

4.1 Jesus as a Hermeneutical Event: Exousia and the Intensification of the Torah

Jesus does not appear merely as one interpreter among others within Second Temple Judaism. Rather, his person and authority (*exousia*) function as a decisive

[17] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel,* 350–52; Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now,* 14–23. The reference to proto-PaRDeS here is functional rather than historical. It does not claim that PaRDeS was operative in ancient Israel, but that later categories may help describe earlier patterns of layered rereading.

[18] John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1–20.

[19] Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, 1–25.

hermeneutical horizon. This does not negate the role of Scripture or established interpretive traditions, but reconfigures them in relation to his identity and mission. As Richard B. Hays has argued, early Christian interpretation involves not simply reading Scripture differently, but rereading Israel's Scriptures in light of the "Christ event."[20]

The Gospels portray Jesus teaching with authority that distinguishes him from the scribes (Matt. 7:29). Within the Jewish context, as Hindy Najman has shown, authoritative teachers often functioned as mediators who rearticulated the meaning of revelation for new historical circumstances.[21] In this light, the antithetical structure of the Sermon on the Mount—"You have heard that it was said … but I say to you"—should not be understood as abrogation of the Torah, but as a hermeneutical intensification. As Dale C. Allison notes, Jesus engages in a "radical internalization" of the law, disclosing its deeper divine intention.[22]

Through this intensification, Jesus does not reject Jewish interpretive traditions but reorients them. Hermeneutical authority is no longer grounded primarily in the transmission of the interpretive tradition but in the person of Jesus as the revealer of God's will. Thus, Jesus' teaching remains intelligible within a Jewish hermeneutical framework while introducing a newly configured axis of authority.

4.2 Fulfillment as Hermeneutical Refiguration

The motif of "fulfillment" in the Gospels is often reduced to a simple correspondence between prediction and event. This pattern resonates with what Erich Auerbach famously described as *figura*, in which earlier events are understood as prefigurations that find fuller meaning in later historical realities.[23]

However, within the ministry of Jesus, fulfillment functions more deeply as a process of hermeneutical refiguration. As Hays argues, the early Christian community underwent a "conversion of the imagination," learning to perceive figural correspondences between Israel's Scriptures and the Christological reality they encountered.[24]

A paradigmatic example is Luke 4:16–21, where Jesus declares Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled "today." This is not merely a citation but a hermeneutical act that situates the text within an actualized eschatological horizon. Joel B. Green rightly interprets this as an interpretive claim concerning the present reality of the Kingdom of God.[25]

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[20] Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*, 1–17.
[21] Hindy Najman, "The Prototype of the Teacher in Second Temple Judaism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 31, no. 4 (2000): 376–404.
[22] Dale C. Allison Jr., *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 41–65.
[23] Erich Auerbach, "Figura." *Archivum Romanicum* 22 (1938): 436–489.
[24] Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1–24.
[25] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 209–14.

Such rereading reflects patterns already present in Jewish interpretive culture, in which texts were understood to speak beyond their original historical contexts. Within the analytical framework of PaRDeS, this may be described as a movement in which *peshat* is not negated but drawn into a wider network of meaning through figural and eschatological interpretation. Fulfillment, therefore, should be understood not as the replacement of meaning but as its reconfiguration within a new theological horizon.

4.3 Mysterion and the Disclosure of Meaning: An Analytical Use of Sod

The teaching of Jesus frequently engages the category of mystery, particularly in his use of parables. Mark 4:11 refers to the "mystery" (*mysterion*) of the Kingdom of God, a concept that resonates with Jewish apocalyptic traditions in which hidden divine realities are disclosed in particular historical moments.

It is important to clarify that the use of the category *sod* in this analysis is analytical rather than historical. The argument does not suggest that Jesus consciously employed a formal PaRDeS framework. Rather, *sod* is used here as a heuristic descriptor for the disclosure of divine mystery within the interpretive process.[26]

In Jesus' teaching, this dimension of mystery is not detached from history or community but is bound to the presence of the Kingdom of God. The parables function as hermeneutical instruments that invite participation, calling hearers to move beyond surface understanding toward a deeper apprehension of divine intent. Accordingly, Jesus' use of parables reflects continuity with Jewish interpretive traditions while simultaneously reorienting them toward a Christological and eschatological center.

5. Apostolic Pneumatic Interpretation

5.1 Pneumatic Reorientation: The Holy Spirit as an Epistemological Agent

The hermeneutical refiguration initiated in the ministry of Jesus becomes explicit in the post-Easter and post-Pentecost apostolic community. Early Christian interpretation was not simply a continuation of Jewish scriptural practices, nor was it a rejection of them. It was a pneumatic reorientation of inherited Jewish modes of reading, in which the Holy Spirit functioned as the agent of remembrance, discernment, proclamation, and communal understanding.[27]

This role of the Spirit is already anticipated in the Gospel traditions. Luke depicts Jesus beginning his public ministry "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14), suggesting that his teaching authority and interpretive activity are inseparable from divine anointing. In the Johannine tradition, the Paraclete is promised as the one

[26] Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity*, 230–32; Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 33–59.
[27] Amos Yong, *Spirit–Word–Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 1–20.

who will "teach" the disciples and "remind" them of all that Jesus has said (John 14:26). This promise has profound hermeneutical significance: the Spirit does not merely inspire religious experience but enables the community to remember, understand, and interpret the words and works of Jesus in light of the resurrection.[28]

Craig Keener rightly emphasizes that pneumatology in early Christian hermeneutics cannot be reduced to an emotional or devotional dimension; it functions as an epistemological factor that enables the community to grasp Scripture's deeper intention.[29] Gordon Fee similarly shows that, for Paul, the Spirit is indispensable for theological understanding, since the "deep things of God" are known through the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10–13).[30] Luke Timothy Johnson further underscores that early Christian discernment involved a Spirit-attuned mode of reading in which interpretation is inseparable from communal life and theological judgment.[31] Amos Yong develops this insight within a broader theological framework, describing the Spirit as mediating among Word, community, and interpretation.[32] Kenneth Archer likewise argues that Pentecostal hermeneutics, when properly understood, is not anti-critical but integrates textual attentiveness with Spirit-led understanding.[33]

In this sense, the Holy Spirit serves as the agent who relates the depth of Israel's Scriptures to the concrete experience of the messianic community. This pneumatic reorientation does not abolish Jewish interpretive practices. Rather, it reconfigures them by placing Christ at the center and the Spirit as the mediator of understanding. The apostolic community continued to cite, reread, argue from, and proclaim Israel's Scriptures. However, it did so from within the conviction that the crucified and risen Christ had disclosed the *telos* of Scripture and that the Spirit now enabled the community to discern and proclaim that disclosure.

5.2 PaRDeS Pneumatikon as a Heuristic Model

Based on the preceding analysis, it may be proposed that early Christian interpretation preserves the layered reading structure characteristic of Jewish hermeneutical traditions while reorienting its interpretive axis in Christological and pneumatic terms. Within this framework, this study introduces the concept of *PaRDeS Pneumatikon* as a retrospective analytical model.

A further clarification concerns the status of this term. *PaRDeS Pneumatikon* is not intended as a historical claim that Jesus or the apostles consciously employed a formal fourfold hermeneutical system. Rather, it functions as a heuristic construct

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[28] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 5–18.
[29] Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 1–9.
[30] Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, 90–92.
[31] Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church,* 5–18.
[32] Yong, *Spirit–Word–Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*, 1–20.
[33] Kenneth J. Archer, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13, no. 1 (2004): 63–81.

designed to describe a recognizable pattern: the coexistence of textual fidelity and theological refiguration within early Christian interpretation.[34]

Within this model, *peshat* remains foundational as the textual anchor, while *remez*, *derash*, and *sod* are refigured in light of the person of Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Early Christian hermeneutics, therefore, does not represent a rupture from Jewish interpretive traditions, but a dynamic continuity—rooted in the Jewish hermeneutical "orchard" while reoriented within a pneumatic horizon.

5.3 Apostolic Interpretation: Continuity and Pneumatic Refiguration

The apostolic community did not develop its hermeneutics in isolation. As Francis Watson has argued, early Christian interpretation involves a theological engagement with Scripture in which the authority of the text is rearticulated within the life of the believing community.[35] Its interpretive practices show clear continuity with Jewish scriptural reasoning, including patterns of citation, intertextual argumentation, and forms of midrashic exposition. At the same time, these practices undergo a decisive refiguration within a Christological and pneumatic framework.[36]

Pentecost and Peter: Pneumatic Refiguration of Pesher

The Pentecost event (Acts 2) provides a paradigmatic example. When Peter interprets the outpouring of the Spirit through Joel 2:28–32, he employs a logic structurally comparable to *pesher*: prophetic Scripture is read as disclosing its meaning in the present moment ("this is that"). Yet this is not a simple continuation of Qumranic *pesher*. Peter's interpretation is not a sectarian decoding for a closed community, but a proclamation of the eschatological fulfillment of Joel's promise.

Whereas Qumranic interpretation often functioned within a relatively closed community, Peter's use of Scripture is public, Christocentric, and proclamatory. By combining Joel with Psalms 16 and 110, he constructs an interpretive argument that is both prophetic and persuasive within a Jewish context. As Sara Mandell observes, this represents a shift from interpretive identification to theological demonstration within communal discourse.[37]

Here, the role of the Spirit is decisive. The Pneuma functions as the agent that bridges the prophetic text and the lived reality of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation.

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[34] Francis Watson, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 15–18; Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*, 1–17.

[35] Francis Watson, "The Authority of the Voice: A Theological Reading of Paul," *New Testament Studies* 46, no. 4 (2000): 520–536.

[36] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 1–20; Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6–20.

[37] Lim, *The Pesher Habakkuk Commentary*, 32–45; Sara Mandell, "The Exegesis of Acts 2:14–36: A Functional Analysis," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 1 (1992): 18–20.

Paul: Figural Reading, Midrash, and Pneumatic Epistemology

The Pauline corpus provides a particularly rich field for observing this pattern. Paul does not abandon Jewish interpretive methods but reconfigures them in light of the Christ event.

In passages such as Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 10, Paul employs figural reading (*typoi*) that links Israel's history to Christological fulfillment. As Richard B. Hays has shown, this is not an arbitrary allegory but a disciplined rereading that affirms the coherence of Israel's narrative as it finds its climax in Christ.[38]

At the same time, Paul utilizes midrashic argumentation, as seen in Galatians 3–4. Daniel Boyarin describes this as a form of radical intertextuality in which the Torah is reread to articulate a new understanding of covenant identity.[39] These practices remain recognizably Jewish in form while being reoriented in theological content.

Central to Paul's hermeneutics is the concept of *mysterion*. As Markus Bockmuehl has demonstrated, this notion is rooted in Jewish apocalyptic categories of *raz* or *sod*—a divine plan once hidden and now revealed.[40] However, in Paul, this disclosure is not esoteric but proclamatory: the mystery is revealed as Christ among the nations.

This disclosure depends on the work of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:10–13, Paul affirms that the Spirit reveals "the depths of God." Gordon Fee emphasizes that, for Paul, theological understanding is inseparable from the Spirit's illuminating work.[41] Thus, *sod* is reconfigured as a pneumatic epistemology grounded in the revelation of Christ.

Johannine Tradition: Pneumatic Memory and Interpretation

The Johannine tradition further develops this pattern by emphasizing the role of the Spirit as the "Advocate" (*Paraklētos*), who teaches and reminds the community of Jesus' words (John 14:26). This introduces a hermeneutics of memory, in which understanding unfolds post-resurrection through the Spirit's guidance.

The Johannine Prologue reconfigures scriptural motifs from Genesis and Wisdom traditions within the framework of the incarnation. As Larry Hurtado observes, this process of pneumatic recollection plays a crucial role in shaping early Christian identity and theological reflection.[42]

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[38] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the* Letters of Paul (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 14–17.

[39] Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 33–56.

[40] Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity,* 230–32.

[41] Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul,* 90–92; Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 1–9.

[42] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary, Vol. 2* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 2:963–70; Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 370–80.

In this context, the Spirit is not merely a source of inspiration but the agent who sustains, interprets, and actualizes the community's engagement with Scripture.

5.4 Synthesis: Continuity, Transformation, and Pneumatic Epistemology

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that apostolic hermeneutics remains structurally continuous with Jewish interpretive traditions while undergoing a decisive transformation.

The layered structure, later summarized in PaRDeS—attention to textual meaning, figural reading, interpretive reasoning, and orientation toward divine mystery—remains recognizable. However, its interpretive center shifts. Authority is no longer grounded primarily in tradition or institutional transmission, but in the revelation of Christ and the witness of the Spirit.

In this sense, *PaRDeS Pneumatikon* provides a historically responsible analytical category for describing early Christian interpretation: a mode of reading that is textually grounded, theologically refigured, and pneumatically mediated.

6. Implications for Jewish–Christian Hermeneutical Dialogue

This reconstruction carries implications not only for Pentecostal theology and academic biblical studies, but also for Jewish–Christian hermeneutical dialogue. If early Christian interpretation emerged from within Jewish scriptural practices rather than outside them, then Christian pneumatic reading should not be framed as a rejection of Jewish interpretation. As Paula Fredriksen has emphasized, the relationship between Jewish and early Christian communities cannot be reduced to a simple "parting of the ways" but reflects a more complex, overlapping historical development.[43] It is better understood as a Christological and pneumatic refiguration of inherited Jewish modes of reading.

6.1 Historical Plausibility of Pneumatic Hermeneutics

The analysis suggests that the Pentecostal instinct to read Scripture "in the Spirit" possesses historical precedents in apostolic practice, provided that such reading remains anchored in textual discipline, communal discernment, and respect for Israel's Scriptures. Pneumatic interpretation, in this sense, is not an excuse for arbitrary spiritualization. It is a disciplined mode of reading in which the Spirit enables the community to discern the text's theological depth without severing that depth from its scriptural and historical grounding.[44]

This point is important for Pentecostal hermeneutics. It allows Spirit-led interpretation to be located within the broader history of Jewish and early Christian

[43] Paula Fredriksen, "What 'Parting of the Ways'? Jews, Gentiles, and the Ancient Mediterranean City." *Harvard Theological Review* 99, no. 1 (2006): 35–63.

[44] Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics,* 1–9; Archer, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect," 63–81; Yong, *Spirit–Word–Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*, 1–20.

scriptural engagement rather than treated as a purely modern experiential phenomenon. At the same time, it guards against supersessionist tendencies by recognizing that the Christian rereading of Scripture depends upon the continuing significance of Jewish scriptural traditions.

6.2 Bridging Historical and Theological Meaning

This study also challenges the modern dichotomy between "historical meaning" and "theological meaning." The two need not be opposed. Historical reading attends to the textual and Jewish contexts in which Scripture was formed and interpreted, while theological reading asks how Scripture continues to speak within communities of faith. Kevin Vanhoozer's concept of theodramatic interpretation offers a helpful analog: Scripture invites readers not merely to observe a past drama but to participate responsibly in its ongoing performance.[45]

Within this framework, *PaRDeS Pneumatikon* proposes a mediating path. It honors the textual "body" of Israel's Scriptures while recognizing the Christian claim that Scripture is reread in the Spirit through Christ. Such a model does not erase Jewish readings, nor does it collapse Christian interpretation into Jewish interpretation. Rather, it clarifies both continuity and difference, providing a more responsible basis for Jewish–Christian conversation.

6.3 A Dialogical Contribution

For Christian–Jewish relations, the value of this model lies in its refusal of two extremes. On the one hand, it resists a supersessionist reading in which Christian interpretation replaces Jewish interpretation. On the other hand, it resists a flattening approach that treats Christian and Jewish readings as identical. *PaRDeS Pneumatikon* instead names a dialogical space: early Christian interpretation is deeply indebted to Jewish hermeneutical traditions, yet it reorients those traditions around Christ and the Spirit. From a Christian perspective, this refiguration is centered on Christ and mediated by the Spirit; however, this claim does not seek to override Jewish interpretive traditions but to articulate how early Christian communities understood their own scriptural inheritance.

In this way, the model contributes to contemporary hermeneutical discourse by showing that Spirit-led interpretation can be historically grounded, textually disciplined, and dialogically responsible. It offers a way for Pentecostal theology to enter Jewish–Christian studies not as an outsider, but as a constructive participant in the wider conversation about Scripture, tradition, and the life of interpretive communities.

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[45] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 37–42.

Conclusion

This study has argued that early Christian interpretation did not arise as a hermeneutical rupture from Jewish tradition, but as a historically situated reconfiguration of inherited Jewish interpretive practices within a Christological and pneumatic horizon. By tracing the layered logic of scriptural reading within Jewish interpretive plurality and examining its transformation in the ministry of Jesus and the apostolic community, the article has proposed *PaRDeS Pneumatikon* as a retrospective analytical model for mapping continuity and transformation.

The analysis has clarified that PaRDeS is not treated here as a formal first-century system. Rather, it is used heuristically to identify proto-PaRDeS tendencies already visible in earlier Jewish practices: attention to textual sense, intertextual allusion, communal exposition, and openness to divine mystery. This distinction is essential for avoiding anachronism while still recognizing that the layered logic later codified as PaRDeS had antecedents in the broader Jewish scriptural world.

Jesus and the earliest Christian communities operated within this shared hermeneutical world. Their readings of Scripture did not abolish the *peshat* of Israel's Scriptures but drew it into a wider network of meaning shaped by fulfillment, *mysterion*, figural reasoning, and eschatological disclosure. The distinctive feature of early Christian interpretation lies in its reorientation of inherited Jewish interpretive practices around the revelatory significance of the Christ event.

Central to this reorientation was the epistemological role of the Holy Spirit. The apostolic witness presents the Pneuma not merely as a source of inspiration or religious experience, but as the agent who enables remembrance, discernment, proclamation, and communal understanding. Early Christian interpretation may therefore be described as pneumatic, not in opposition to textual discipline, but as a mode of knowing that integrates Scripture, history, and communal experience.

For contemporary hermeneutical discourse, *PaRDeS Pneumatikon* offers a constructive but limited proposal. It does not impose a new method upon Scripture, nor does it collapse Jewish and Christian interpretation into one another. Instead, it names a dialogical space in which Christian interpretation may acknowledge its deep indebtedness to Jewish scriptural practices while also clarifying the Christological and pneumatic convictions that distinguish early Christian reading.

In this sense, the model may contribute to Jewish–Christian relations by resisting both supersessionist rupture and undifferentiated continuity. It invites Christian interpreters, including Pentecostal theologians, to understand Spirit-led reading as historically grounded, textually disciplined, and dialogically responsible. Such a framework can enrich ongoing conversations among Jewish–Christian studies, biblical hermeneutics, and pneumatology.