

PENTECOSTAL SACRAMENTALITY: EXPERIENCING CHRIST'S PRESENCE IN  
PENTECOSTAL PRAXIS AND THE PERFORMANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

by

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## ABSTRACT

“Pentecostal Sacramentality: Experiencing Christ’s Presence in Pentecostal Praxis and the Performance of the Lord’s Supper”

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This dissertation investigates the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord’s Supper. The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada’s “Statements” identify the Lord’s Supper as an ordinance, but I contend that the Lord’s Supper is more than an ordinance. I argue that the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada should define the Lord’s Supper in sacramental terms for at least two reasons: first, it reflects a return to nascent Canadian Pentecostalism, and second, it better reflects essential Pentecostal praxis. The term sacrament has been lost from traditional Pentecostal theology until recently, but sacramentality better represents a Pentecostal sense of Christ’s presence at the Lord’s Supper.

There are six components to this practice-led, practical theology study: First, the reflexive examination of my experience of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper performance. Second, a reception history of the Lord’s Supper praxis that uncovers the founders’ belief that the Lord’s Supper was an exceptional occasion to encounter Jesus—a supernatural occasion *par excellence* worthy of weekly adherence. Third, a phenomenological analysis of the contemporary Canadian Pentecostal praxis. My textural description of the phenomenon is that the clergy participants experience the Lord’s Supper as a *momentary, sacred, and mysterious meeting* with Christ. At the same time, laypersons understand it as a *serious, lingering* that *connects* Pentecostals to Christ *supernaturally*.

Fourth, I bring my reception history and phenomenological analysis into a mutually enriching dialogue. Fifth, I examine the liturgical text most often used by contemporary Pentecostals, attending to three realms of interpretation for the “body of Christ,” the bread and wine, the partaker’s body, and the church body. Sixth, I suggest how the theological implications of steps one to five can better inform Pentecostal praxis.

The Lord’s Supper performance would better reflect, contribute to, and perpetuate essential Pentecostal spirituality if, when curating and performing the rite, the presiding minister integrated within the liturgy a well-crafted unambiguous eucharistic *epiclesis* in connection with reading the words of institution, such that its performance occurs in a manner that reflects the familiar Pentecostal practice-orientation of abiding and waiting. Adding the eucharistic *epiclesis* shaped by this Pentecostal ethos would be a recognizable way to meaningfully orient participants toward a rich pneumatological experience of the sacrament, an experiential encounter with Christ mediated by the Holy Spirit.

## DEDICATION

To my family “team Long,” who gave me loving encouragement to accomplish this monumental task, and to the places of ministry that invested in my theological formation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Lord's Supper is a communal event. I am fortunate to have celebrated the rite in various settings shaped by the gathered community. Every unique expression of the body of Christ had a part in my spiritual formation. Three of which I had the privilege of curating, preparing and performing the Lord's Supper regularly. I am especially indebted to the residents, families, and colleagues of the long-term care facility in Northern Ontario, with whom I struggled and overcame the challenges of a global pandemic while writing this dissertation. You taught me much about discerning the body of Christ.

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## INTRODUCTION: DEFINITIONS AND METHODS

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen has observed that Pentecostals have preferred the Spirit over the sacraments, contributing to “an unfortunate history of pneumatological anemia” regarding “the Eucharist, the primary sacrament.”<sup>1</sup> He goes on to say that, until recently, the role of the Spirit in the mediation of Christ’s presence in the Supper has not received “due attention, although it has always been believed that the Spirit has something to do with the mediation of Christ’s presence in the table fellowship.”<sup>2</sup> Later, Kärkkäinen also noted that some emerging Pentecostal voices were saying, in effect, “that nothing in Pentecostal spirituality or theology necessarily makes talk about sacraments problematic.”<sup>3</sup> The Pentecostal sacramental conversation is growing.<sup>4</sup> My research aims to address the “pneumatological anemia” Pentecostals suffer regarding the “primary sacrament” within the discipline of practical theology and from the perspective of Pentecostal praxis and to contribute to the growing sacramental conversation.

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<sup>1</sup> Kärkkäinen, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology*, 136.

<sup>2</sup> Kärkkäinen, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology*, 137.

<sup>3</sup> Kärkkäinen, “The Pentecostal View,” 132.

<sup>4</sup> Other Pentecostal works include a discussion on the Lord’s Supper as a means of divine-human interaction, such as Biddy, “Re-envisioning the Pentecostal Understanding of the Eucharist,” 228–51. On the Lord’s Supper in Pentecostal practice aligning with an inherent liturgical ethic, see Attanasi, “Toward a Pentecostal Liturgical Ethic,” 1–8. For an exploration of the correlation of the Full Gospel, refer to Thomas, “Pentecostal Theology,” 17–19. For further elucidation of Thomas’s argument, consult Archer, “Nourishment for Our Journey,” 94–95. For an ecclesiological discussion of the Lord’s Supper, see Vondey, *People of Bread*, 141–94; *Beyond Pentecostalism*, 109–40; “Pentecostal Ecclesiology and Eucharistic Hospitality,” 41–55; Vondey and Green, “Between This and That,” 243–64.

## Core Practice

The core practice of this dissertation project is the ritual performance of the Lord's Supper in my context. I explore ways that the praxis of the Lord's Supper uniquely reflects, contributes to, and perpetuates essential Pentecostal spirituality. My research focuses on how the performance of and participation in the rite in Canadian Pentecostal churches embodies God's gracious presence *in* and *for* the world. Presently, rather than a sacrament, the PAOC "Statement of Essential Truths" neither identifies the Lord's Supper as an ordinance or sacrament and the standard PAOC Local Church Constitution and By-Laws categorizes the Lord's Supper as an Ordinance.<sup>5</sup> Although the Lord's Supper is an ordinance, I contend it is more than an ordinance. I argue that the PAOC should define the Lord's Supper in sacramental terms for at least two reasons: first, doing so reflects a return to nascent Canadian Pentecostal theology regarding the rite itself, and second, sacramental language better reflects essential Pentecostal praxis. In other words, *sacramentality* better describes how Pentecostals understand their experience of Christ's presence in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, even though up until recently, the term sacrament has been lost to the lexicon of traditional Pentecostal theology.

## What Is Sacramentality? What Are Sacraments?

### Sacramentality

Any attempt at redefining Pentecostal praxis in sacramental terms requires an explanation of how a Pentecostal worldview accommodates such a theological shift. Sacramentality is an important theological concept for this task. Lizette Larson-Miller writes,

The elusive nature of the term "sacramentality" is its strength, in that it can lure Christians beyond the narrowness of ecclesial sacramental terminology

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<sup>5</sup> "Constitutions," [n.d.].

to a broad context in which the other terms can find a home, both contextualized and relational and capable of development. The advantage of this invitation to imaginative theology is that it can then be turned back to ecclesial concerns with new insights.<sup>6</sup>

Because the term sacrament has been absent from the contemporary Pentecostal lexicon, “Pentecostal sacramentality” provides an instinctive theological context for the sacramental language employed in this dissertation to describe Pentecostal praxis.<sup>7</sup> How is it instinctive? James K. A. Smith has noted that “Pentecostal spirituality is not escapist, disembodied mysticism, nor is it merely pragmatic materialism,” instead Pentecostals envision “materiality as space for work of the Spirit” and that “Pentecostal practice is a material supernaturalism or supernatural materialism.”<sup>8</sup> He goes on to write, “A philosophy of religion that would do justice to Pentecostal experience will have to recover a sense of religion as a form of life and embodied experience.”<sup>9</sup> As such, “a Pentecostal worldview is not a set of doctrines or dogmas. Instead, latent, implicit theological and philosophical intuitions are embedded within, and enacted by pentecostal rituals and practices.”<sup>10</sup> Pentecostals often testify about their ecclesiastical experiences, pointing to discernible signs as proof of God’s presence. This project engages in “sacramental theological re-imagining.” Larson-Miller might call the testimonies I proffer in this study (mine, those of

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<sup>6</sup> Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Scampini (“The Sacraments in Ecumenical Dialogue”) makes too general of an assumption that, like the Mennonites and Baptists, *all* Pentecostals find their “sacramental” roots in the Anabaptist movement. Consider four examples: Frank Macchia’s (*Tongues of Fire*, 601) conviction that “transignification” best describes a faithful Pentecostal way of explaining Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper; Daniel Tomberlin’s (*Pentecostal Sacraments*, 203–4) distinction between a Pentecostal notion of faith-experientialist real presence and Calvin and Wesley’s classical Pneumatic approach; Chris Green’s (*Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 282) assertion in the eucharistic event, “Christ is really, personally, and *bodily* present in Communion because the Father wills it and the Spirit makes it so for the sanctification of the church on mission in the world;” and Jonathan Black’s (*Apostolic Theology*, 608–9) discourse that “In the Supper, heaven meets earth as Christ’s body and blood are joined in the sacrament with the bread and wine on the Lord’s Table. Although we eat and drink the body and blood of Christ with our mouths, we do so in a supernatural way in the bread and wine.”

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 99.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 112.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, xix.

the PAOC founders, and the research participants) about the body sense of Christ's presence in the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper spiritual discernment "knowing God's presence and activity in our very midst, and so experiencing his grace."<sup>11</sup>

James W. Farwell and Martha Moore-Keish explain, "sacramentality is a more general term than sacrament, and it refers to the character of the created world as it witnesses to and mediates God's presence."<sup>12</sup> Situating Pentecostal praxis within sacramentality is a way to decipher the way Pentecostals describe their encounters with God in Pentecostal praxis. Defined succinctly,

Sacramentality is . . . a worldview which sees the unity of time and space in the continuing presence of God, in God's desire to meet us again and again, and in how the body of Christ, Christ the head and all the baptized, encounters the living God in the union of all time and space in the sacraments. Sacramentality and sacraments are part of a symbolic world where what is seen points to and participates in what is unseen, what was, and is, and is to come.<sup>13</sup>

This kind of "sacramental theological reflection" about what Pentecostals testify about what they spiritually discern in practice is important research since it tests what contemporary Pentecostal theologians like Smith have observed about Pentecostal spirituality generally.

### Sacrament

Like James Eustice Purdie, one of the founders of Canadian Pentecostalism, by employing the term "sacrament," I infer the fundamental definition proposed by Augustine of Hippo:

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<sup>11</sup> Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality*, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Purdie, "Canadian Pentecostal Bible College," 6–7. Cf. Moore-Keish and Farwell, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Larson-Miller, "Sacramentality as Contemporary Theological Context," 46.

“a visible sign of an invisible grace” or “a sign of a sacred thing.”<sup>14</sup> Farwell and Moore-Keish expound,

In most cases, Christians interpret sacraments in terms of two directions at once: from God to us, and from us to God. We take certain material elements (such as bread, wine, water, oil), and surround them with stories and ritual actions so that they draw us into relationship with the risen Christ, by the power of the Spirit. And at the same time, in and through these signs, God (in Christ, by the Spirit) draws near to us.<sup>15</sup>

In Chapter 2, “Reception History from a Canadian Perspective,” I demonstrate that the early Canadian Pentecostals, rather than avoiding the term sacrament to describe the Lord’s Supper, used it to differentiate the Lord’s supper and water baptism from the “other” biblical ordinances. Their point reflects Moore-Keish and Farwell’s explanation that “sacraments are signs and symbolic actions that Christians perform in order to point to and participate in God’s triune life, for the sake of the world.”<sup>16</sup>

### *Epiclesis*

In Chapter 6, “Prayerfully Making Pentecostal Sense of the Lord’s Supper,” I propose a “Pentecostal” way of understanding and performing the *epiclesis* during the Lord’s Supper that coheres with the Pentecostal ethos that has as its practice orientation, the priorities of “abiding and waiting,”<sup>17</sup> and that is informed by the three realms of Christ’s sacramental body that I outline in Chapter 5. The liturgical act of invoking the Holy Spirit during the eucharistic rite has a long, rich, and complicated history.<sup>18</sup> Narrowly speaking, the *epiclesis*

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<sup>14</sup> Augustine, Letters 138:1. Quoted in Gordon Lathrop, “The Bible and the Christian Sacraments,” p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> Moore-Keish and Farwell, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Moore-Keish and Farwell, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 1. Cf. Larson-Miller (“Sacramentality as Contemporary Theological Context,” 46) who notes, “St. Leo the Great (Bishop of Rome 440–461) ... write[s] that ‘what is visible in our redeemer has now passed into the Mysteries,’ ‘mysteries’ meaning the sacramental actions of the church.”

<sup>17</sup> Castelo, *Revisioning*, 130.

<sup>18</sup> For an ecumenical exploration of the role of epiclesis in eucharistic liturgies, see, Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality*, 85–99.

is used principally as “a petition for the consecration of the bread and cup.”<sup>19</sup> The prayer petitions the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon the elements to transform them into the body and blood of Christ. David J. Kennedy remarks that the Eastern church’s *epiclesis*, by the middle of the fourth century, included three features: “the petition for the operation of the Spirit; the description of the effects of this operation as the change of the bread and cup into the body and blood of Christ; the statement of the ends for which this is sought, the fruits of communion.”<sup>20</sup> Some, like John McKenna, have identified three “equivalent movements” in the eucharistic *epiclesis*: “an appeal for the Holy Spirit; to transform or sanctify the bread and wine; so that they may benefit those who partake of them worthily.”<sup>21</sup> Essential to this study, Kennedy has also noted that various Christian liturgies have more than one *epiclesis* (one associated with the bread and another with the cup), it occurs both before and after the institution narrative, and that the Holy Spirit invocation has been upon the eucharistic elements and, in some cases, also on the worshipper.<sup>22</sup> That is to say, what I propose in Chapter 6 is another “renewal of praxis,” but one whose significance theologically and devotionally articulates a eucharistic spirituality that better reflects, contributes to, and perpetuates essential Pentecostal spirituality—one that envisions a Pentecostal liturgy with a renewed emphasis on the Spirit in the Lord’s Supper.

### **The Importance of My Research**

The research question at the heart of my dissertation project is as follows: How does the practice of the Lord’s Supper in the PAOC reflect, contribute to, and perpetuate essential Pentecostal spirituality in the fellowship of churches? I contend that the Eucharist, the

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<sup>19</sup> Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> McKenna, “The Epiclesis Revisited,” cited by Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality*, 4.

primary sacrament, can do all three, so long as the “pneumatological anemia” Kärkkäinen has observed is remediated. The remedy includes developing a constructive pneumatology of the Lord’s Supper that incorporates an explicit *epiclesis* reflecting Pentecostal spirituality. The significance of this study lies in redefining the Lord’s Supper in a way that coheres with how Pentecostals *experience* and understand the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of Pentecost in praxis. In other words, I consider how the “Pentecostal heartbeat,” which Keith Warrington suggests is “a personal, experiential encounter of the Spirit of God,”<sup>23</sup> nuances the Pentecostal understanding that “Christ really is present with us in the Supper, and he really does feed our hearts by his presence.”<sup>24</sup> This project attempts to regain the balance between ecclesiology, pneumatology, and eschatology.<sup>25</sup> Fundamentally, this dissertation project is a practical theological investigation of perceptions of Pentecostal sacramentality, a significant foray into sacramental theology from the Pentecostal tradition.

The study focuses on the practice of the Lord’s Supper in PAOC churches. The rationale is twofold. First, previous historiographical work on the Canadian Pentecostal tradition of the Lord’s Supper is negligible. Even though this is only one part of the study, the contribution of my research has significance for posterity. Second, not only does the research promise to rediscover an aspect of the heart of Canadian Pentecostalism, but this study also contributes to understanding the phenomenon of Christ’s presence in the contemporary Pentecostal experience of the Lord’s Supper. This project is a qualitative study. It examines the performance of the Lord’s Supper of thirty-five PAOC churches. The research design facilitates an exploration of religious phenomena in a “serious intellectual and public manner.”<sup>26</sup> It endeavours to develop an “experiential description” of the felt

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<sup>23</sup> Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Chester and Ferguson, *Truth*, chapter 3, para. 25, location 1247.

<sup>25</sup> Knight, *Anticipating Heaven*, 126.

<sup>26</sup> Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy*, 4.



sense of Christ's presence that Pentecostals experience in the Lord's Supper in contemporary PAOC churches.<sup>27</sup> The theological concept of sacramentality as it relates to the experiential mode of Pentecostal participants frames the project. Exploring the idea of Pentecostal praxis within the theological framework of sacramentality contributes to the "renewed and changed interest in sacramental theology."<sup>28</sup>

### Limitations Proposed for the Study

Most Christians understand the Lord's Supper as an "invitation to experience Christ's presence."<sup>29</sup> However, the way Christ is present in the Lord's Supper and the nature of such an experience has been controversial throughout church history. Due to this project's scope, the list of historical conversation partners is admittedly selective but thought-provoking for many reasons, including how it demonstrates the continuity and discontinuity of Pentecostal praxis with historical theological movements. At the same time, it sets aside other important issues well covered by other historians and theologians. This dissertation will not attempt to explain the historical development of eucharistic theology fully.<sup>30</sup> This project is particular—not exclusively for Pentecostal reflection—but it considers the current ecclesial needs of Canadian Pentecostals, with an eye to charismatics and other Christians elsewhere.

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<sup>27</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology*, 54.

<sup>28</sup> Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality*, "Introduction," para. 4, location 93.

<sup>29</sup> Chester, *Truth*, chapter 3, para. 3, location 1136.

<sup>30</sup> Bradshaw and Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies*.

## Theoretical Perspective

Steven J. Land, building on the work of Walter J. Hollenweger,<sup>31</sup> argues that the first ten years of Pentecostalism are the “heart” and not the “infancy” of the movement.<sup>32</sup> This historiographical perspective, known as the “Cleveland School of Pentecostal Studies,”<sup>33</sup>

insist[s] that any contemporary attempt at constructing an authentically Pentecostal theology must reckon with the spiritual practice and theological reflection of the earliest Pentecostals, who, by virtue of their discerning openness to the work of the Spirit, provide the norm by which Pentecostalism’s ensuing developments must be judged.<sup>34</sup>

Christopher Green, aligned with the so-called Cleveland School, remarks, “[b]y attending carefully to primitive Pentecostalism, Pentecostals can (re)discover categories of thought and modes of practice suitable to their spirituality, their being-in-the-world.”<sup>35</sup> Green’s seminal work on the American Pentecostal practice of the Lord’s Supper goes a long way in setting the table for this project.<sup>36</sup> In pursuing the pneumatological vitality of the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord’s Supper, this project pays due attention to the sacramental thought and practice of early Canadian Pentecostals.<sup>37</sup> Doing so both remedies the

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<sup>31</sup> Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, 551.

<sup>32</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 37.

<sup>33</sup> Yong, *The Hermeneutical Spirit*, 28. Yong differs from the Cleveland School, preferring a broader perspective that includes reception histories along with other contemporary Pentecostal hermeneutical possibilities. See Yong, “Salvation, Society, and the Spirit,” 22–34. Chan (*Pentecostal Theology*, 7) remarks on Land’s work, “One does see something of the wholesomeness and beauty in Land’s portrayal of Pentecostal spirituality, even if some of it seems to represent an ‘ideal-type’ construction rather than historical description.”

<sup>34</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 74–75.

<sup>35</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 76.

<sup>36</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 181.

<sup>37</sup> While this project focuses on early Canadian Pentecostalism and does so primarily in contrast to early American and British Pentecostalism, my North-American “Canadian” focus does not imply that Pentecostalism’s development, nor its nascent sacramentalism, is the same in every global Pentecostal movement. Take, for example, Tharwat Maher Nagib Adly Nagib’s study, *Egyptian Pentecostalism*, Brill, 2023. Even though the historiography I present is derived from the available widely published Canadian journals, I also acknowledge Alan Anderson’s (“The Writing of Pentecostal History,” 166) criticism that “Historians of Pentecostalism have often reflected a bias interpreting history from a predominantly white American perspective neglecting (if not completely ignoring) the vital and often more significant work of Asian, African, African American and Latino/ a Pentecostal pioneers.” I also acknowledge the complexities Aaron Ross (“Contention and Contextualization,” 135–82) has identified in his work regarding the differences between PAOC domestic and international missions and that “By and large, though, the PAOC’s domestic missions departments (particularly within the NLM) routinely installed Euro-Canadian missionaries in leadership roles that rightly should have been filled by Indigenous ministers” (167).

underappreciation and misunderstanding that persists about Canadian Pentecostal history, theology, and sacramentality, and it contributes to the historiographical work championed by the Cleveland school that is embraced by the PAOC Commission.<sup>38</sup> Alicia R. Jackson convincingly argued that “reception history helps contemporary Pentecostals to understand their biblical and theological roots and to locate their own readings in the historical and theological trajectory of Pentecostalism.”<sup>39</sup>

One needs only to look at early PAOC theological training to rediscover early Canadian Pentecostal sacramentalism. Dr. J. Eustice Purdie,<sup>40</sup> the architect of PAOC theological education, wrote an article in 1927 for the *Testimony*, the official organ of the burgeoning fellowship entitled, “[A] Statement of What We Believe and Teach in the Bible School Concerning the Essential Doctrines of the Christian Religion.”<sup>41</sup> He offers the following definition: “The term Sacrament is to be understood as meaning a symbol or sign divinely appointed. It is an outward or visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.”<sup>42</sup> Purdie states that Christ ordained only two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. He explains, “There are other ordinances found in the Scriptures but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>43</sup> Notably, the first Canadian Pentecostal Bible school curriculum, an institution devoted to training Pentecostal pastors, evangelists, and missionaries, underscored that sacrament was an appropriate theological category for essential Pentecostal doctrines and practices and that the sacraments are distinguishable from other biblical ordinances because they have a unique *nature*. Since the PAOC

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<sup>38</sup> Green does highlight an article by Gerald Emery entitled “Holy Cene (Lord’s Supper): Practice and Significance in the Pentecostal Tradition.”

<sup>39</sup> Jackson, “Reception History,” 48.

<sup>40</sup> For an extensive examination of Purdie’s influence on Canadian Pentecostalism, see James Craig’s thesis, “‘Out and Out for the Lord;’ James Eustace Purdie, An Early Anglican Pentecostal.”

<sup>41</sup> Purdie, “Canadian Pentecostal Bible College,” 5.

<sup>42</sup> Purdie, “Canadian Pentecostal Bible College,” 6–7.

<sup>43</sup> Purdie, “Canadian Pentecostal Bible College,” 6.

Commission has embraced the Cleveland School's historiographical perspective regarding other essential truths, it must do so regarding Purdie's sacramental pedagogy to demonstrate theological consistency.

Today's PAOC Commission has used sacramental language in its refreshed "Statement" but not to describe the mode of Christ's presence in the sacraments. Instead, similar to Purdie, but regarding the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, they adopt "sacramental" language to explain the unique *nature* of tongues:

Speaking in tongues (unlearned languages) *signifies* that believers have been baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). It is also a *sign* indicating the *nature* of Spirit baptism as empowering communication, both to others as we witness about the Kingdom (Rom 15:1–19) and to God as we pray in the Spirit (1 Cor 14:14–15; Rom 8:26–27).<sup>44</sup>

Whatever else might be implied, the use of *signifies*, *sign*, and *nature* signals that the Commission, like Purdie (and others), also sees value in sacramental language. My project fits in line with this theological shift. It will help nuance an understanding of Pentecostal sacramentality within practical theology, which "closely connect[s] pastoral situations and church theology."<sup>45</sup>

### **Theological Framework**

My research approaches this theological task, as Hans W. Frei describes, as an aspect of Christianity or, more specifically, Pentecostalism, "and is therefore partly or wholly defined by its relation to the cultural or semiotic system that constitutes" Canadian Pentecostalism.<sup>46</sup> To clarify, I explain theology through Pentecostalism rather than vice versa.<sup>47</sup> This work primarily focuses on Canadian Pentecostalism, but not exclusively

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<sup>44</sup> "Constitutions," Emphasis added.

<sup>45</sup> Miller-McLemore, "The Contributions of Practical Theology," 3.

<sup>46</sup> Frei, *Types*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Frei, *Types*, 78–94. This project approximates Frei's type four theology.

because of the complexly porous relationship that Canadian Pentecostal theology has with the broader Pentecostal movement. My theological framework, Frei would elucidate, attends first to “the first-order statements or proclamations made in the course of Christian practice and belief” and second, to the Pentecostal “community’s second-order appraisal of its own language and actions under norms internal to the community itself.”<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, this project is descriptive and critical: articulating the “internal logic” of first-order Pentecostal statements and weighing articulations of “Pentecostal logic” for its success or failure in adhering to its acknowledged governing norms. This practical theological endeavour is not a philosophical discipline per se subordinating or subsuming “communal religious self-description” under a philosophical “science of knowledge.” Instead, I set out to recognize “a specific symbol system interpretively rather than reductively” and then correlate the “understandings” with other dialogue partners.<sup>49</sup>

As to normed Pentecostal self-description and methods founded on general theory, this project has six building blocks: (1) this project is practice-led research, thus I begin with my personal experience; (2) I examine the testimony of Canadian founders through the lens of reception history, a PAOC priority; (3) I analyze a contemporary Canadian experientialist conversation, qualitative research describing the experience of Christ’s presence in the performance of the Lord’s Supper through a phenomenological lens; (4) having brought together my reception history and my analysis of the phenomenological interviews in a mutually enriching dialogue, I pay particular attention to sensory language; (5) I examine the liturgical text most often used by contemporary Pentecostals; and (6) suggest how the theological implications of steps 1–5 can better inform Pentecostal praxis. The building blocks are heterogeneous and unequal. Pentecostal self-description (mine,

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<sup>48</sup> Frei, *Types*, 2.

<sup>49</sup> Frei, *Types*, 2.

the founders’, and the interview participants’) governs the applicability of the general meaning criteria in this practical theological endeavour.

### Overview of Research

My project is a *phenomenology of practice*: an investigation of the body sense of Christ’s presence in the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord’s Supper, even though I recognize that this is not a classical approach. My practice-led research starts in my practice’s tangible and gritty world. It looks back at the witness of early Canadian Pentecostals to uncover nascent Pentecostal sacramentality. It extends to the practice of contemporary Canadian Pentecostal churches. It also considers St. Paul’s theology of the Lord’s Supper. I propose the following working definition for *Pentecostal sacramentality*:

Pentecostal sacramentality is the eschatological mystery of God’s promised gracious presence in the praxis of God’s people *in* and *for* the world. Discerning and testifying about this supernatural encounter *portends* the presentness of the kingdom of God *to* the world.

This way of *speaking* about Pentecostal sacramentality is a theological way of explaining *what* Pentecostals say about their experience of God’s presence in praxis. Traditionally, the sacraments “involve communal action and participation, communal ritual activity.”<sup>50</sup>

This assertion is valid for the Lord’s Supper in Canadian Pentecostal praxis. It is noteworthy that the founders used a variety of terms to describe their Lord’s Supper performance, including “emblematic,” “memorial,” “symbol,” “sign,” “prophecy,” “commemoration,” “typifying,” and even “ordinance.” Still, they called the Lord’s Supper a sacrament.<sup>51</sup> Sacraments are “by definition, created materials and cultural products actively used in the liturgy and life of embodied humans who assemble in actual

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<sup>50</sup> Lathrop, “Liturgy, Preaching, and the Sacraments,” 654.

<sup>51</sup> Marshall in “What Is the Eucharist,” 501–2, notes that sacramental theology is “concerned to claim that the Eucharist ‘signifies’ in a distinctive way.”

communities.”<sup>52</sup> Or, as Thomas Aquinas defines, “sensible signs of invisible things whereby man is made holy.”<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, even though I present articles with language that describes the bread and wine as precisely the body and blood of Christ, that is,—a traditional sacramental definition—like Peter Leithart, I understand “sacrament” not so much as a symbolic or signifying thing; rather, the sacramentality of the Pentecostal rite lies in its praxis, “Actions done by the church at God’s command with confidence in God’s promise.”<sup>54</sup> The founders’ confidence in God’s promised and gracious presence in their Lord’s Supper praxis showcased it as an exceptional occasion for Pentecostal outsiders to experience Christ in a Pentecostal way. Like him, the founding Pentecostals point to the Holy Spirit as the mode of Christ’s presence in the sacrament without explicitly crediting John Calvin.<sup>55</sup> Like Martha Moore-Keish, I suggest that we attend to the embodied performance of the Lord’s Supper rite to discern the meaning of God’s presence in any celebration.<sup>56</sup> Like most Pentecostals, the ritual theorists would remind us, “We are not entirely in control of the ritual.”<sup>57</sup> At the Holy Spirit’s direction and power, ranges of symbolic meaning are “possible” and “being formed” even as the Lord’s Supper is performed. Moore-Keish reminds us, “If we ignore the particularities of performance, we may miss it.”<sup>58</sup> Meaning emerges through ritual performance.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Leithart, “Signs,” 632.

<sup>53</sup> Aquinas, Thomas, *ST III*, q.61, a.3, cited by Murphy, “Christ,” 617.

<sup>54</sup> Leithart, *Sacramental Theology*, Segment 2.

<sup>55</sup> Calvin, in *Institutes*, II, 1390, insists, “Christ descends to us ... by his Spirit, that he may truly quicken our souls by the substance of his flesh and of his blood.” Later he writes, “Yet a serious wrong is done to the Holy Spirit, unless we believe that it is through his incomprehensible power that we come to partake of Christ’s flesh and blood” (1405).

<sup>56</sup> Moore-Keish, *Do This*, 118.

<sup>57</sup> Moore-Keish, *Do This*, 118.

<sup>58</sup> Moore-Keish, *Do This*, 118.

<sup>59</sup> Moore-Keish, *Do This*, 118.

My working definition provides a new way of *speaking* about Pentecostal sacramentality: a linguistic congruence between *what* is said about *how* Pentecostals experience God's presence. It moves the conversation about the Pentecostal experience from mysticism to theology.<sup>60</sup> To borrow from Larson-Miller, this broad definition of Pentecostal sacramentality is the "imaginative theology" that provides a functioning interpretive grid for the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper.<sup>61</sup> In other words, this "interpretive grid" mediates the *experience* of Christ's presence.

### **Design and Methodology**

#### **An Overarching Framework: Theology as Praxis**

Pentecostal praxis occasions the transmission of Pentecostal faith by mediating an experience of Christ's presence. American sociologist Margaret Poloma describes Pentecostalism as an "anthropological protest against modernity providing a medium for encountering supernatural . . . fus[ing] the natural and supernatural, the emotional and rational, the charismatic and institutional in a decidedly postmodern way."<sup>62</sup> For Pentecostals, the "decidedly postmodern way," and the "basis for Pentecostal faith," fuses believing and experiencing. Pentecostal praxis is first-order theology.

Like David Kolb's cycle of learning ("Experience–Reflective Observation–Abstract Conceptualization–Active Experimentation"),<sup>63</sup> this project approaches the research task with the pastoral cycle's "epistemological commitment to practice as both foundation and aim of theological reflection."<sup>64</sup> In other words, my overarching methodological framework

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<sup>60</sup> Frei, *Types*, 78.

<sup>61</sup> Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality*, 9.

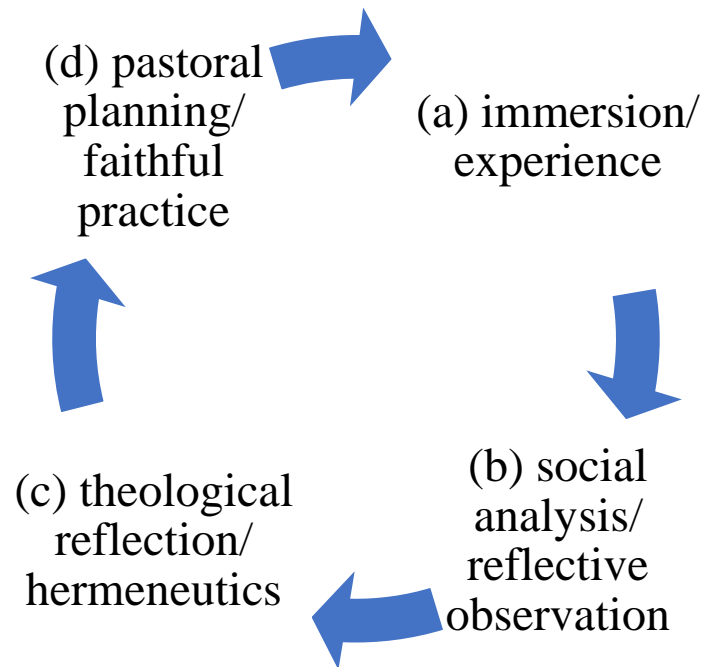
<sup>62</sup> Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, xix, as cited by Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 92.

<sup>63</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*.

<sup>64</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflections*, 203.



is a “movement from practice to theory to practice.”<sup>65</sup> The ensuing knowledge (or “practical wisdom”) is applied in the service of “Pentecostal” discipleship. Regarding the hermeneutics of “theology as praxis,” Elaine Graham explains, “Each new reality or problem prompts us to a process of reflection, critical interpretation of our situation and existing sources and resources of understanding, back to action. It necessitates hearing the word of God as it speaks to our situation, and so received tradition (doctrine, Bible, church teaching and practice) will need to be interpreted in the light of the contemporary situation.”<sup>66</sup> The pastoral cycle, rooted in Latin American liberation theology, has traditionally been depicted as having four *moments*: (a) immersion/experience; (b) social analysis; (c) theological reflection/hermeneutic mediation; and (d) pastoral planning/faithful practice.<sup>67</sup> See, Figure 1. PASTORAL CYCLE



<sup>65</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflection*, 203.

<sup>66</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflection*, 203–4.

<sup>67</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflection*, 204.

My practice and the experiences of the research participants occur as movement (a) immersion/experience. The phenomenological interviews are a way of “grasping” the research participants’ experience. Phenomenological writing is a reflexive analysis to gain a deeper critical understanding of the immediate context of the experience. Sensory anthropology and performance theory (and sacramental theology, for that matter) are “sources and resources” for (b) social analysis (or abstract conceptualization), a movement from “anecdotal to critical or analytical experience.”<sup>68</sup> As social analytic frameworks for theological reflection, these “sources and resources” afford the project a way to categorize and understand body sense and provide numinous categories and vocabulary to speak about Pentecostal sacramentality.<sup>69</sup>

The Canadian Pentecostal reception history of the Lord’s Supper is movement (c), a hermeneutical key to mediate a return to the Pentecostal tradition “renewed by a new hermeneutics of retrieval and reconstruction, generating narratives, values and visions, which are tested against the contemporary situation” of the experientialist dialogue I assembled from the research participants.<sup>70</sup> Like the pastoral cycle, my “theological enquiry” progresses “through the stages of descriptive, historical, systematic and strategic analysis.”<sup>71</sup> My project is “inductive theology,” a reflection on praxis, or, as Frei would describe it, a second-order appraisal of the community’s witnessing of their Christ experience (mine, the founders, and the research participants).<sup>72</sup> With each movement, I am concerned with the “practical reason” that embodies the different aspects at work in the

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<sup>68</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflection*, 204.

<sup>69</sup> Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality*, 12.

<sup>70</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflection*, 204.

<sup>71</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflection*, 204.

<sup>72</sup> Frei, *Types*, 2.

“practical reason” of the PAOC: “the prevailing norms, narratives, constraints, material factors, expectations and roles that shape its worldview.”<sup>73</sup>

Mark J. Cartledge explains that “praxis denotes a way-of-being-in-the-world that is part and parcel of someone’s worldview, beliefs and values.”<sup>74</sup> Pentecostals expect to encounter God in praxis, and laypersons hope pastors will facilitate this encounter.<sup>75</sup> The clergy participants are concerned with how liturgy fittingly contributes to the experience. These experiences, if curated well, balancing liturgy and Pentecostal serendipity, stimulate “sacramental imagination” and awaken the senses to Christ’s presence.<sup>76</sup> Wolfgang Vondey writes,

On the level of experience, resonating the central emphasis spirituality places on the Spirit, Pentecostal theology is both pneumatic (as the experience resulting from the encounter with the Spirit) and pneumatological (as reflection on that experience).<sup>77</sup>

At times, Pentecostals experience God’s presence with such “wonder” that it stretches the descriptive limits of language (second-order appraisal). Ronald Kydd captures this sentiment: “When we press our experiences with God into words and sentences, we may end up with something lucid and precise, but find that a part of the reality of the experience is lost in the process.”<sup>78</sup> Rather than being suspicious of feelings and experiences, Pentecostals are “aroused by the senses.”<sup>79</sup> Pentecostal truth inevitably passes through the “foundational moment of experience.”<sup>80</sup> I proceeded attentive to Kydd’s warning, knowing that the fruit of this research is (d) pastoral planning/ faithful practice–theology as praxis.

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<sup>73</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflection*, 203–4.

<sup>74</sup> Cartledge, *Practical Theology*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 219.

<sup>76</sup> Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 147.

<sup>77</sup> Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 18–19.

<sup>78</sup> Kydd, “Better Felt Than Telt,” 30.

<sup>79</sup> Le Breton, *Sensing*, 317.

<sup>80</sup> Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 19.

This project aims to describe what is common to Pentecostals as they describe their experience of Christ in the praxis of the Lord's Supper.<sup>81</sup> Unlike philosophical phenomenology, which is criticized for assuming a disembodied, abstract relationship to the material world, this project pays close attention to lived experience, drawing on—language (testimony) about God encounters peculiar to Pentecostals.<sup>82</sup> My phenomenological inquiry distills the Pentecostal felt sense of Christ's presence while being conscious of the limitations of language, which, in a sense, grasps at the “very nature of the thing.”<sup>83</sup>

The often-pronounced judgment, “today's service felt dead,” indicates a perception of failure to facilitate a Spirit-filled event. Without a “shared sense” of Christ's presence, the gathering might be Pentecostal by name, but ultimately, this felt contradiction becomes theologically untenable. Reimagining the felt sense of Christ's absence in sacramental terms can counter this harmful censure. Larson-Miller reminds us, “Without real absence, real presence is distorted and static.”<sup>84</sup> Both real presence and absence are “modes of divine revelation,” and “both are mediations of God's presence and economy of salvation.”<sup>85</sup>

Smith's notion of “material supernaturalism” evokes the sensuality of Pentecostal spirituality (bodily, in persons and community, we experience the Spirit's presence; therefore, we know Christ in truth). This workspace for the Spirit includes bodies “made of the same flesh as the world.”<sup>86</sup> Pentecostal vitality manifests in the corporeal, an *embodied-sensory phenomenon* that requires Pentecostals to “judge the body rightly” (1 Cor 11:29). Pentecostals are adept at deriving theological meaning from spiritual experiences.

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<sup>81</sup> Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 75.

<sup>82</sup> Frei, *Types*, 79.

<sup>83</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology*, 39.

<sup>84</sup> Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality*, 104.

<sup>85</sup> Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality*, 105–6.

<sup>86</sup> Le Breton, *Sensing*, chapter 1, para. 7, location 314.

If Warrington is correct, Pentecostal sacramentality is a discernible phenomenon. The performance of the Lord's Supper is a ritualized occasion to evaluate Warrington's proposition. Since this study focuses on sensory and embodied experience, anthropology of the senses provides a way to explore the relationship between sensory perception, Pentecostal culture, and the sites of embodied knowing. My research focuses on the "multisensory or polysensory nature of the lived experience."<sup>87</sup> Pentecostals are famous for idioms like: "There is a sweet sense of Christ's presence in the room." This project explores the relationship between the felt sense of Christ's presence and the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper.

Anthropology of the senses offers my research a framework to explain "the back and forth between sensing and sense-making (or symbolization), between sensation and signification, feeling and meaning."<sup>88</sup> David Le Breton would describe the extemporaneous descriptions of spiritual experience in worship contexts as a "way of thinking the world, filtered through the prism of a sensory organ and rendered communicable."<sup>89</sup> Many aspects of Le Breton's "sensology" are compatible with a Pentecostal worldview.<sup>90</sup> Regarding the embodied experience, Le Breton writes:

Individuals, through their bodies, continually interpret and respond to their environments according to inclinations interiorized through education and habit. Sensation is immediately submerged in perception, and knowledge arises between the two, reminding us that human beings are not just biological organisms but meaning-making creatures too.<sup>91</sup>

Newcomers interiorize Pentecostal sensibility by way of rituals and rites.<sup>92</sup> Pentecostals are adept at discerning Christ's presence, embodying Spirit-consciousness *in* and *for* the

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<sup>87</sup> Elliott and Culhane, *A Different Kind of Ethnography*, chapter 3, para. 7, location 1352.

<sup>88</sup> Le Breton, *Sensing*, Preface, para. 6, location 99.

<sup>89</sup> Le Breton, *Sensing*, chapter 1, para. 9, location 336.

<sup>90</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 112.

<sup>91</sup> Le Breton, *Sensing*, chapter 1, para. 9, location 336.

<sup>92</sup> Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, 132.

community. Cartledge explains, “These corporate experiences of mediation are not just mental events, which are experienced in isolation. They are also embodied and relational events.”<sup>93</sup> He goes on, “Rituals influence all aspects of who the person is, as well as the whole context, and they function to mediate the Spirit’s presence.”<sup>94</sup> What Pentecostals say about the felt sense of Christ’s presence while partaking of the Lord’s Supper teaches Pentecostal sense-ability. In other words, what we communicate about our spiritual experiences makes explicit the “inherent implicit sacramentality” of these modes of mediation.<sup>95</sup>

### Practice-Led Research

Methodologically, this research is practice-led, initiated and rooted in my religious practice. This practice-led research aims to “advance knowledge about practice” and to “advance knowledge within practice.”<sup>96</sup> The pastoral situations of my practice “are generative of theological insight.”<sup>97</sup> In other words, my practice of the Lord’s Supper as a PAOC clergyperson is not only the genesis of this research (from where my research question arises) but also part of the hermeneutical spiral of the practical theological enquiry. I curate, prepare, and perform the rite weekly, and I participate in the Lord’s Supper, which is curated, prepared, and performed by another clergyperson weekly. In a sense, throughout this study, my eucharistic experiences continued as a theological dialogue partner. Fittingly, this research will contribute valuable knowledge to

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<sup>93</sup> Cartledge, *Mediation*, 69.

<sup>94</sup> Cartledge, *Mediation*, 69.

<sup>95</sup> Cartledge, *Mediation*, 69.

<sup>96</sup> Candy and Edmonds, “Practice Based Research,” 3.

<sup>97</sup> Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection*, 14.

practitioners and participants within the PAOC community,<sup>98</sup> including new empirical data from examining the practices of thirty-five other PAOC churches.

### Theological Performance *par Excellence*

According to Elaine Graham et al., “Theology is first and foremost a ‘performative’ discipline and practical theology sets about ‘excavating’ the norms that inhabit pastoral, social, ecclesial, and communicative praxis, which takes place in primary form in the transformative practices of ‘love-in-action.’”<sup>99</sup> I intentionally describe the Lord’s Supper as a performance. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, clergy and laypersons enact the rite, and from within the enactment, theological meanings emerge.<sup>100</sup> The clergypersons preside and serve with the laypersons of the Holy Spirit’s agenda—all are “full, conscious and active participants” in this profoundly spiritual embodied and sensorially rich encounter. In other words, “the assembly is the ‘celebrant’ of the sacrament.”<sup>101</sup> The Lord’s Supper is a theological performance *par excellence*, an exceptional occasion where emergence intersects pneumatological imagination.<sup>102</sup>

Nimi Wariboko illuminates, “The pneumatological imagination calls for the transfer of all reality into the play of the Holy Spirit who manifests in the concrete, personal, and particular contexts and moments of human existence. This play transforms and assimilates the particular purposes of the current situations, the given performative trajectory of our current world into freely evolving potentialities.”<sup>103</sup> Wariboko calls this the “Pentecostal

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<sup>98</sup> Ferguson, “Practice Led Research.”

<sup>99</sup> Graham et al., *Methods*, 205. Cf. Frei, *Types*, 78.

<sup>100</sup> Moore-Keish, *Do This*, 118.

<sup>101</sup> Lathrop, “Liturgy, Preaching, and the Sacraments,” 646.

<sup>102</sup> Moore-Keish, *Do This*, 15.

<sup>103</sup> Wariboko (*The Pentecostal Principle*, 76) writes, pneumatological imagination is an “orientation to the work of the Holy Spirit and is the starting point for theology.”

principle.” In my qualitative research, I have observed what Moore-Keish and Wariboko have independently described as emergence, namely, that there is an emergent quality to the ritual performance of the Lord’s Supper in Pentecostal praxis.

As my research moved along the “iterative cyclic web of practice-led research and research-led practice,”<sup>104</sup> the performances not only served as objects of study (experiences in their own right), but they also served as “conceptualization resources” for the “creative output” of practical theology. The different performances “assist[ed] in stimulating new insights and verifying their significance.”<sup>105</sup> Each performance experiment in my ongoing praxis of the Lord’s Supper was “knowledge-generating” and “creative collaboration.”<sup>106</sup> Critical reflection directed towards consciousness-raising sheds light on the intricate relationship between the principle of emergence, pneumatological imagination, and the Spirit-consciousness commended as the body sense of Christ’s presence.

Meaning does not merely precede the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord’s supper; sense *emerges* amid the performance.<sup>107</sup> The Spirit is the “efficient first cause” of sacramentality.<sup>108</sup> Praxis, in this case, the performance of the Lord’s Supper, is the *instrumental* cause.<sup>109</sup> The Holy Spirit “harbours and undergirds the *possibility* that brings the real into *emergent* being.”<sup>110</sup> The Spirit does this by playing a “liminal, constitutional and eschatological role” in the Pentecostal praxis.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Combrink and Marley, “Practice-Based Research,” 183–84.

<sup>105</sup> Combrink and Marley, “Practice-Based Research,” 186.

<sup>106</sup> Combrink and Marley, “Practice-Based Research,” 186.

<sup>107</sup> Moore-Keish, *Do This*, 14. Moore-Keish expounds, “Ritual performances are not pure reflections of some set ‘text,’ but are fluid events in which text and context interact creatively to produce new meaning ... Only in performance does a ritual assume and project a particular meaning; this meaning cannot entirely be predicted beforehand” (114–15).

<sup>108</sup> Colwell, *Promise and Presence*, 7.

<sup>109</sup> Colwell, *Promise and Presence*, 7–8.

<sup>110</sup> Wariboko, *The Pentecostal Principle*, 74.

<sup>111</sup> Studebaker, *From Pentecost*, 68–78.



## Biblical Framework

It is not an exaggeration to state that the Scriptures are essential in substantiating PAOC practices theologically. Article 4, “Tenets of Faith” of the standard PAOC Local Church Constitution, says, “We believe most assuredly that the Holy Scriptures are God’s final revelation and constitute our all-sufficient rule for faith and practice.”<sup>112</sup> The PAOC Local Church Constitution has the “Statement of Essential Truths” as its theological guide.<sup>113</sup> Two Article 5 statements from this document are pertinent. The first concerns the Bible, which states it “is true, trustworthy, and the final and absolute authority on belief and conduct.” However, Green’s evaluation that Pentecostals read the Bible with a *Pentecostal* lens is also relevant since the PAOC’s “Statement” states that the Holy Spirit enables “biblical interpretation and application.” The “Statement” hints at how the Holy Spirit functions in this regard. The second pertinent statement says, “Central to the church is the shared experience of the transforming presence of God (Acts 2:42–43; 1 Cor 12:7; Matt 18:20; 2 Cor 3:17–18). The church responds with worship, prayer, proclamation, discipleship, and fellowship (1 Pet 2:9–10; Col 4:2–6; Acts 2:42), including the practices of water baptism and the Lord’s Supper.” This second statement suggests that for PAOC Pentecostals, the work of the Spirit is primarily understood as a shared experience.<sup>114</sup> It also indicates that the Lord’s Supper practice, like worship, prayer, proclamation, discipleship, and fellowship, is a response to the shared experience of the transforming presence of God. In other words, the Holy Spirit’s transforming presence is vital to understanding all Pentecostal church practices. I contend that the current statement,

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<sup>112</sup> “Constitutions,” [n.d.].

<sup>113</sup> “Constitutions,” [n.d.].

<sup>114</sup> Cox (*Fire from Heaven*, 100) concurs, “the Pentecostal wave has an irreducibly communal dimension.”

The Lord's Supper symbolizes Christ's body and blood, and our communion as believers. Shared together, it proclaims his death in anticipation of his return (Matt 26:26–29; 1 Cor 11:23–26),

could more clearly capture the theological principle of “the transforming presence of God” while leaving room for differing views regarding the mode of Christ's presence. To summarize, both the Bible and the communal experience of God's presence are essential to a Canadian Pentecostal hermeneutic.

Regarding the place of the Bible in practical theology specifically, Pete Ward suggests two predominant streams, namely liberal and conservative.<sup>115</sup> Ward understands the divide as a matter of priority: liberals have an agenda of “adapting faith to the experience of contemporary life,” and conservatives of moulding the Christian life to reflect the “interpretation of Scripture and the formulation of doctrine.”<sup>116</sup> This binary description lacks nuance and is an insufficient generalization for the task of this project.<sup>117</sup> Per the PAOC “Statement” Article 5, both are a priority for Pentecostals since we come to understand the Bible through a communal experiential lens. The Pentecostal practical-theological way does not fit precisely with Ward's liberal-fundamentalist generalization. Instead, as Archer, Noel, Green, and others suggest, Pentecostals employ a Spirit, Word, and Community hermeneutic.<sup>118</sup> I attend to the Pentecostal self-description: The founders' testimony, which is essential because of their “discerning openness to the work of the Spirit.”<sup>119</sup> I also listen to the experientialist religious discourse of contemporary

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<sup>115</sup> Ward, “The Gospel and Practical Theology” in *Introducing Practical Theology*, 39–53. Cf. Ballard, “The Use of Scripture,” Cartledge, “Scripture, Experience, and the Holy Spirit in Practical Theology,” 32–59.

<sup>116</sup> Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*, 41.

<sup>117</sup> Frei, *Types*, 1. He contends that, regardless of priority, Christian self-description or disciplined Christian theology can “both show up as liberal or conservative” (27).

<sup>118</sup> See also, Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics*; Noel, *Pentecostal and Postmodern Hermeneutics*; Purdy, *A Distinct Twenty-First Century Pentecostal Hermeneutic*; Philemon, *Pneumatic Hermeneutics*; Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*; Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation*; *Pentecostal Theology*, 183; Yong, *The Hermeneutical Spirit*.

<sup>119</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 74–75.

Pentecostals to understand how current PAOC communities describe their experience of the phenomenon of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper.<sup>120</sup> I then examine the biblical text most often used by the research participants (1 Cor 11) as their liturgical script for the Lord's Supper performance. I then endeavour to evaluate (make *sense* of) the uncovered Pentecostal assertions. As Frei has described, my theological task is not preoccupied with the truth of what I uncover, but rather their meaning: "a re-description in technical concepts rather than their explanation. It is conceptual analysis."<sup>121</sup>

### My Phenomenological Method

According to Creswell and Poth, "a phenomenology study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.

Phenomenologists focus on describing what all the participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon."<sup>122</sup> My research is interested in the body sense (felt sense) of Christ's presence in the performance of the Lord's Supper. I collect data from the study participants through in-depth interviews. These interviews focus on the participants' experience of the phenomenon.

My study is interested in the perspective of both clergy and laity. The two main phenomenological questions I ask the clergy participants are: What is the nature, meaning, and significance of Christ's presence as you curate and lead the *performance* of the Lord's Supper?<sup>123</sup> How does the body sense of Christ's presence and absence present itself as a different sacramental event in the performance of the Lord's Supper?<sup>124</sup> The two main

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<sup>120</sup> Cartledge, *Mediation*, 26.

<sup>121</sup> Frei, *Types*, 81.

<sup>122</sup> Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 75.

<sup>123</sup> See Marion, *Givenness and Revelation*; and Bouyer, *Le Rite and L'homme*.

<sup>124</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology*, 39.

questions I ask the laity are: What sense of Christ's presence and absence did you experience participating in the performance of the Lord's Supper? What situations have typically influenced your experiences of the phenomenon? The first question aims to discern the nature, meaning, and significance of the shared *experience*. The second question seeks to determine how the performance of the Lord's Supper is a distinguishable sacramental event.

The first round of phenomenological inquiry examines the perspective of the clergy participants. I led the clergy participants in the phenomenological interviews. The second round of phenomenological inquiry looks at the view of the lay participants. I led the lay participants in the phenomenological interviews. The accumulated data from the in-depth interviews generated a phenomenological snapshot of the body sense of Christ's presence and absence in the Lord's Supper performances. The guided dialogue aimed to discern "the living meaning of the experience."<sup>125</sup> The phenomenological *data analysis* looked for "significant statements . . .' that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon."<sup>126</sup> My research looks for "sensory language" and "emergence statements" regardless of whether the participants describe their experience of real presence or absence. The *data analysis* is the source for the *textural description* of the phenomenon. The phenomenological *report* distills the various testimonials about the phenomenon.<sup>127</sup>

With the collected data from the two research questions (and follow-up discussions), I "highlight significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon."<sup>128</sup> With these

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<sup>125</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology*, 215.

<sup>126</sup> Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 79.

<sup>127</sup> Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 75.

<sup>128</sup> Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 79.

highlights, I developed a textural description of what the participants experienced.<sup>129</sup> Employing different writing styles, including “experiential, thematic, vocative and interpretive writing,” I composed several depictions of the Lord’s Supper event.<sup>130</sup> The point of the drafts is to distil the “individual experiences” into a universal definition of “the essence.”<sup>131</sup>

### Project Outline

This introduction provides an overview of the project to help the reader navigate through the details of the dissertation. In “Introduction: Definitions and Methods,” I have discussed the structure of this practice-led research: The importance of my research, the theoretical and theological perspective, and an overview of the research, design, and methodology. Furthermore, I considered how this project attempts to answer the research question: *How does the practice of the Lord’s Supper in the PAOC reflect, contribute to, and perpetuate essential Pentecostal spirituality in the fellowship of churches?* In Chapter 1, “Practice-led Research, Fleshing Out My Body Sense,” I begin with an auto-phenomenological narrative of my experience performing the Lord’s Supper and then reflexively explore my experience. In Chapter 2, “Reception History from a Canadian Perspective,” I survey early Canadian Pentecostal literature about the Lord’s Supper. This section focuses on writing produced in the first ten years of the movement, primarily from the journal *Canadian Pentecostal Testimony* (1920–1930), the official magazine of the PAOC, but also material from earlier independent periodicals. This historiographical work sheds light on how the PAOC founders understood the Lord’s Supper performance at the birth of the Pentecostal

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<sup>129</sup> Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 79–80.

<sup>130</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology*, 376–88.

<sup>131</sup> Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 80.

movement in Canada, an important theoretical component of my research since it serves to discern the “heart of the movement,” a vital piece of any theological work addressing Pentecostal spirituality. My reception history demonstrates that the founding Canadian Pentecostals described the rite as an exceptional occasion to experience Christ’s presence, highlighting it in their publications aimed at both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals alike. In this way, its performance and tangible spiritual results reflected the Pentecostal ideal they hoped to spread evangelistically.

In Chapter 3, “New Canadian Qualitative Research,” I overview the Lord’s Supper ritual performances of thirty-five congregations through the perspective of the twenty clergy persons and eighteen laypersons I interviewed. My research extends from the witness of the PAOC founders to contemporary experientialist dialogue on the subject, assessing not only the way things were but also the way things are. Doing so explores the current PAOC church’s Lord’s Supper sacramental experience. Chapter 2 is an exposition of my phenomenological findings. I delineate the essence of “what is given” (a way of describing the phenomenon) in the experience of Christ’s presence in the performance of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>132</sup> My phenomenological enquiry has uncovered that the clergy participants understand the Lord’s Supper as a *sacred*, mysterious, *momentary meeting* with Christ that laypersons, however, understand somewhat differently as a *serious, lingering event* that *connects* Pentecostals to Christ *supernaturally*.

In Chapter 4, “Reception History and Contemporary Practice,” I bring together the testimonies of the PAOC founders and current practitioners in a mutually enriching dialogue. In other words, by highlighting points of congruity and dissonance between the two, I chart the current state of praxis in light of the heart of Pentecostalism (the reception

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<sup>132</sup> Marion, *Being Given*, 216–19.

history), offering a map to plot a way forward in light of Pentecostalism's ensuing theological developments.

In Chapter 5, "The Lord's Supper: A Pentecostal Biblical Framework," I examine 1 Cor 11:23–32, the most frequently used biblical text by Pentecostals "liturgically" in their Lord's Supper performance. I focus on the Apostle Paul's use of the word body throughout 1 Corinthians and propose that the shared bread (11:25), the individual church member (6:19–20), and the church established by the believing community (12:12–26) are all sacramental bodies (Christ's body), intended for discernment. I examine the contemporary Pentecostal theological discussion addressing my research in Chapter 6, "Prayerfully Making Pentecostal Sense of the Lord's Supper." In the "Conclusion," I summarize my findings, suggest some initial thoughts on how this research can benefit the church broadly, and present opportunities for further investigation. I also end the project with "personal praxis," offering an example of an explicit eucharistic *epiclesis* that reflects this work.

## CHAPTER 1: PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH, FLESHING OUT MY BODY SENSE

I begin with my own experience of leading the Lord's Supper for three reasons. First, this project originates from my Lord's Supper practice, an essential part of the practice-led research hermeneutic.<sup>1</sup> Practice is both the foundation and aim of this project's theological reflection.<sup>2</sup> This chapter is rooted in theological reflection on my personal experience. Second, according to van Manen, the reflexivity of the *epoché* makes clear that I am "aware of the structure of [my] own experience of [the] phenomenon."<sup>3</sup> Third, not only must I "open myself" and try to *bracket* "presumptions, common understandings, and scientific explanations," I also need to "regard the phenomenon that was given in my experience (the *reduction*) and observe how the remembrance emerged."<sup>4</sup>

COVID-19 posed challenges to this project. It delayed data collection efforts because in-person church gatherings were restricted and, at times, prohibited. For safety, clergy persons and laypersons had to reimagine the Lord's Supper performance and, in some cases, cancel the Lord's Supper altogether. These two factors made clergy participants reticent to share about their Lord's Supper practice. It also forced me to indefinitely postpone *City Church Sudbury*, my PAOC church plant—a new missional

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<sup>1</sup> Smith and Dean, *Practice-led Research*, 19–25.

<sup>2</sup> Graham ("Theological Reflection," 1) describes theological reflection as a "structured, methodologically oriented process of drawing contextual perspectives into dialogue with theological sources and resources for the purpose of enhancing practice and understanding."

<sup>3</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 313.

<sup>4</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 217.



work that combined traditional Pentecostal practices (worship, prayer, and sermon) with the Lord's Supper during a communal meal.

Not all was lost. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, I served as a Chaplain in a Long-Term Care facility that was reeling from its effects. Even though this, too, posed challenges for my research,<sup>5</sup> within the ground zero context of the LTC home, the pandemic afforded me a sensitivity to wonder, that is, "the unwilling willingness to meet with the utterly strange in what is most familiar."<sup>6</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic affected all four lifeworld fundamental existential themes (spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality) within the LTC home, which forced me to scrutinize and reimagine our experiential modalities reflexively.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, this project is essential because it reframes the delays, restrictions, challenges, tragedy, and trauma into important practice-led research partners.

As is evident, like all researchers, I am not without bias as I approach my subject of study. As a research practitioner, I often experience a profoundly felt sense of Christ's presence in the performance of the Lord's Supper, whether participating as a congregant or curating and administering the performance as the officiant. I also experience the hiddenness of Christ in the sacrament as a felt sense, that is, as an absence.<sup>8</sup> My Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper is framed by an eschatological *now-but-not-yet* tension that informs the felt sense of this sacramental experience, both presence and absence (or hiddenness). I also interchange the terms felt sense and body sense, although I prefer what

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<sup>5</sup> Not the least of these was the incredible stress such work imposed on all frontline health care workers. See McKinnon and Moll, "McMaster-Research and Support to Address Pandemic Trauma," [n.d.].

<sup>6</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 223.

<sup>7</sup> van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 101.

<sup>8</sup> Auten (*Emptiness*, 12) writes, "Absence, we might say, has its own kind of 'weight.' Absence has its own kind of significance. Absence, in other words, isn't a nothing, not really. Absence is actually a something, something that counts, something that matters even though we can't see it. The invisibility of absence is reminiscent of God."

the phrase body sense captures, especially as it relates to the Lord's Supper.<sup>9</sup> I organize my account structurally according to *context*, *preparation*, and *performance*. The following narrative is my auto-phenomenological writing.

### **Auto-Phenomenological Narrative**

#### **Context**

Typically, the Villa's religious programming occurs daily: Roman Catholic services on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, small group on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and a rotation of different Protestant traditions. I lead a Pentecostal church service once a month. Since I celebrate the sacrament once a month in my parish practice, I administer the Lord's Supper every time I conduct a monthly Pentecostal service in the Villa.

To avoid mixing cohorts, one-to-one visits and small neighbourhood group activities were the limited Spiritual and Religious Care programming for long periods. It had been weeks since I held a worship service in the Chapel and even longer since the last eucharistic service of any tradition—a stark contrast considering that before the pandemic, the Eucharist was available four times a week (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday). The Ministry of Long-Term Care restricted gatherings within Long-Term Care homes to prevent another tragic COVID-19 outbreak. External clergies were only permitted to enter our facility for end-of-life rites. Even so, they donned complete personal protective equipment (PPE). I escorted them to and from the resident's room and supervised the doffing of PPE as they left the neighbourhood and facility. The visit was always brief but improved over the virtual end-of-life visits occurring in the earliest days of the pandemic.

As epidemiological science progressed, precautionary and outbreak restrictions shifted and gradually lifted. Dining room service had recently resumed—two residents per table, not four, with a plexiglass divider. Eating together was better than in-room tray service. Even if the residents could not hear their conversation partners because of the barriers, they could see each other through the plexiglass and smile. We immediately noticed a boost in the residents' and staff members' psycho-social well-being.

Even though the dining halls were filling up, it had been a long time since these residents, who were in the habit of meeting for worship several times a week with residents from other neighbourhoods, had seen each other. This Pentecostal Lord's Supper celebration was the first off-neighbourhood group activity that crossed cohorts. At a pandemic management meeting, I suggested that we, a faith-based healthcare organization, were keen to restore access to faith practices for two reasons: First, for most residents, church attendance is a longstanding, regular religious practice and, therefore, a

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion on the interchangeability of felt and body sense, see Liebert, *Discernment*. For an examination of spiritual senses, see Gavriluk, *The Spiritual Senses*.

fundamental psycho-spiritual coping resource. Second, many residents were approaching end-of-life without this crucial resource, which compounded the adverse effects of the restrictions. The team agreed and tasked me with creating a new pandemic Chapel assembly protocol.

### Preparation

One day before Thursday's service, the maintenance and environmental crew dismantled the temporary makeshift lunchroom in the Chapel to accommodate the staff working in the outbreak neighbourhoods. With the tables, fridge, microwave, and toaster removed and the floor and chairs sanitized and scrubbed clean, the sacred space returned to the care of the Spiritual and Religious Care department. Like my parish ministry practice, I prayed for each congregant in preparation for the service. While spacing out the chairs two metres in all directions, I imagined the resident who would soon occupy the chair—an easy task since people are creatures of habit and typically sit in the same spot weekly. By name, I prayed that Christ would spiritually nourish them as we gathered as an ecumenical expression of the body of Christ.

Next, I outlined the plan for the leadership team's final review. I proposed to place the altar bread in little dixie cups and drip the wine onto the bread. I would handle all the communion elements in the most sanitary way: disinfect all utensils, use proper hand hygiene, and wear appropriate PPE. The team approved the process, and the Assistant Director of Care, the infection control clinical lead, provided me with *unusual liturgical utensils*: disposable forceps, latex gloves, hand sanitizer, medical-grade wipes, syringes, and medication cups—better than I imagined!

On Thursday morning, I recounted the seats. Spaced two metres apart, I could safely accommodate 20 residents in the Chapel. In the sacristy, I arranged the med-cups on a cafeteria tray in five-by-four rows. With the forceps, I carefully placed one host in each cup—which fit the bread perfectly! I then poured the wine into the stemless glass chalice, drew it into the syringe, and carefully put one drop of wine at the centre of the embossed cross of each host. With each wine drop, I asked, "Heavenly Father, help us receive Christ's broken body and shed blood in a worthy manner." Again, I imagined each resident receiving the elements. After the twentieth drop, I prayed, "Lord Jesus, let your body and blood be healing medicine for all who partake." And just as I was about to close the prayer with "Amen," I sensed that the preparations were incomplete. Pausing a moment, I experienced a chain of memories.

I remembered the recently deceased residents we would miss at this service. Those attending would know some who died, but not necessarily those from the other neighbourhoods from which they were isolated. I remembered the staff members' compassionate attention to the deceased's end-of-life needs. I also remembered carefully transferring the residents from their Villa beds into white body bags and onto the funeral home stretcher. I remembered the moment of silence that anticipated the prayer that I offered as an attempt to ground this disorienting experience. I recalled my slow and

deliberate steps when leading the Honour Guard procession to the exit. I provided the last prayer in the Villa lobby before the gathered staff members and led the deceased out of the building to the funeral van.

While remembering, I had an overwhelming sense that the needs of the residents and staff were significant. I teared up. I paused for several moments and prayed in the Spirit—or, as Pentecostals like to say, a quiet but audible back and forth between angel speech and the vernacular. While “in the Spirit,” I felt the weight of this intercessory burden gradually lift, as if lingering in glossolalic prayer leveraged the requisite grace required to complete the Lord’s Supper preparations.<sup>10</sup> Prayerfully remembering while caring for the communion elements, I became profoundly aware of Christ’s crucified body. Overcome by the holiness of this moment, I was mindful of the sacrifice being made all around the Long-Term Care home and the needs that Christ could only meet.

### Performance

Unlike the *context* and *preparations*, the *performance* was uncomplicated. The order of service was as follows:

- Call to Worship
- Lighting a candle—in memory of those who died since we last met
- Prayer of invocation
- Hymn: *Great is Thy Faithfulness* by Thomas Chisholm and William M. Runyan
- The Lord’s Prayer (English and French)
- Chorus: *Je Cherche Son Visage* by John Littleton
- Reading & Homily (French and English)
- Chorus: *Remembrance* by Matt Maher
- The Lord’s Supper Liturgy based on 1 Corinthians 11

Typically, volunteers would distribute the elements to my parish practice congregation. Then I would lead the liturgy from the communion table, and all would partake together, first the bread, then the juice. I had no volunteers on this day, so I adjusted my practice.

Like my parish practice, holding the unbroken altar bread high, I read, “For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’” I return the altar bread, broken in two, to the silver serving plate. I then lift the glass chalice with the remaining red wine and read, “In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.’” Then I raise the bread and the cup and read, “For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord’s death until he comes again.” I then prayed an *epiclesis*: *Holy Spirit, come now and make us alive again by the power of the Gospel. Nourish us*

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<sup>10</sup> Archer, *I Was in the Spirit*, 299.

*here at this Lord's Supper with Christ's presence. Amen.* I remove my surgical mask (required PPE), eat the bread, and drink the wine. While eating the bread and drinking the wine, I notice how attentive the residents are to me. I distinctly recall thinking that everybody looked famished.

Next, I invite the residents to indicate if they wish to partake of the elements, and I distribute the wine-kissed bread as requested. As I hand the med-cups to each resident, I repeat, "His body broken and blood shed for you" ("*Son corps brisé et le sang versé pour toi*"), only this time I don't imagine them, they are flesh and blood responding, "Amen." Some residents require help getting the host from the med-cup into their mouths, which makes this already sacred exchange personal and intimate—a different kind of holy. Many tears are shed, including my own again.

After attending to the last resident, prompted by another resident's request (someone from a Charismatic Christian tradition), "Can you anoint me with oil and pray for me?" I shuffle back to the communion table to return the cafeteria tray, then into the sacristy and return with Jerusalem anointing oil. I queued *10,000 Reasons* by Matt Redman on the audio system. With Redman's song playing in the background, I anoint the residents with an aromatic blend of frankincense and myrrh, and pray, as is my Pentecostal parish practice. Many other residents request anointing prayer. Some also join me in laying hands on the petitioners, their friends. It was awkwardly beautiful: masked intercessors shuffling walkers and wheelchairs to *touch* faith-filled petitioners—an embodied juxtaposition to the recently endured isolation. I conclude the chapel service with a benediction from Numbers 6:24–26. I sense that everyone's hunger and thirst are satisfied and "things have been made right," like the feeling you get at the end of a family feast.

### **Theological Reflection, Exploring My Experience**

The service seemed timeless but lasted approximately fifty minutes. It was unusual yet beautiful. Even though of the twenty-one attending, I was the only formal member of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, the service was Pentecostal. What made the service Pentecostal? It was more than the fact that I administered the rite or that the liturgy had Pentecostal content. I believe the performance accomplished its supreme purpose: it carried the gathered to the Lord Himself, in a distinctively Pentecostal way.

First, the *context* informed how I approached the Lord's Supper performance. Since I attended to the various preconditions—primarily the lived experiences of the congregants since the last eucharistic celebration—I curated the performance accordingly. Not only did

my reflexivity in this regard inform the liturgy, but it also shaped the nature of my connection with Jesus and the congregants in prayer. Also, this reflexivity (remembering) impacted how I prepared and delivered the Lord's Supper elements (according to COVID-19 safety protocols) and how I experienced sacramentality—God's gracious presence in the praxis. In other words, praxis (pastoral theology as action) regarding the preconditions set in motion my discerning preparation.<sup>11</sup>

Second, the *preparation*, like a bridge, spans the context and performance preconditions. During the Lord's Supper preparation (in the present), I invited "what was" (in the past) to encounter "what will be" (in the future). From the *preparatory* vantage point, I thoughtfully and prayerfully experienced a bifurcation of time—"a cleaving of the present moment into past and future."<sup>12</sup> Bialecki describes this bifurcated felt sense of the present moment as "an operative aporia, a kink or joint in time resulting from its actually being two times as once."<sup>13</sup> I experienced this felt sense as between already and not-yet. This experience is a perspectival glimpse of what occurs in the Lord's Supper performance—being "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."<sup>14</sup> I expanded on what Bialecki describes as having "an eye on cosmology and eschatology,"<sup>15</sup> noting that these sacramental horizons are undiscernible without a pneumatological lens.

Third, proper preparation prepares the players for the Lord's Supper performance. Having already straddled a "then and *soon-to-be*" in an "in the Spirit moment in time" while conducting the preparatory work, I felt sure (that is, there was a witness in my spirit or a spiritual sense) that I had laid the groundwork for the actual Lord's Supper's

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<sup>11</sup> Graham and Walton, *Theological Reflection*, 206.

<sup>12</sup> Bialecki, *A Diagram for Fire*, 46.

<sup>13</sup> Bialecki, *A Diagram for Fire*, 46.

<sup>14</sup> Archer (*I Was in the Spirit*, 299) writes, "*Spirited* worship turns ordinary places ... into sacred spaces and ordinary time into eschatological time."

<sup>15</sup> Bialecki, *A Diagram for Fire*, 46.

performance. I was prepared to straddle once again the eschatological horizons implicit in the Pentecostal Lord's Supper liturgy. I experienced this confidence as knowing and being known. As I performed the rite, I had a familiar sense, though not utterly different from my experience of the Spirit in everyday life or other church contexts; it most clearly reflected the "in the Spirit" felt sense of the *preparatory* stage. What is also true is that with each liturgical component, the witness of his presence amplified such that during the communion act, I did not simply "presume Christ present," though hidden beneath the praxis (including the prayers, music, and elements—altar bread and glass chalice of wine and the wine-kissed hosts in med-cups), the Holy Spirit confirmed and made manifest the prophetic utterances "His body broken and blood shed for you" with the overwhelming sense of His presence.

### Concluding Remarks

My auto-phenomenological narrative describes my experience of Christ's presence as I curate, prepare and lead the Lord's Supper performance. Several things stand out regarding the nature, meaning, and significance of my experience. First, I understand the Lord's Supper as situated in a *context* that informs my prayerful *preparation* and *performance*. Second, I believe that the *context*, *preparation*, and *performance* are "threaded together" by the Holy Spirit. Third, I attribute a more significant role to the Holy Spirit's enabling power in the preparation and performance, two occasions when I more explicitly invoke the Holy Spirit for ecclesiastical tasks. These structural descriptors reflect my "embedded theology:"<sup>16</sup> a ritual continuum essential to the immersion points of my praxis. Exploring

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<sup>16</sup> Doering (*The Practice*, 19) writes, "embedded theologies use first-order, often precritical expressions of religious experiences." My imbedded theologies about the Lord's Supper come from two stages of my pre-critical religious experiences: (a) I was reared Roman Catholic by charismatic Roman Catholic parents from birth to the age of fifteen; (b) at the age of fifteen, my parents converted to Classical Pentecostalism and therefore I attended a PAOC church with my family until the age of nineteen, when I enrolled in a PAOC Bible College.

my experience (theological reflexivity regarding my embedded theology) is an exercise in “deliberative theology.”<sup>17</sup> My Lord’s Supper practice is based on pastoral planning shaped by my experience of Christ’s presence and social analysis of the context. I reflectively engage my “Lord’s Supper tradition,” which includes prayerfully preparing and performing the rite accordingly.

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<sup>17</sup> Doering (*The Practice*, 19) explains, “deliberative theology draws on informal and formal theological education to use second-order religious language to interpret embedded theologies.”



## CHAPTER 2: RECEPTION HISTORY FROM A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

“We have breaking of bread every Sunday morning, and it pleases the Lord to make Himself known to us at those services as at none other. Beautiful singing in the Spirit is often given. These last two Sundays have been more powerful than ever.” – Brother and Sister Hebden<sup>1</sup>

Having theologically reflected upon my practice of the Lord’s Supper, I now turn to the witness of the earliest Canadian Pentecostals. Reception histories seek to rediscover what sacred texts and traditions have meant.<sup>2</sup> These texts and traditions have “histories of effect” because they have powerfully affected the witnesses of history. Martin Mittelstadt explains, “Reception historians return to stories of the Scriptures read, interpreted, viewed, and performed through the centuries. In a move postmodernists should celebrate, these scholars give voice to the ‘other’ and the many. Reception histories offer a museum-like tour of the reading of Scriptures between original authors and current readers.”<sup>3</sup> Reception history can be traced back to Hans-Georg Gadamer’s notion of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (“history-effected consciousness”)<sup>4</sup> and Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser’s *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (“reception history”).<sup>5</sup> The work of New Testament scholar Ulrich Luz, who explores the “history of influences,” precisely the “history, reception, and actualizing of text in media

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<sup>1</sup> Hebden, “Letter from the Hebden,” 8.

<sup>2</sup> Mittelstadt, “The Discipline,” 6.

<sup>3</sup> Mittelstadt, “The Discipline,” 6. Cf. Berg (“All Men are Equal,” 16) notes that Gadamer’s *Wirkungsgeschichte* “stresses the effect of the work, in that the focus is on the text and the influence it has in history,” and that Jauss’s *Rezeptionsgeschichte* “stresses the reception of the work, in that the focus is on the way a particular audience interprets a work.”

<sup>4</sup> Mittelstadt, “The Discipline,” 6.

<sup>5</sup> Mittelstadt, “The Discipline,” 6.

other than a commentary,” most closely reflects the historiography I conduct in this chapter.<sup>6</sup>

As I alluded to in the introduction, following Land and Hollenweger, this reception history endeavours to uncover the “heart” of the Canadian Pentecostal movement regarding the Lord’s Supper.<sup>7</sup> Since reception historians remind us that “our present horizon always includes the original horizon of the past as it has passed through the tradition,”<sup>8</sup> in this chapter, I endeavour to glimpse the founders’ vision of the Lord’s Supper (alongside my own) to renew our contemporary Pentecostal tradition by this “hermeneutics of retrieval and reconstruction.”<sup>9</sup> By the end of Chapter 3, I will have explored the eucharistic vision of ten Pentecostal pioneers, including R. E. McAlister and Ellen Hebden, two of the earliest Canadians to receive the “Pentecostal blessing,” and to write about the Lord’s Supper in an evangelistic magazine. In this chapter, I focus primarily on the horizon McAlister portrays through his writing and the texts he assembled and republished from other Pentecostals between 1920 and 1930 in the “Pentecostal Testimony,” the official paper of the PAOC.

### **The Founders’ Sacramental Horizon**

Chris Green notes:

Contra much of what has been reported in the secondary literature, early Pentecostals were *not* averse to sacramental language, and they did not uniformly hold to a weakly memorialist view of the Lord’s supper. In fact, many signs of a robust sacramentality—especially as it relates to the Eucharist—were found. Therefore, in light of these and other similar discoveries, it seems clear that the story of early Pentecostalism needs to be rewritten to show that the sacraments,

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<sup>6</sup> Mittelstadt (“The Discipline,” 6) highlights “sermons, canonical law, hymnody, art, and in the actions of sufferings of the church” as Luz’s media other than commentary.

<sup>7</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Berg, “All Men Are Equal,” 13.

<sup>9</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflection*, 204.

and especially the Communion rite, were central to the spirituality of the emerging movement.<sup>10</sup>

However, Green does not address Canadian Pentecostalism. In pursuing the pneumatological vitality of the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper, I pay specific attention to early Canadian Pentecostals' sacramental thought and practice by examining early published Canadian works in this chapter.

In the Introduction, I provided a working definition of Pentecostal sacramentality, the heart of which is the connection between God's gracious promised presence, Pentecostal praxis, and body sense. I also noted that until recently, the term sacrament has been lost to the lexicon of traditional Pentecostal theology. As a result, many contemporary Pentecostals could be surprised to discover that early Canadian Pentecostals like the Hebden's broke bread weekly and discerned a unique sense of Christ's presence in the rite. Consider Brother and Sister Hebden's Lord's Supper report printed in their paper, *The Promise*, which I included at the beginning of this chapter. Notice that (a) they break bread every Sunday morning; (b) The Lord is pleased to make himself known in the rite uniquely—as at no other church service held at the faith mission; (c) The sign of the Lord's pleasure is the manifestation of “regular beautiful singing in the Spirit;” (d) Rather than experiencing a routinization of charisma at the regular weekly practice of the rite and thus a perceivable diminishing spiritual experience, most recently, the encounters with the Lord “have been more powerful than ever;” (e) The implicit conclusion is the invitation to experience this sacramentality for yourself at this exceptional service. Considering the Cleveland school's historiography, Mr. and Mrs. Hebden, two of the earliest Canadian

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<sup>10</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 327.

Pentecostals, invite us to engage them as essential conversation partners to pursue a vital Pentecostal Lord's Supper praxis.<sup>11</sup>

Contemporary Pentecostals might also be surprised that Nellie A. Moyes was comfortable using sacramental language to describe her way of being in the world—her experience of Pentecostal sacramentality. Pentecostals are famous for idioms like: “There is a sweet sense of Christ's presence in the room.” “Calvary Love,” poetry published in the *Testimony* in 1926, illustrates this sensory disposition.

Lord, take my life a sacrament to be;  
I would be *broken* and *poured out* for Thee.  
Kept one in heart with Thee, let Calvary love  
*Flow freely through* to others from above.  
I've chosen Thee a sacrament to be;  
Thy heart's desire is just my will for Thee.

*While Calvary's love flows through my life*, I'll raise  
To Thy Great Name, *a sacrament of praise*;  
And, when translated to my home above,  
My praise shall be for Thy redeeming love.<sup>12</sup>

Pentecostal *sense* language is sacramental speech, a way of talking about sensing God's presence. The vernacular perception, “let Calvary love *flow freely through* to others from above,” indicates that, for Pentecostals, at least, sacramentality is a *sensed* experience. Moyes poetically suggests that she expects to *feel the flow* of divine presence. Not only is being a sacrament possible, but her reciprocal act of praise is also sacramental, a sign of “Calvary love.”

While Moyes explicitly connects sacramentality with her worldview and sacrament with prayer and praise (theologically significant points in their own right), in May 1924, R. E. McAlister (1880–1953) also published an extensive seven-column article by Mrs. R. M.

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<sup>11</sup> Green (*Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 138) offers a similar testimony by Pentecostal pioneer William Durham.

<sup>12</sup> Moyes, “Calvary Love,” 2. My italics emphasize sensory language.

Stephens entitled “The Blood Covenant.” I examine her paper extensively later in the chapter, but notice the presence and related sensory language:

[The Supper] is a feast, a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving, and we worship, and adore Him who liveth for ever and ever. It is a memorial only till he come. Every time we sup, we look back, but also forward to His sure and certain return. And He who though unseen is in our midst will make the sound of His voice to be heard “Surely or truly, I come quickly;” and our hearts will reply in glad response, “Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”<sup>13</sup>

Like Moyes’s poem, Stephens’s prose is sensorially rich. The auditory and other sensory language is expectant with sacramentality—Christ’s presence. The Supper is a memorial until Jesus comes, which *will* occur at Christ’s second coming and *does* occur at the Supper. The Supper discernably is a sacrament “by the sound of His voice.” Stephens, like Moyes, describes the occasion of Christ’s presence as *discernible*—because Christ makes it so. Stephens testifies that the felt sense of Christ’s presence at the Lord’s Supper solicits a “glad response”—*Maranatha*. Moyes and Stephens describe their spiritual experiences using sense language, and meanings emerge from the experienced phenomenon.

McAlister used similar language to describe the Western Canada District Council Meeting in July 1924. He reports,

The observance of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper by the Conference was a very precious service and finished with an outpouring of the blessing of the Lord. The volume of praise that arose at such times to our glorious Saviour and King was truly inspiring and soul-stirring.<sup>14</sup>

McAlister connected observing the Sacrament with the Lord’s outpouring of blessing, eliciting the participants’ praise crescendo. McAlister’s report teaches the readership that God’s blessing-presence is discernible, so discernible that Christ-honouring praise

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<sup>13</sup> Stephens, “The Blood Covenant,” 8, emphasis added.

<sup>14</sup> McAlister, “Western Canada District Council Meeting,” 8.

spontaneously and commensurately arose from the participants—“truly inspiring and soul-stirring.”<sup>15</sup>

### **In a Sense, Surprised?**

What is not surprising is that early Canadian Pentecostals experienced and testified about this kind of “blessed outpouring” at regular worship services or camp meetings, for this is standard Pentecostal praxis. What should not be surprising, but could be for some, is that of all the church services that McAlister (and the Hebdens, for that matter) could highlight, he highlights the celebration of the sacrament. Because until recently, the term sacrament has been lost to the lexicon of traditional Pentecostal theology, perhaps most surprising is that McAlister, the editor of the *Testimony*, published Moyes’s poem and Stephens’s article in the early issues of the paper. This is especially surprising because, in the inaugural edition of the *Testimony*, McAlister promises that the paper “will not only be of interest and upbuilding to all Assemblies, but it will always be kept clean-cut from all contentious issues, and will be safe to hand out to anyone at any time and at all times.”<sup>16</sup> McAlister’s “clean-cut- and safe” promise was an important one. The PAOC was already embroiled in serious doctrinal controversy around Water Baptism.<sup>17</sup> Historians blame McAlister for “unwittingly triggering” the dispute in 1913.<sup>18</sup> What may have been unintentional at the Worldwide Apostolic Faith Camp Meeting in Arroyo Seco, California, shortly after that was deliberate. Thirty candidates were baptized in Jesus’ name in response to McAlister’s sermon.<sup>19</sup> Soon after, “the Jesus Only doctrine spread like wildfire” such that “nearly the

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<sup>15</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 138.

<sup>16</sup> McAlister, “The Paper,” 4.

<sup>17</sup> Griffin, “1919,” 31.

<sup>18</sup> Griffin, “1919,” 30.

<sup>19</sup> Griffin, “1919,” 30.

entire Canadian Pentecostal clergy were rebaptized in the name of Jesus,” including McAlister.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, McAlister returned to his Trinitarian roots. Most importantly, for my purposes here, McAlister “had a plan to bring the many ‘Jesus only’ converts back into the Trinitarian fold.”<sup>21</sup>

Regarding the plan, two points are pertinent to my argument. Correcting the widespread *Jesus only* error would take time. McAlister remarked, “If we try to do it too fast, it will all break up on us, and we’ll lose.”<sup>22</sup> Keeping the Fellowship together was vital to McAlister’s plan. How he planned to keep the Fellowship together is the first crucial point. McAlister intentionally focused the Assembly’s attention on what unites (the Bible and the Holy Spirit) and protected the PAOC membership from what divides (controversy). According to William Griffin, “clear evidence” of McAlister’s “handiwork” is that “the subject of doctrine was placed to the sidelines” in the November 26, 1919, *Memorandum of Agreement*.<sup>23</sup>

However, McAlister could not cleverly sideline the controversy forever. Correcting the doctrinal error required sagacity, and McAlister did not disappoint, which brings me to a second crucial point. According to Griffin, McAlister addresses the doctrinal controversy “artfully” at the November 25 to 28, 1919 meeting of the General Assembly. McAlister crafted a resolution that both sides of the Oneness/Trinitarian controversy could support. He also convinced Canadian Pentecostals that they should avoid contentious and confusing issues:

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<sup>20</sup> Griffin, “1919,” 31.

<sup>21</sup> Griffin, “1919,” 32.

<sup>22</sup> Griffin, “1919,” 32.

<sup>23</sup> Griffin, “1919,” 32.

Be it resolved that we as a body go on record as disapproving not only the above issue, but all other issues that divide and confuse God's people to no profit, and that aggressive evangelism be our motto.<sup>24</sup>

Suffice it to say, what made it on the pages of the *Testimony* served McAlister's plan to keep the PAOC from breaking apart. McAlister curated the *Testimony* content to unite the Fellowship and spread the Pentecostal message aggressively. Thus, including Moyes's poem, Stephens's prose, and whatever else pertains to the Lord's Supper within the pages of the *Testimony* is significant: "Longing to live as a sacrament" was a non-contentious description of Pentecostal spirituality, at least to McAlister and the other PAOC leaders at the time. Talking about the Lord's Supper as "The Sacrament" was not divisive or confusing; it was considered clean-cut and safe.<sup>25</sup>

### ***The Testimony: 1920–1930***

McAlister was a founder and prominent voice in the earliest days of the Pentecostal revival in Canada. According to Martin W. Mittelstadt and Caleb Haward Courtney, McAlister's ministry has at least four memorable "characterizing aspects." I will highlight three now because I mentioned his earlier role in the Oneness controversy. First, along with Elen Hebden, he was one of the earliest Canadian recipients of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues and one of the earliest Canadians to preach it in Canada. Second, he cofounded the PAOC in 1919: "The PAOC was operated by McAlister and his wife out of their home in London, Ontario, for many years."<sup>26</sup> Third, he eventually gained a reputation for his doctrinal soundness. Once he was front and centre in the "Jesus

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<sup>24</sup> Griffin, "1919," 32.

<sup>25</sup> McAlister, "The Paper," 4.

<sup>26</sup> Mittelstadt and Courtney, *Canadian Pentecostal Reader*, 302.



Only” controversy, he later became a voice of theological stability in the wake of other challenging theological issues for the PAOC.<sup>27</sup>

McAlister understood the power of print to promote the new Pentecostal movement. He published *The Good Report* from 1911 to 1916, a 24-page paper with a circulation of 45,000 copies.<sup>28</sup> After a brief stint in the United States, McAlister returned to Canada and established *The Canadian Pentecostal Testimony* in December 1920. Since McAlister was the secretary-treasurer of the PAOC and the founding editor of the *Testimony*, the “official organ of the PAOC,” and since McAlister not only had a part to play in the paper’s philosophy but was also the content gatekeeper,<sup>29</sup> I begin this reception history with his clean-cut contribution.

### McAlister and The Sacrament

The earliest reference to the Lord’s Supper in the *Testimony* is the March 1922 issue. In the first article, on the front page, you read the main heading, “The Ordinances,” and the subheading, “The Sacrament.” He contrasts the “outstanding Old Covenant ordinances” of circumcision and the Paschal Supper with the “outstanding New Covenant ordinances” of Water Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.<sup>30</sup> His point is clear: the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant, as reflected in the Ordinances. Baptism takes the place of circumcision, and the Lord’s Supper replaces the Paschal Supper.

McAlister uses a dispensational framework to set up his argument. He explains that God institutes “codes or ordinances” specific to each dispensation. Ordinances are “peculiarly symbolic of the truth taught in the dispensation in which they were given to be

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<sup>27</sup> Mittelstadt and Courtney, *Canadian Pentecostal Reader*, 302.

<sup>28</sup> Mittelstadt and Courtney, *Canadian Pentecostal Reader*, 305.

<sup>29</sup> McAlister, “The Paper,” 4.

<sup>30</sup> McAlister, “The Ordinances,” 1.

observed.”<sup>31</sup> According to McAlister, the Old Covenant assumes that religion can improve the “old creation,” but God deals with humankind “on an entirely different basis with the New Covenant.”<sup>32</sup> The New Covenant assumes “flesh cannot be improved.” Old Covenant *circumcision* symbolizes “the human effort to improve the flesh,” and New Covenant *Baptism* “signifies the death of the old creation.” McAlister did not teach that Baptism was a condition of salvation. However, he did say it was a “result of obedience to the command of the gospel ... essential to obedience.”<sup>33</sup> While McAlister used the word “symbolic” to describe all four ordinances in the article’s Introduction, he concludes the section on Baptism using other sacramental words with a particular Pentecostal definition of sacrament in mind. He writes,

Baptism is the outward sign, symbol or expression of an inward death, burial and resurrection, signifying the believer’s identity in Christ, having been planted in the likeness of his death and raised by the might of His power to walk in the newness of His life; yielding His members unto God as those that are alive from the dead.<sup>34</sup>

McAlister viewed Water Baptism as an act of obedience to the command of the Gospel, in other words, an Ordinance. However, his use of “outward sign, symbol or expression” in the concluding paragraph of section one sets up the term sacrament in section two, dedicated to the Lord’s Supper.

While McAlister applies the title “outstanding ordinances” to the Paschal meal, Circumcision, Water Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, and he uses sacramental language to describe Water Baptism, he explicitly identifies the Lord’s Supper as a sacrament. Notably, he uses the designation “The Sacrament” as a synonym for the Lord’s Supper. McAlister writes,

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<sup>31</sup> McAlister, “The Ordinances,” 1.

<sup>32</sup> McAlister, “The Ordinances,” 1.

<sup>33</sup> McAlister, “The Ordinances,” 1.

<sup>34</sup> McAlister, “The Ordinances,” 1.

The Sacrament or Lord's Supper was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ on the eve of His crucifixion at the Last Supper. It now takes the place of the paschal supper. The New Covenant providing things so much better than the old, almost everything in connection with the significance of the Lord's Supper is by way of contrast to the Paschal Supper and necessarily so in revealing present truth as the New Covenant is in contrast to the old.<sup>35</sup>

McAlister argues that "present truth" regarding "the significance of the Lord's Supper" is knowable in part because we properly view the two Covenants in contrast; the Old Covenant foreshadows and informs the "things so much better" in the New Covenant. Jesus replaced the Paschal Supper by instituting the Sacrament at the Last Supper. We understand The Lord's Supper as the better Supper in light of (in contrast to) the praxis of the Paschal Supper.

McAlister gives four examples of how the Paschal meal clarifies the significance of the Lord's Supper.<sup>36</sup> He points to blood, flesh, presence, and readiness to build his argument. His logic is as follows: The Paschal meal provided a slain lamb whose blood the Israelites applied to the lintels of their household doorposts, which kept the death angel at bay. The sacrament also offers the blood of The Lamb, better blood, Jesus' shed blood for the salvation of souls. The Paschal meal provided the lamb's flesh (physical food) to eat for the strength of their physical bodies. The sacrament provides Jesus' flesh to eat (spiritual food) to heal our bodies. At the Paschal meal, the Israelites left an empty chair, expecting a coming one (the prophet Elijah) who anticipated the coming of the Messiah. At the last supper, Jesus, the guest of honour, fills the empty chair and fulfills the hope that Elijah's empty chair represents.<sup>37</sup> The sacrament is an occasion when Jesus' presence fills the empty chairs of the human heart, life, and home. The Israelites ate the Paschal meal, ready to exit captivity from Egypt for the freedom of the Promised Land. Quoting 1 Cor 13, McAlister

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<sup>35</sup> McAlister, "The Ordinances," 1.

<sup>36</sup> McAlister, "The Ordinances," 1.

<sup>37</sup> Stronstad, *Prophethood*, 75–84.

states that the sacrament affords “true believers” a three-fold enduring disposition, “Faith, Hope and Love.”<sup>38</sup> Each attitudinal virtue has a corresponding focus: Faith looks back (past) upon Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, Hope looks forward (future) to Christ’s soon return, and Love looks up (present) into Christ’s “dear face.”<sup>39</sup> To behold Christ’s face is to *know* His presence. McAlister paints an eschatological panorama of Christ’s glory from the perspective of the Lord’s Table.

In conclusion, McAlister draws his reader to the eschatological significance of “The Sacrament.” In homiletic fashion, he explains that the Supper foreshadows an even more excellent meal:

The Lord’s table is the longest table in the universe. It bridges the chasm between the suffering and the glory. One end rests on the cross and the other on the throne, and as we surround it, the Father looks down from heaven and says, “My beloved sons in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus Christ is the bread that came down from heaven. He is the living water that gushed from the smitten rock in the wilderness. He has prepared for all believers a perpetual feast in Father’s banqueting house.<sup>40</sup>

Undoubtedly, McAlister highly esteemed the sacrament. He expressed that the Father was pleased that Pentecostal saints (those he identifies as sons), obedient to Christ, observe the sacrament. But what does McAlister intend by alluding to Luke 3?

In the 1912 issue of the *Good Report*, as part of an article entitled “Confession of Faith,” McAlister briefly expounds on “The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>41</sup> In it, he makes similar points. Most importantly, McAlister teaches that the sacrament must be “partaken of in the Spirit with the understanding” to be “a great blessing.”<sup>42</sup> McAlister’s sacramental Lord’s Supper formula requires presence and discernment: “in the Spirit *being*” before “with understanding *knowing*” in classic Pentecostal form. Still, his point is

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<sup>38</sup> McAlister, “The Ordinances,” 1.

<sup>39</sup> McAlister, “The Ordinances,” 1.

<sup>40</sup> McAlister, “The Ordinances,” 1.

<sup>41</sup> McAlister, “Confession of Faith,” 3–5.

<sup>42</sup> McAlister, “Confession of Faith,” 5.

clear. Both are required.<sup>43</sup> Effectively, the theological principle of *anamnesis* (remembrance) is possible within an “epicletic” state.<sup>44</sup> The translation of this is that Christ responds to the prayer for the Spirit (*epiclesis*), and His gracious presence makes remembrance (*anamnesis*) possible and deliverance.<sup>45</sup> I find it fascinating that McAlister emphasizes and prioritizes the Spirit’s role in the sacrament such that the performance becomes a charism or Spirit-liturgy.<sup>46</sup>

McAlister’s earlier article in the *Good Report* sheds light on his use of Christ’s baptism narrative in the later *Testimony* article. At first, it might seem strange that McAlister uses Jesus’ baptismal narrative (Luke 3:21–22) as a proof text for the Lord’s Supper and not Water Baptism in an article that deals with both. But Jesus’ Baptism, at the ministry of John the Baptist, is a significant *epiclesis* in St. Luke’s narrative.<sup>47</sup> The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at this point in Luke’s narrative marks the inauguration of Jesus’ Christly ministry.<sup>48</sup> McAlister infers that the Lord’s Supper rite can serve as an empower-for-witness (or prophetic) ritual. With understanding, the *epicletic* prayer makes the Lord’s Supper an “evocative liturgy” that re-missions participants in the power of the Spirit—for Christ’s body is animated and empowered by the Spirit. The *epicletic* prerequisite makes the sacrament a Full Gospel meal.

Pentecostals are never really full of the Holy Spirit for long; they are only temporarily filled and always require a refill. The sacrament is an ongoing, repeated rite, not a one-time event (like Water Baptism), making it the perfect occasion to be refilled and

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<sup>43</sup> Green (*Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 137) offers a similar testimony from Fred Francis Bosworth and Myer Pearlman.

<sup>44</sup> Castelo (*Revisioning Pentecostal Ethics*, 3) defines epicletic as a “doxological as well as pneumatic term.”

<sup>45</sup> This also includes healing, empowered witness, and readiness for His return.

<sup>46</sup> See Fagerberg “Liturgy,” 455–65, for an indepth discussion on liturgy as sacrament.

<sup>47</sup> Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 36–39.

<sup>48</sup> Stronstad, *Charismatic Theology*, 39–46.

re-commissioned by the *epicletic* prayer that makes it possible to eat the body and drink the blood of Christ discerningly. What better evidence is there to affirm that the Lord's Supper is a "Full Gospel Meal" than to echo and appropriate the Heavenly Father's approval of Jesus? McAlister creatively pluralizes "son," "My beloved sons [sic] in whom I am well pleased,"<sup>49</sup> assuring the *Testimony* readership that God is pleased with His children when they partake of the better Supper—the right way—in the Spirit with understanding. True believers discern Him present this way: "Jesus Christ is the bread that came down from heaven. He is the living water that gushed from the smitten rock in the wilderness. He has prepared for all believers a perpetual feast in Father's banqueting house."<sup>50</sup>

### **Mrs. R. M. Stephens's Blood Covenant**

As alluded to earlier, in May 1924, McAlister published an extensive article by Mrs. R. M. Stephens entitled "The Blood Covenant."<sup>51</sup> Stephens describes the blood covenant between God and Abram and then illustrates how the Lord's Supper is similar. Her explanation of blood covenants draws on ancient "Oriental" customs so that the readers "apprehend the depth and power of the precious promises."<sup>52</sup> Stephens explains that a blood covenant between two parties from "Palestine and other Oriental lands" follows a pattern. First, they mingle blood from self-inflicted wounds and sometimes drink the "mingled blood." This act symbolizes that the parties "now consider themselves partakers of a common life . . . The two are one man [sic] with a common purpose and object in life." Second, they add the other's name or blend it with their own. Third, as in Abraham's covenant with God, the

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<sup>49</sup> Including sons and daughters or children would have strengthened McAlister's argument. Pentecostals believe the Spirit was poured out on "all flesh."

<sup>50</sup> McAlister, "The Ordinances," 1.

<sup>51</sup> See note 13 for the available biographical details.

<sup>52</sup> Stephens, "Blood Covenant," 4.

inferior party submits to a concession that the more powerful party prescribes. In

Abraham's case, he submits to God's circumcision requirement. Stephens explains, "As circumcision was only a 'token' of the covenant, we see that Abraham performed his part by symbol, which is only temporary, one day to be replaced by the reality."<sup>53</sup> Stephens explains the profound power of the Blood Covenant:

The two, thus knit together so closely, are liable to be called upon at a moment's notice to defend each other's causes . . . Oh! How faithful is our God in coming to the aid of those who put their trust in Him . . . So feeble and weak are we that we need the constant presence and protection of our covenant Friend.

Notice that it is both the presence and protection of God that addresses the feebleness and weakness of humans. Later, Stephens explains that "all the Old Testament saints dealt with God on the strength of the Blood Covenant."<sup>54</sup> The article's crowning moment is when Stephens explains that the "day of days" occurred when "God entered into blood covenant in REALITY, for he gave of His blood in the blood of His Son." Stephens explains that the incarnation made it possible for "Man" to also enter "in Reality" into the blood covenant,

Behold that stream flowing out, man's blood and God's blood mingling and flowing down together. God's blood flowing manward and satisfying man; man's blood flowing Godward and satisfying God; and eternally sealing our oneness in an everlasting covenant of unfailing love.<sup>55</sup>

Having explained how Jesus fills both roles of the blood covenant, Stephens describes how Jesus, the Son of God, made what was symbolic a reality on the "day of days." Stephens explains how the Lord's Supper is a recurring commemoration of the "Reality" Jesus accomplished.

Stephens identifies the Lord's Supper rite as a feast, like feasts commemorating Old Testament blood covenants. "Remembrance feasts" occurred at regular intervals. Blood

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<sup>53</sup> Stephens ("Blood Covenant," 4) likely means circumcision of the heart.

<sup>54</sup> Stephens, "Blood Covenant," 5.

<sup>55</sup> Stephens, "Blood Covenant," 5.

covenant partners gathered around a “festive board.” The wine they drank was the “symbol of their mingled blood and the common life they share,” and the meat and bread they “feasted on” nourished their “common life.”<sup>56</sup> Even though Stephens calls the Lord’s Supper a “feast of remembrance,” she explains that Jesus is both absent from us and present to us.<sup>57</sup> Nothing in her description allows the superior party to be missing from the commemoration feast. Stephens highlights the mystery of the hidden though present Christ and maintains that though Christ is still yet to come, he is present “in our midst every time we sup.” The vibrant experiential language is expectant with a Pentecostal pneumatological and eschatological vision of the world.<sup>58</sup> And Christ’s discernible presence is evidence of Pentecostal sacramentality.

### **Dr. James Eustice Purdie’s Bible College Curriculum**

Like most other Christian traditions, early Canadian Pentecostals believed the Lord’s Supper was the preeminent ordinance.<sup>59</sup> Even though early Canadian Pentecostals practiced other ordinances, including the “healing ordinance,” the Bible College taught that Baptism and the Lord’s Supper were “of a higher nature.”<sup>60</sup> Dr. James Eustice Purdie,<sup>61</sup> the architect of PAOC theological education, briefly defined “The Sacraments” within a three-page Bible College advertisement in 1927.<sup>62</sup> Purdie did not indicate when students would learn about the sacraments. This is surprising because the ad includes a section entitled “The

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<sup>56</sup> Stephens, “Blood Covenant,” 8.

<sup>57</sup> Stephenson (*Types*, 121–26) devotes attention to the concept of Christ’s absence when discussing divine presence in the supper. Stephenson’s main point is that Pentecostals avoid adopting a “realized eschatology” by emphasizing Christ’s absence rather than presence in the meal.

<sup>58</sup> Green (*Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 88–91) offers similar feasting metaphors.

<sup>59</sup> Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatological Theology*, 135.

<sup>60</sup> Stuernagel, “Seven Elements,” 13.

<sup>61</sup> For an extensive examination of Purdie’s influence on Canadian Pentecostalism, see Craig, “Out and Out for the Lord.”

<sup>62</sup> Purdie, “Canadian Pentecostal Bible College,” 5–7.



Sacraments.”<sup>63</sup> Notably, at twenty-one lines, “The Sacraments” and “The believer’s obedience to God” are the most comprehensive statements.

Notably, the first Canadian Pentecostal Bible school curriculum, an institution devoted to training Pentecostal pastors, evangelists, and missionaries, underscored that sacrament was an appropriate theological category for essential Pentecostal doctrines and practices and that the sacraments are distinguishable from other biblical ordinances because they have a unique *nature*.<sup>64</sup> Purdie differentiates the sacraments from the other ordinances. Sacraments are “a symbol or sign divinely appointed. It is an outward or visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.”<sup>65</sup>

### **Max Wood Moorhead’s Weekly Holy Meal**

Early Canadian Pentecostals knew the sacrament as the Lord’s Table, Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper, the Breaking of Bread, the Eucharist, and the Holy Meal. McAlister often included *Testimony* articles written by missionaries and evangelists stationed abroad. Max Wood Moorhead (1862–1937) was a missionary, evangelist, publisher, and educator.<sup>66</sup> Originally from Erie, Pennsylvania, Moorhead was raised Episcopalian, had a later conversion experience at age 21, dedicated his life to missionary work at D. L. Moody’s 1886 Northfield Conference, and became affiliated with Union Theological Seminary’s delegation to the first international convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (1891). While serving as a missionary to India under the Presbyterian board, Moorhead had the “Pentecostal experience” in March 1907. Three months after hearing A. G. Garr preach in Calcutta (January 1907), the first missionary sent out from the

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<sup>63</sup> Purdie, “Canadian Pentecostal Bible College,” 5.

<sup>64</sup> Purdie, “Canadian Pentecostal Bible College,” 6–7.

<sup>65</sup> Purdie, “Canadian Pentecostal Bible College,” 6.

<sup>66</sup> Rodgers, “Moorhead, Max Wood,” 907.

Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, Moorhead experienced the Spirit Baptism's "Bible evidence." He continued his work in India as an independent itinerant evangelist and published a free periodical with worldwide circulation entitled *Cloud of Witnesses to Pentecost in India* (1907–1910). After thirteen years in India, Moorhead taught at various Bible institutes in England and America, including Howard Carter's Bible School in London and Elim Bible School in Hornell, New York.

McAlister includes Moorhead's article (likely the notes of a sermon he preached) entitled "The Breaking of Bread" in the July 1925 issue of the *Testimony*. Moorhead's Introduction implies that "breaking of bread" was common Pentecostal parlance (at least in his circles), even the preferred Pentecostal designation for the Lord's Supper. He points out that "Holy Communion" and "Eucharist" are complementary terms, highlighting the rite's different attributes: fellowship and thanksgiving.<sup>67</sup> Moorhead believed, "As Pentecostal people, we are, doubtless, in divine order, in breaking bread every Lord's Day; for this was the practice in the Apostolic Church."<sup>68</sup> His thesis is clear. Like the Apostolic Church, Pentecostals should break bread every Lord's Day. His argument is twofold: First, the rite's performance facilitates "fellowship" with Christ the Redeemer, an experience aptly described by the alternative name Holy Communion. Moorhead explains that this "enjoyable fellowship" occurs *as* believers partake of the bread and wine—symbols of Christ's body and blood. Second, the rite elicits thanksgiving from the participants, a disposition aptly described by the second alternative, Eucharist—meaning giving thanks. The breadth of the terminology used to describe the rite supports Moorhead's argument that the Lord's Supper is a "Holy Supper." What is fascinating is that Moorhead's view passes McAlister's "clear-cut" rule. Pentecostals tended not to be prescriptive in terms of worship

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<sup>67</sup> Moorhead, "Breaking of Bread," 12.

<sup>68</sup> Moorhead, "Breaking of Bread," 12.

practices. To argue that Pentecostals are “undoubtedly in divine order” to break bread weekly, as did the Apostolic Church on the Lord’s Day, comes close. McAlister promoted the weekly “Breaking of Bread” observance, at the very least.

Like McAlister’s “Ordinances” article, Moorhead contrasts the Holy Supper with the Passover meal, but with this distinction, “the Passover which the Jews observed in the time of Christ.”<sup>69</sup> Also, like McAlister, Moorhead argues that spiritual knowledge (*anamnesis*) depends on the Spirit (*epiclesis*). Moorhead writes, “Through the operation of the Spirit, we will be helped worthily and with spiritual intelligence to eat the bread and drink the cup of remembrance of HIM Who shed His Precious Blood on Calvary’s Cross.”<sup>70</sup> In Pentecostal form, Moorhead prays that the same Holy Spirit that makes possible worthy participation in the rite illuminates the teaching he now delivers.

Moorhead states that the Passover foreshadows Christ’s sacrifice. His biblical prooftext is 1 Cor 5:7, where the Apostle Paul identifies “Christ as our Passover,” a spotless sacrifice, like the lambs chosen for the Jewish Passover.<sup>71</sup> He lists four Jewish Passover practices that should illuminate the Pentecostal ordinance of the Breaking of Bread: *Bodigath chametz* (searching for leaven), *Bi-oor chametz* (purging of leaven), *Haggadah* (showing forth), and the Bread of Affliction. As to *Bodigath* and *Bi-oor chametz*, Moorhead believes the symbolic acts of finding, collecting, and “purg[ing] out the old leaven” are somehow significant for Pentecostals. Whatever (else) these Jewish practices might mean, Moorhead does little more than highlight them. What is unclear is whether Moorhead intends leaven to refer to personal sin or an unsanctioned sinner in the ranks of a

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<sup>69</sup> Moorhead credits Rev. K. E. Khodadad for the research on the Passover but does not cite the work.

<sup>70</sup> Moorhead, “Breaking of Bread,” 12.

<sup>71</sup> Moorhead builds this section of his argument upon 1 Cor 5:6–8 without mention of the sexual immorality Paul addressed in vv. 1–5. He does devote space to the devil (Satan) and sin but does not connect it to 1 Cor 5.

church participating in the rite.<sup>72</sup> However, he points out that their contemporary applications involve the work of the Holy Spirit. According to Moorhead, the regenerative work of the Spirit makes worthy participation possible. To state it negatively: without the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, we eat and drink unworthily, causing self-damnation, sickness, or death.<sup>73</sup>

Unworthy eating and drinking equal not discerning the Lord's body. As his argument goes, the (regenerative) work of the Holy Spirit is vital in discerning the Lord's body. Like the Hebrew practices *Bodigath* and *Bi-oor chametz* (repeated every Passover feast), the Spirit's regenerative work is ongoing and occasioned by the Holy Meal. Complementing the work of the Spirit, Moorhead warns, "There is also a peril in going through the service, so to speak, in a sluggish, mechanical, prayerless fashion, thus missing the great blessing which our loving Heavenly Father has designed."<sup>74</sup> In other words, the participant's disposition and actions matter. What blessing? Moorhead does not explicitly identify it yet. He saves the reveal for the conclusion. In the meantime, he encourages participants to let go of grudges and end quarrels, a further obstacle to the blessing.

As to the Holy Meal *Haggadah*, Pentecostal participants proclaim the Lord's death until He returns rather than telling the story of the Jewish people's deliverance from Egypt. Moorhead highlights the Holy Meal's corporate declarative function: "The partaking of the bread and wine by *an assembly of believers* is, in itself, a confession of faith in Christ's vicarious atonement to the world, and it is a showing forth also to wicked principalities and powers, HIM Who bear our sins in His own body on the tree."<sup>75</sup> I found Moorhead's two-prong explanation unique among the early literature: the corporate praxis of the Holy Meal

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<sup>72</sup> Church discipline is the context of 1 Cor 5:7.

<sup>73</sup> Moorhead, "Breaking of Bread," 12.

<sup>74</sup> Moorhead, "Breaking of Bread," 12.

<sup>75</sup> Moorhead, "Breaking of Bread," 12.

is (a) a confession of faith to the world and (b) a showing forth of “HIM” (Christ crucified) to the wicked principalities and powers. Later, we discover Moorhead has in mind the bondage of the caste system (likely in India). The confession has an element of invitation (world, join us in the confession), but showing Christ’s victory leaves the principalities and powers only one choice: submit because you have lost.

As to the Bread of Affliction: when believers break bread at the Holy Meal, rather than remembering the sparseness of Egyptian bondage and giving thanks for redemption from the poverty of slavery, performing the actions of breaking bread at the Holy Meal is an opportunity to thank God for delivering us from sin’s bondage (the more extraordinary feat), through Jesus’ sacrifice. For Moorhead, Jesus’ sacrifice affords Christians complete deliverance.

Having extolled, “What a wonderful and complete deliverance from ALL bondage. Our God is a God of deliverance! Hallelujah,”<sup>76</sup> Moorhead adds the refrain,

Jesus is stronger than Satan and sin,  
Satan to Jesus must bow:  
No, I will triumph without and within,  
For Jesus saves me now.<sup>77</sup>

If the devil wrought Satanic bondage to humankind “in the fall of man [sic] through the first Adam,” Jesus, the second Adam by his “Atoning Sacrifice,” recovered all that was lost and brought about freedom. Moorhead defines this freedom as an exchange: no longer Satan’s “bondslaves” but Christ’s. In Pentecostal form, Moorehead describes the benefits of serving the Lord with praise.

I have no cares, O blessed will,  
For all my cares are Thine;  
I live in triumph, O my God,

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<sup>76</sup> Moorhead, “Breaking of Bread,” 12–13.

<sup>77</sup> Moorhead, “Breaking of Bread,” 13.

Thou has made Thy triumphs mine.<sup>78</sup>

This deliverance song is a Pentecostal triumph likely inspired by the Spirit's presence and delivered extemporaneously. Moorhead explains,

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Praise the Lord for deliverance from the bondage of formalism! How much better is the Lord's programme for our services than man's! Greatly preferable is the Divine order to the human order. God is Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24).<sup>79</sup>

Victorious, Pentecostal Christians are free from formalism and human order—liberated by the Spirit. For Moorhead, the Lord's better program, which means Spirit-liberty, not human-formalism, anticipates “deliverance from the bondage of caste.”<sup>80</sup>

Moorhead concludes the article by explaining how the Holy Meal “is designed to lead the believer into deeper communion with our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord.” He uses John 6:56–57 as his proof text:

He that eateth My flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me and I in Him (John 6:56). As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me shall live by Me (John 6:57). Jesus said, “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” And as Jesus lived by the Father, even so, the believer who eats the bread by faith, partakes in his spirit, soul, and body of Him Who is Resurrection and Life and is blessedly renewed.<sup>81</sup>

Pentecostals enter deeper communion with Jesus as we partake of the elements by faith. Mutual indwelling—Jesus in me and I in Him—the gift of Godself is “the great blessing our loving Heavenly Father has designed.”<sup>82</sup> We live by Him, mirroring the inter-Trinitarian life through the mystery of the Holy Communion. By faith, bread and wine become flesh and blood. Miraculously, we experience blessed renewal as we partake of Resurrection Life in our spirit, soul, and body—Jesus the Bread come down from Heaven.

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<sup>78</sup> Moorhead, “Breaking of Bread,” 13.

<sup>79</sup> Moorhead, “Breaking of Bread,” 13.

<sup>80</sup> Moorhead, “Breaking of Bread,” 13.

<sup>81</sup> Moorhead, “Breaking of Bread,” 13.

<sup>82</sup> Moorhead, “Breaking of Bread,” 12.

### Daniel Warren Kerr's Feast of Flesh and Blood

Daniel Warren Kerr (1856–1927) was born in Center County, Peansylvania. Before joining the Pentecostal movement, he was an experienced pastor who previously pastored churches in the Evangelical Association and the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA). In 1907, while pastoring in Dayton, Ohio, Kerr and his wife Mattie attended Beulah Park camp meetings and received the Pentecostal experience. Shortly after, he transferred to a CMA church in Cleveland full of congregants who had already experienced the Pentecostal blessing. The church ultimately agreed to declare independence from the CMA. After pastoring the church for eight years (1911–1919), he moved to California. Kerr founded two Bible institutes, a Southern California Bible Institute (1920) and Central Bible Institute (1922), and was an early executive presbyter of the General Council of the Assemblies of God.<sup>83</sup>

McAlister published Kerr's sermon in the August 1924 issue of the *Testimony*.<sup>84</sup> Kerr makes several noteworthy points. First, he identifies the Lord's Supper as a meeting place that affords an extraordinary encounter with the Lord. Kerr also describes its observance to be in service to the gospel.<sup>85</sup> Second, Kerr emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in making the experience of "Calvary" real.<sup>86</sup> Having lamented the loss of the collective knowledge of Calvary, he assures the audience, "But by the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit, it is a living reality."<sup>87</sup> He explains, "We are lost without the

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<sup>83</sup> Jones, "Kerr, Daniel Warren," 820.

<sup>84</sup> Kerr, "Sermon," 5–6.

<sup>85</sup> Kerr ("Sermon," 5) writes, "This is a place where the Lord will meet us in a very special way . . . We are here to serve the gospel; we are gathered to do what the Lord has told us, which He has passed on to us through His servant Paul."

<sup>86</sup> Tomberlin (*Pentecostal Sacraments*, 191) concurs, stating that in 1 Corinthians 11, "Paul's concern is for *power* and *order*. Their improper worship denied the power of the holy meal to bring the people of God into a holy communion."

<sup>87</sup> Kerr, "Sermon," 5.

company of Jesus Christ, our risen Christ would be lost to us if it would not be for the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. It is by Him that the Passover is made real to us. The Holy Spirit, which is present with us here, will make Christ a reality to every one of us.”<sup>88</sup> According to Kerr, the Holy Spirit makes plain the presence of Christ. Kerr goes on to define Christ’s presence in his concluding remarks.

But before he does so, Kerr illustrates his thesis by comparing the Lord’s Supper with God’s provision of supernatural sustenance for the Israelites once emancipated from Egypt and wandering in the desert before entering the Promised Land. Kerr notes that God gave the Hebrews “spiritual food, spiritual meat, spiritual drink.” Manna was the spiritual food (Kerr does not mention quail as the spiritual meat) and gushing water from the rock of Horeb. Hungry and thirsty, God provided supernatural bread from Heaven and drink from the “smitten rock” (a type of Christ’s suffering that he describes as “the smiting of the Rock of Ages”). Pointing out the Communion elements, Kerr states, “We have this morning a spiritual meal before us, the bread and the fruit of the vine. Jesus said: ‘Take eat, this is my body which was broken for you; and drink, this is my blood which is shed for you.’”<sup>89</sup> He makes clear that Jesus’ invitation to eat and drink comes with a solemn warning, “As a spiritual meal, a holy meal, as a memorial, we must discern the Lord’s body, the Lord’s shed blood,” and continues that those who eat or drink unworthily will be damned.<sup>90</sup> Notice the catchall description of the rite: a spiritual meal and holy meal and memorial. Together, all three require a twofold discernment: It is incumbent upon the participants to discern the Lord’s body in the bread and his shed blood in the wine. Failing discernment,

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<sup>88</sup> Kerr, “Sermon,” 5.

<sup>89</sup> Kerr, “Sermon,” 6. Tomberlin (*Pentecostal Sacraments*, 200) offers a similar testimony from A. J. Tomlinson.

<sup>90</sup> Kerr, “Sermon,” 6.



partakers bring about self-damnation. Discerning Christ's presence means being "in Christ Jesus" and "walking after the Spirit," which makes for "no condemnation."

Kerr's sermon warns of the terrible consequences of participating in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy (or non-discerning) manner, but he also explains the blessings of worthy participation:

Why do we eat? We eat that the waste tissues may be replaced. For the same reason we must eat Christ that we may be strengthened in the inner man [sic], every fibre and tissue of our being . . . By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Read the 11th chapter of Hebrews, Some better thing. I wonder what it is? Something that gets down into your bones, if we discern the Lord's body we eat His flesh and drink His blood. This is some better thing; This is a feast.<sup>91</sup>

This sermon excerpt demonstrates that at least McAlister and the early Canadian Pentecostal leaders, like Kerr, at the time described the Lord's Supper as theologically more than the Zwinglian memorialism.<sup>92</sup> For Kerr, the rite includes (a) empowerment ("we shall know the exceeding greatness of His power" and "When God Himself dwells in us and walks in us, we can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us"); (b) blessing for this life ("we shall know the blessedness of Christ and we can have life"); (c) sanctification ("It will enable us to triumph gloriously to overcome all our faults, the flesh and the devil"); and (d) healing ("For the same reason we must eat Christ that we may be strengthened in the inner man [sic], every fibre and tissue of our being"). It is not difficult to see traces of the Full Gospel in Kerr's explanation.<sup>93</sup> Like McAlister and the other *Testimony* contributors, Kerr points out the New Covenant's superiority over the Old. The "better thing" about the New Testament "Feast" is that by discerning Christ's body,

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<sup>91</sup> Kerr, "Sermon," 6.

<sup>92</sup> Smith and Gros (*The Lord's Supper*, 125) state, "In Pentecostal literature, one can also find occasional remarks that apparently embrace the essence of sacramental theology in a way that seems to go beyond the Zwinglian memorial view." See also, Macchia's (*Introduction*, 145) concise explanation of Zwingli and the Anabaptists view of the Lord's Supper.

<sup>93</sup> For an explanation of the Full Gospel, see Dayton, *Theological Roots*, 173–74.

partakers “eat His flesh and drink His blood,” and His presence “gets down into [the] bones.”

### Donald Gee’s Fundamental Truth

The November 1926 issue of the *Canadian Pentecostal Testimony* included an article by Donald Gee (1891–1966) entitled “Studies in the Fundamental Truths No. 9.” The column deals exclusively with the Lord’s Supper. The subtitle reads, “‘The Breaking of Bread’—This is enjoined upon all believers until the Lord comes. Luke 22: 14–20; 1 Cor. 11. 20–34.”<sup>94</sup> McAlister curates a concise theological treatise on the Lord’s Supper for the *Testimony* readership by including Gee’s study, demonstrating that the Lord’s Supper practice *is* essential to Canadian Pentecostal “Fundamental Truth.”

But why is the editor of the *Testimony* republishing articles concerned with Fundamental Truth? By 1926, the PAOC held two values in tension: Canadian Pentecostalism is orthodox yet unique. With Gee’s article, McAlister proves that Canadian Pentecostalism was a legitimate Canadian Christian religious group, though relatively new to the church scene. For McAlister, Gee’s “Study No. 9” demonstrates that early Canadian Pentecostals were theologically orthodox on the “essentials,” but they were also unique; Pentecostals expected a Full Gospel encounter with Christ in Pentecostal praxis, including the performance of the Lord’s Supper.

But why republish Gee’s writings? From 1920 to 1930, Gee pastored a church near Edinburgh. It did not take long to extend his influence “through his articles in Pentecostal magazines and hymns in his *Redemption Tidings Hymn Book* published in 1924.”<sup>95</sup> From 1928 onwards, Gee began to teach and lecture worldwide, starting in Australia, New

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<sup>94</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

<sup>95</sup> Pearse, “Donald Gee,” 252.

Zealand, the United States, and Canada. Gee, a British Pentecostal leader, spent much of his adulthood travelling the globe as a spokesman for worldwide Pentecostalism.<sup>96</sup> There is no doubt about Gee's influence on Canadian Pentecostalism. Canadian Pentecostal leaders like McAlister esteemed Gee's theological prowess. They republished sixty-five of his articles from *Redemption Tidings*, *Pentecost*, and the American Assemblies of God's *Pentecostal Evangel* in the *Canadian Testimony*.<sup>97</sup> Gee was a prolific writer. His writings "exude a combination of humanity, balance and real intelligence, at once committed to Pentecostal distinctives . . . and to healthy self-criticism."<sup>98</sup> Gee was a self-educated theologian. The prophetic message of his early career called Christians out of worldliness, formality, and lukewarmness, which are "telling sins plaguing the church."<sup>99</sup> By 1926, Gee was a trustworthy voice McAlister could echo for the sake of the Canadian Fellowship. Gee was acquainted with Congregationalists, Baptists, Anglicans, and the Welsh revival, and was thoroughly Pentecostal.

Pentecostals sought to experience Christ's real presence, a Full Gospel encounter wherever they went and whenever they gathered. This Full Gospel expectation includes meeting Christ in the Lord's Supper. Gee's Introduction to "Study No. 9" is a solid literary hook for the theological argument that follows: "The supreme purpose of the Lord's Supper is to bring believers to the Lord Himself; and that at the point of greatest importance to salvation—His atoning death."<sup>100</sup> It is not surprising that early Pentecostals sought after an experience of Christ's presence every time they gathered. It might be surprising to some that Gee frames the Lord's Supper's supreme purpose to bring Pentecostals to Christ

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<sup>96</sup> Pearse, "Donald Gee," 251.

<sup>97</sup> Ross, *Donald Gee*, 90.

<sup>98</sup> Pearse, "Donald Gee," 251.

<sup>99</sup> Ross, *Donald Gee*, 90.

<sup>100</sup> Gee, "Study," 3.

Himself.<sup>101</sup> Gee signals that the Lord's Supper is an exceptional occasion for Pentecostals to encounter Christ (which is an orthodox concept). Some contemporary Pentecostals argue that every event is an opportunity to experience Christ's presence. They conclude that the Lord's Supper celebration is not an exceptional opportunity to meet Christ. In other words, they deny the exceptionality of the rite for a Full Gospel encounter with Christ. Still, Gee and, therefore, McAlister believed that the Lord's Supper was an exceptional opportunity to meet Christ.<sup>102</sup> Gee's reasons were twofold: first, Christ ordains its supreme purpose; second, Christ brings participants to Himself through the rite.<sup>103</sup> But how does Christ bring Pentecostals to Himself through the rite? Are participants simply made to remember Christ? Or is Christ present and drawing participants? And if so, how is the Lord present? How might the rite be both orthodox and uniquely Pentecostal?

Gee explains that the ordinance comes from Jesus:

This is the first point to devoutly remember. Not from any church council, not from any Apostolic decree, but directly from the Lord Himself do we receive this simple practice ... Down through all the ages; all the controversies; all the abuses; all the revivals; this simple ordinance still comes to us directly from the Lord Himself.<sup>104</sup>

By centring the rite *on* and later *in* Christ and not on the Supper's controversial history, Gee's article educates the *Testimony* readership that the ritual is rooted in the words and deeds of the Lord, another orthodox concept. Gee reminds the readership, "'He took bread,' 'He took the cup,' and said, 'this do in remembrance of me' (Luke 22: 17–19)."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Kärkkäinen, "Pentecostal View," 122.

<sup>102</sup> Black (*The Lord's Supper*, 182) offers a similar testimony from a British Pentecostal pioneer sentiment.

<sup>103</sup> Kärkkäinen ("Pentecostal View," 123) states that for Richard Bicknell, a British Elim Pentecostal, "there is a need to affirm the 'spiritual' presence of Christ and the spiritual significance of the celebration of the meal. Therefore, the celebration can also be called a 'point of encounter' between believers and Christ or a 'divine contact point.'"

<sup>104</sup> Gee, "Study," 3.

<sup>105</sup> Gee, "Study," 3.

According to Gee, what Jesus did (His actions) and what Jesus said (His words of institution) matter. Quoting the Apostle Paul, Gee emphasizes, “Paul is very emphatic in 1 Cor. 11:23—‘For I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you.’”<sup>106</sup> Gee’s point is that if the Apostle Paul was careful to explain why the Corinthians should take the Bread and the Cup and perform the rite as Jesus did, we should likewise be careful. Gee goes on,

Notice that if the chain is complete looking backward; it is no less complete looking forward, for it connects us unfalteringly with the Lord’s return and Kingdom. Listen to Jesus as He utters the significant words, “I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the Kingdom of God” (Mark 14.15). This memorial feast as definitely links us to a Redeemer who is coming as it links us to a Redeemer who came. It is only—“till He come” (1 Cor. 11:26).<sup>107</sup>

Interestingly, the performance (a memorial feast) links Pentecostals to a Redeemer who came and is coming again. It does so in/by Christ’s presence. Earlier, when Gee stated that the ordinance “still comes to us directly from the Lord Himself,”<sup>108</sup> he was implying that Pentecostals are more than overlooking “church history” to notice Jesus’ words in the text of scripture for themselves. Gee believes Jesus still invites the church to His Table—to His exceptional place of encounter. More than a retrospective connection to Jesus’ “words of institution” (or a prospective gaze into the future), Christ presently invites Pentecostals to encounter Him at His Table.

In the section entitled “It Comes From The Lord Himself,” Gee reminds us that the Lord’s Supper rite should be practiced by Pentecostals because the authoritative decree to do so comes directly from Jesus Himself. In other words, Gee reminds the readership that the Lord’s Supper is an Ordinance. Although the Lord’s Supper is an Ordinance, it is also

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<sup>106</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

<sup>107</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

<sup>108</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

more than an Ordinance. Gee defines the Lord's Supper's "supreme purpose," extending the rite into the sacramental sphere. Gee believed (as all Pentecostals do) that Christ desires an ongoing relationship with humanity. Gee, however, thought that the Lord's Supper rite was a chief way of accomplishing this personal Divine-human connection. But how does Gee understand the essence of the personal encounter with "the Lord Himself?" What, if anything, does Gee's study reveal about what early Pentecostals believed about Christ's real presence in the performance of the Lord's Supper? Does sacramental language better describe Gee's Full Gospel vision of an encounter with Christ?<sup>109</sup>

In the next section, Gee writes, "When partaken of rightly, it carries the Church through all the externals to the very heart of her faith; the very centre of her Gospel; the supreme object of her love. How blessed therefore is this 'Breaking of Bread!'"<sup>110</sup> According to Gee, when Pentecostals observe the Lord's Supper, the rite has the power to unite the participants with Christ.<sup>111</sup> Partaking "rightly" unveils the Christ encounter. Gee's language about the "externals" and what lies beneath the externals is fascinating. The essence—"heart, centre, supreme object"—of the rite is Christ and Christ is somehow hidden beneath the externals—"the outward ceremony." Participants can tragically miss the hidden Christ. Gee warns, "There is a complete failure of the Divine purpose if the believer participates in the outward ceremony and misses the Lord. We must meet in hallowed communion with the Saviour, or we come to the table in vain."<sup>112</sup> Later, Gee describes the "hallowed communion with the Saviour" as emblematic of the imagery of the Song of Solomon.

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<sup>109</sup> Looking back to the point/time of redemption and looking forward to the point/time of the Redeemer's return locates the church at the point/time of His welcome—the inbreaking of His kingdom.

<sup>110</sup> Gee, "Study," 3.

<sup>111</sup> Using the language of transport (taking us to the Lord Himself), we can hear the whispers of Calvin. See, Macchia (*Introduction*, 145) for a concise explanation of John Calvin's view.

<sup>112</sup> Gee, "Study," 3.

Not only does Gee root the “fundamental truth of the Lord’s Supper” in the “Gospel” (the words and deeds of Christ), but he illustrates its necessity for Pentecostal practice from the book of Acts. Gee’s initial prooftext, preceding any evidential support derived from the New Testament Gospels, is sourced from the book of Acts. Early Pentecostals were keen to distinguish themselves as “Full Gospel Christians.”<sup>113</sup> McAlister wrote of the Pentecostal movement, “THIS MOVEMENT is pre-eminently scriptural and stands for the same truths as the apostles taught and practiced in the primitive church.”<sup>114</sup> Practicing what the primitive church practiced, not just believing what the primitive church believed, is fundamental to the Pentecostal “Full Gospel” ethos. Early Pentecostals were a restorationist movement, an “Apostolic Faith Movement,” that believed in and practiced what they understood the primitive church did. The combination of simple faith and religion made possible the “book of Acts” experiences and outcomes they longed for God to restore to the church. Canadian Pentecostal pioneer A. H. Argue encapsulated this restorationist sentiment when he wrote,

Dear ones, God is endeavouring to bring us nearer to the Faith once delivered unto the saints. How may we attain this? The Word says, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Our faith did not grasp the full Gospel in past years *because it was not presented to us*, but God is now revealing the truths in their simplicity, and they are being presented, and faith is grasping them. In these days, when the full, simple Gospel is being preached, we see numbers come to the altar, and before they leave it, are praising God that the Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth them from ALL SIN, and for the blessed Baptism of the Holy Ghost, speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, and for the healing of their bodies. Now, who are we that we can withstand God? Does it not appear that Luther, Wesley, Edwards, Cookman, Fox, Finney, and other good men did not have the full Gospel as we have it today? Let us continue to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints. New wine in new bottles.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 37.

<sup>114</sup> McAlister, “Apostolic Faith Movement,” 319.

<sup>115</sup> Argue, “At Evening Time,” 6–7.

McAlister uses Gee's article as an example of early Pentecostals "contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). It could be easy for early Pentecostals to minimize or even jettison everything associated with non-Full Gospel faith since it did not afford the "good Christian leaders" of the recent past the "New wine" of Pentecostal experience, as Argue described above. With Gee's article, McAlister is safeguarding the valuable Lord's Supper rite so that Pentecostals do not discard it, along with other things that are inessential to the Full Gospel faith.

As early Pentecostals organized and formalized, they found the blueprint for Full Gospel Faith in the book of Acts. It was essential to illustrate that the Lord's Supper was a Full Gospel rite—practiced by the primitive church and thus essentially Pentecostal—and Gee's article helps define it as such. Gee writes, "It seems probable that the early Christians, combining this simple ordinance as they did with the 'love-feast of their common meal,' thus remembered 'the Lord's death' every day (Acts 2.42-46)." Before any proof-text from the Gospels, Gee answers any potential objection that the Lord's Supper rite is unnecessary ritualism. Gee states, "Any participation 'unworthily' is too frequent, even though it be once a year." But when performed and partaken of rightly, as in the book of Acts, "We can scarcely too often take hold of such a precious means of grace if only the heart is prepared to enter into it thoughtfully and devoutly."<sup>116</sup> Gee, and thus McAlister, believed that Pentecostals could profitably observe the rite (at least) weekly as a "means of grace." The phrase "means of grace" is essential to early Pentecostal sacramental thought. In what sense is Gee using it? Since, according to Gee, the blessedness of this rite is that it can carry the church to Christ Himself, his description of the Christ encounter and how it relates to the rite is vital.

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<sup>116</sup> Gee, "Study," 3.



Gee describes the felt sense of the Full Gospel encounter he envisions for the rite:

If the institution of the Lord's Supper is a link directly with the Master; it is still more significant that every element is calculated to draw the soul to Himself. The bread that is broken is "My body which is given for you;" the wine which we drink is "My blood which is shed for you" (Luke 22.19-20). Moreover, there is His distinct command, "This do in remembrance of Me." All Divinely Personal. There is a complete failure of the Divine purpose if the believer participate in the outward ceremony and misses the Lord. We must meet in hallowed communion with the Saviour, or we come to the table in vain.<sup>117</sup>

He builds on the "Divinely Personal" affectional language to emphasize the relational qualities of the Christ encounter. He describes the Lord's Table as a "trysting-place between the betrothed and the Bridegroom," imagery he borrows from the Song of Solomon.<sup>118</sup> Gee describes the encounter with the Lord as a tryst, "an agreement between lovers to meet at a certain time and place," and the Table as "a private meeting place that lovers have agreed on." Gee uses evocative romantic language: "Love and gratitude, adoration and then love again, should mark these holy seasons." To miss the opportunity to meet with the Lord by partaking unworthily "provokes the Lord to jealousy." He warns that the "divided heart" makes "Divine Jealousy to blaze at the Lord's Table."

As to the efficacy of the rite, Gee puts the burden on the participants. Participants must partake "thoughtfully and devoutly." In some contemporary Pentecostal contexts, novelty is sacrosanct. However, when originality becomes an idol, Pentecostal worship services become a trinket spirituality. For some, it is hard to imagine a Pentecostal context that would champion the tradition of a consistent weekly ritual, but originality does not equal sacramentality, according to Gee.

As to the elements, Gee teaches that the bread chiefly represents the truth that Jesus gave himself as the "ransom price for our release from sin and Satan."<sup>119</sup> Gee also remarks

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<sup>117</sup> Gee, "Study," 3.

<sup>118</sup> Gee, "Study," 3.

<sup>119</sup> Gee, "Study," 4.

that Christ's use of bread affords "many wonderful lines of meditation," "too many to consider fully" in this article. He mentions five themes:

1. The bread focuses our attention on His body (the vessel of His flesh and blood), the very expression of His incarnation and the means of our deliverance (Heb 2:14).
2. The unleavened bread or biscuit reminds us that Christ is our spotless Passover lamb—"utterly sinless character" (1 Cor 5:7).
3. The Lord's teaching regarding being the *Bread of Life* (John 6).
4. The bodily suffering of Jesus leads to meditating on divine healing: "Thoughtful, devout, believing participation in a Breaking of Bread service is a wonderful means towards Divine Healing" (1 Cor 11:24; 2 Cor 5:21; Isa 53:5; Matt 8:17).
5. The unity of the mystical body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16–17).

As to Jesus' "Bread of Life" discourse, Gee writes,

This should never be narrowed down to any superstitious, mystical participation of the literal bread at the Lord's Table. It includes all true spiritual communion with the Lord and all appropriation by the believer of what Christ is to the soul in meeting its every need. Nevertheless, the Breaking of bread should also make still more real to the spiritual sense of the believer an actual participation in all the fullness of Christ for spirit, soul and body.<sup>120</sup>

In essence, Gee rejects transubstantiation. But notice Gee's "nevertheless" caveat regarding "all true spiritual communion with the Lord." Communion at the Lord's Table affords "actual participation in all the fullness of Christ." The Breaking of Bread rite occasions a "still more real sense" of the fullness of Christ for the participants' "spirit, soul and body."

He notes that the second element, the wine, also chiefly signifies ransom. In a theological twist, Gee explains that there is significance to the fact that Jesus offered the apostles the cup. Gee argues that the promises of God (the New Covenant in His blood) are things willed (bequeathed) and proved by His blood. The believers (recipients of the cup and partakers of His blood) have the right to appropriate these bequeathed blessings as possessions. He writes, "The remarkable paradox is that the Testator has now risen from the

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<sup>120</sup> Gee, "Study," 4.

dead to be the Executor of His own will!”<sup>121</sup> The implication is that the inheritance is secure because no one can contest Christ’s will.

In his final section, Gee addresses the solemn warning of 1 Cor 11:20–31. His elucidation of verses 27–31 makes clear that first, the scriptures call for introspection (self-examination), not policing, and second, the self-examination (discerning the Lord’s body) includes (a) repentance for personal transgressions, (b) identification and reparation of relational disunity, and (c) mending spiritual disconnection. As to spiritual disconnection, Gee writes:

Still, we are to “discern the Lord’s body” by realizing closeness and reality of communion and relationship with the Lord at such a time. Then with such a glorious, yet solemn truths [sic] in view, we are to “Examine ourselves” as to our personal condition of soul towards the Redeemer: our personal faith, 2 Cor. 13:5, our personal hope (1 Thess. 5:6) our personal love (Rev. 2:4).<sup>122</sup>

Here, Gee suggests that this weekly ordinance is a means to ensure the “revival fires” are burning. The Lord’s Table is an opportunity for Pentecostal believers to test themselves: ensuring Christ is present in them (2 Cor 13:5), attentive to the Spirit’s command (1 Thess 5:6), and loving toward God and neighbour (Rev 2:4). The inevitable consequence of the sinful, divided, and disconnected state (an unhealthy spiritual life), one that is consistently failing to “discern the Lord’s body,” is physical weakness, sickness, and sleep.

### **Concluding Remarks**

McAlister published Stephens, Purdie, Moorhead, Kerr, and Gee in the Testimony. He viewed their articles as clear-cut. So, how should we interpret the sacramentalism of the first wave of Pentecostalism in Canada? McAlister welcomed early Canadian Pentecostals who did not uniformly hold a memorialist view of the Lord’s Supper. It was clear that early

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<sup>121</sup> Gee, “Study,” 4.

<sup>122</sup> Gee, “Study,” 13.

Canadian Pentecostals believed the same as Moorhead, Kerr, Gee, etc. Still, the founding Canadian Pentecostals' use of the term sacrament and their mixed language (ordinance, sacrament, symbol, sign, emblem, etc.) and sensory descriptions of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper made their views more than commemorative. Gee utilized spiritual presence language, while Moorhead and Kerr employed literal description. Stephens used memorialist terminology but described Christ's Presence sensorily. The reception history I have presented is not pneumatologically weak. Regardless of the differences, Pentecostals encounter Christ and respond "Maranatha," which is closer to Calvin's sacramentality.<sup>123</sup> Early Canadian Pentecostals saw the Lord's Supper as an ordinance, but it was more than that. It was "sacramental," that is, not simply sacred, but gravid with Christ, mediated by the Spirit, and attested by the saints.

Early Canadian Pentecostal language differed because the founders were freshly Spirit-baptized Anglicans, Wesleyans, Baptists, Mennonites, Salvation Army, etc. McAlister avoided controversial positions that "confuse God's people to no profit." He still saw the Lord's Supper as a "full gospel" rite that would help them in their "aggressive evangelism of the world" since it was an exceptional occasion to encounter Christ in a Pentecostal way.

Like other Pentecostal periodicals in the United States and Europe, the early Canadian papers include vivid testimonials and comprehensive essays on the practice of the Lord's Supper. This Canadian testimony is an essential conversation partner for today's theological work. McAlister's curated "clean-cut" witness in the *Testimony*, like that of the Hebden and others, redirects us to consider the centrality of the Lord's Supper in Pentecostal praxis. Building a theology of the Lord's Supper must incorporate the

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<sup>123</sup> See, Macchia *Introduction to Theology*, 145 for an explanation of Calvin's sacramentality from a Pentecostal perspective.

sacramental spirit of early Canadian Pentecostals. What of this early Pentecostal witness is discernible within the contemporary Pentecostal liturgy of the Lord's Supper? Next, I examine the lived experience of current Pentecostal clergypersons and laypersons.

### CHAPTER 3: NEW CANADIAN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In the previous chapter, I assembled a composite early Canadian testimony about the Lord's Supper, offering it as a reception history of the topic. The data illustrates that not only was the rite *more* than an ordinance adhered to by Canadian Pentecostals monthly, but the data also suggests that the early Canadian Pentecostal leaders believed that the rite was a unique meeting place with Christ. In other words, even for Pentecostals who expected to experience the powerful presence and gifts of the Spirit at every assembly, the Lord's Supper was an exceptional occasion to encounter Christ.

In this chapter, I investigate the contemporary Canadian Pentecostal "experientialist religious discourse" on the Lord's Supper from two perspectives: clergy persons and laypersons.<sup>1</sup> I outlined my phenomenological methodology in the "Introduction: Definitions and Methods." My goal in this chapter is illustrative: a sign "orienting the reader reflectively to that region of lived experience where that phenomenon dwells in recognizable form."<sup>2</sup> In other words, generally speaking, my phenomenological concerns are with the "essences of lived experiences."<sup>3</sup> Specifically, my phenomenological interviews sought to discover how clergypersons and laypersons experience the felt sense of Christ's presence in the performance of and participation in the Lord's Supper.

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<sup>1</sup> Cartledge (*Mediation*, 26) writes "that experientialist religious discourse should be respected as containing genuine theology. But an attitude of respect does not preclude theological evaluation or comment."

<sup>2</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 390.

<sup>3</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 89.

Following van Manen, I can say that the process of writing is part of my research.<sup>4</sup> From my phenomenological data, I generate two rich composite snapshots that form the textural description of the experience of Christ's presence in the performance of the Lord's Supper as it is lived in the PAOC today. My phenomenological method, including the data analysis and my own account, reflects van Manen's phenomenology of practice.<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, I uncover the "objective features of the subjectivities" of the Pentecostal experience of Christ's presence in the praxis of the Lord's Supper.<sup>6</sup> As to the phenomenological themes, I pay attention to what they are (the manifest) and what they mean (the latent).<sup>7</sup> In other words, this phenomenological project brings the experiential realities of Pentecostal praxis to expression in language.<sup>8</sup> I organize my findings under two headings. First, I provide a brief overview of the research participants. Second, in a "feelingly understanding" way, based on the interviews, I describe the phenomena in three ways: (a) I provide a textural description, the "what of the appearing phenomenon," namely that clergypersons' experience the Lord's Supper as a sacred, mysterious, moment when Pentecostals meet with Christ, and the laypersons' experience is a *serious, lingering* event that *connects* Pentecostals to Christ *supernaturally*; (b) I offer anonymized text of the interviews to exemplify the textural description; and (c) I present a brief reflection on the felt sense of Christ's presence.

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<sup>4</sup> van Manen (*Phenomenology of Practice*, 20) states, "To write is to reflect; to write is to research. And in writing, we may deepen and change ourselves in ways we cannot predict."

<sup>5</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*.

<sup>6</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 68.

<sup>7</sup> Saldaña, *The Coding Manual*, 268.

<sup>8</sup> van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 68.

## Research Participants

This study's research participants consist of thirty-eight Canadian Pentecostal adults:<sup>9</sup> twenty clergy persons and eighteen laypersons.<sup>10</sup> The clergypersons come from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Maritime, Quebec, Eastern Ontario, Western Ontario, Saskatchewan, and the British Columbia and Yukon Districts of the PAOC.<sup>11</sup> The clergypersons include six women and fourteen men. Three of the clergy participants are people of colour. One participant conducts services in French. The age range of the clergy participants is from 30–35 to 70–75.

As to laypersons, they attend church in the Western Ontario, Eastern Ontario, British Columbia and Yukon, and the Maritime Districts. The laypersons include eleven women and eight men. Four of the participants are people of colour. The age range of the participants is from 30–35 to 70–75. Both groups are culturally diverse, reflecting the PAOC demographic.

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<sup>9</sup> The McMaster Research Ethics Board approved all research aspects that involved human subjects.

<sup>10</sup> Creswell and Poth suggest recruiting between 3 to 15 research participants but later note that Donald E. Polkinghorne suggests “5 to 25” (*Qualitative Inquiry*, 76, 79). van Manen, whose methodology I follow in this study, does not indicate an ideal sample size but instead warns about defending “research in terms of references that do not belong to the methodology of phenomenology” and goes on to state that matters like sample size “are concepts that belong to the languages of different qualitative methodologies.” Nevertheless, my sample size, twenty (20) clergypersons and eighteen (18) laypersons fall within Polkinghorne’s recommendation. More pertinently, the sample of both clergy and laypersons reflects the national PAOC demographic approximately. Also, “qualitative research is not well-served by validation schemes that are naively applied across various incommensurable methodologies” (*Phenomenology of Practice*, 347). Still, I submitted the anonymized interview script to be reviewed by a third party familiar with Pentecostal praxis and phenomenological enquiry who independently examined each interview statement used for the phenomenological writing, answering “what it is” (or what is manifest) and “what it means” (or what is latent) (as per Saldaña, *The Coding Manual*, 268).

<sup>11</sup> The study includes six of the eight Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada districts and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador. I had no Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario or Alberta & Northwest Territories participants.



## **Phenomenological Description: Fleshing out Body Sense**

### Textural Description: The Clergy Participant's Perspective

My clergy participant interviews provided insight into their Lord's Supper practices, their goals for the congregations, and their experience of Christ's presence as they curate and perform the rite. From the standpoint of the clergy participant, there are at least four components that comprise the substance of a Pentecostal Lord's Supper performance:

1. The Lord's Supper is sacred.
2. The Lord's Supper is momentary.
3. The Lord's Supper is mysterious.
4. The Lord's Supper is a meeting with Christ.

### *The Lord's Supper Is Sacred*

All but one clergypersons expressed, in one way or another, that the Lord's Supper is sacred.<sup>12</sup> In fact, C3, C5, C7, C12–C14, C16 and C19 said the rite is sacred. Using synonyms, C2, C5, C7 and C11 stated the Lord's Supper is holy, C8, C11, C16 profound, C6 and C10 solemn, and C4 somber. For some, the sacredness of the Supper meant less frequent practice. Some would not celebrate the rite “too often” to safeguard it from religious familiarity—an experience akin to the routinization of *charisma*—and so diminish it. For example, C16 believes “the Lord's Supper is too great to be reduced to a common weekly practice.” Those like C16 who celebrate it monthly worry about its “majesty and power” diminishing in the estimation of laypersons because of routinization.<sup>13</sup> The Lord's Supper is sacred, meaning the rite is an exceptional worship occasion too great for common

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<sup>12</sup> Contrary to this point, C20 explained, “I’ll admit it’s an additive. It’s something that’s tacked on. I don’t know that I’m unique in the PAOC. We have to do it. I’m not saying that it doesn’t gain significance while we’re doing it. But I don’t put heavy thought on it ahead of time.”

<sup>13</sup> C16 implies that the Lord's Supper *is* an exceptional worship occasion.

practice. The power in the Lord's Supper is majestic but requires safeguarding from familiarity's diminishing effects.

Counter to C16 and others, C7 and C13 believe the rite is sacred, for them which means they practice the Lord's Supper weekly. While C3 and C11 have occasionally celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly for an extended period, C7 and C11 were the only clergy participants who regularly encouraged laypersons to celebrate the Lord's Supper in small groups from home to home or daily as a personal devotional practice. C7 explains the reason for a frequent Lord's Supper practice:

We have Holy Communion every Sunday. We used to do it once a month, but I think more frequent practice comes with growing in Christ. So, we do it as often as we can. Communion is something that has been provided faultless. We need it even more now, especially now that the day of His return draws near. We do it every day, whenever we gather, like the disciples. I believe Communion is a very sacred time.

Notice that C7 believes the Lord's Supper is faultless, which means it is exceptionally well suited to practice as often as Pentecostals gather. The Lord's Supper is also a very sacred time, meaning it should be taken seriously and often, especially considering the world's eschatological time-scape. Whereas C16 believes that there comes a point when things are overdone when adhered to every Sunday, and the majesty and power are lost, C7 believes that because the Lord's Supper is a sacred time and faultless rite, its spiritual benefit for believers is certain in perilous times and needed as frequently as possible. To this point, C7 argued,

So, the less you do it, the more sacred it is, and the more people value it? I say that's not true. They take it too lightly.

C7 also believes that some North Americans (like most of C7's PAOC colleagues) celebrate the Lord's Supper too infrequently, which means they take it too lightly.

In a follow-up interview, C15 reported that they recently started celebrating Communion weekly. C15 explained, “Some of the clergy participants avoid ritualizing the Lord’s Supper by not doing it often. I celebrated Communion monthly because every church I’ve attended does. I thought the PAOC required monthly practice. I never considered having the Lord’s Supper more often. Nobody mentioned it. It surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was missed. So I made sure we did it often.” This shift in practice caused C15 to reflect theologically:

I never recommend intermittent spiritual disciplines to avoid ritualization. We began a weekly prayer meeting with Communion following our initial interview. I found weekly Communion enhances practice. It may have felt ritualistic when done less often.

C15 celebrated the rite monthly, not for fear of it becoming ritualistic and losing meaning, majesty, and power. Instead, he never thought he could or should practice it more often, nor did it ever come up, which changed during the pandemic. Like C15, C3’s congregation requested that they celebrate the Lord’s Supper weekly on the Sundays that the Public Health Authority permitted outdoor gatherings during the pandemic. C3 explained, “I know it’s sacred to my congregation. It’s a step of obedience, so I included it weekly. I recognize that they connect with God’s presence during Communion.”

Like C3 and C9, C16 emphasized that the Lord’s Supper is an act of obedience. In fact, according to C16, obedience is the key to the spiritual encounter:

Christ Himself said, “This do in remembrance of me.” And because of that, it’s an absolute. So, when you are in obedience, I’ve found that the Holy Spirit tends to really strive with you more than when you’re trying to sneak by, as it were. When you are living in obedience and surrender, then the Holy Spirit comes in.

C16 describes the “Eucharist” as “one of the supreme examples of obedience and probably one of few tangible touchstones whereby we are actually called—other than by our lives—

but to honour Christ in a very visible, in a very public and in a very tangible way is sacred.”

Unlike C7 and C11 (and now C15 and C3 during the pandemic), fourteen others perform the rite monthly. Four celebrate the Lord’s Supper less frequently and at irregular intervals using different liturgies every time as routinization safeguards. Two framed the reason for their infrequent practice by highlighting that they reside in contexts populated mainly by Roman Catholics. For example, C1 remarked,

So, my Lord’s Supper practice takes lots of shapes and sizes because I’m in a very, very, very Catholic area where it is very much taken for granted. It is at every funeral, every wedding, every service, every everything. If you’ve not been to church for thirty-five years, you still take Communion. There is no thought to it. It doesn’t matter. It just happens. It is very robotic.

C1 and C9 infrequently practice the Lord’s Supper to avoid the robotic sense that results when practiced too frequently or when the Lord’s Supper is too accessible. C1 believes that the rite is meaningful, meaning that it must be practiced (and partaken) thoughtfully. In other words, C1 and C9 suggest that the Lord’s Supper is profaned when taken robotically (or ritualistically and for granted).

According to C2 and C6, the rite’s holiness needs ongoing liturgical inventiveness. It is as though the originality of the attending clergy persons produces holiness. Rather than the ritual being implicitly holy or the direct activity of God or Christ’s presence in the ceremony, C1 and C6 feel responsible for ensuring the holiness of the Lord’s Supper by attending to the participants’ intentions.

Regardless of whether the sacred nature of the Lord’s Supper inspired the clergy participants to perform the rite frequently or infrequently, all but one clergy participant understood the rite to be so. Even C20 admitted to “tacking on” the Lord’s Supper to a service once a month and gave it little thought but stated that it “gains significance” during the performance. Like C20, even though C3 discerns that the congregants connect with

God's presence in the Lord's Supper, the performance is cumbersome because it is an extra obligatory component whose logistics make it "a burden of practice." C3 says,

I have to get all this stuff organized. It's time-consuming . . . so we make time for it . . . I cut back on the sermon and save a song for the end . . . we just compensate for it. I know it's a sacred time, but I'm glad to include it because the congregants who embrace it experience God's presence. I don't experience God's presence as thoroughly—not to the same measure as I would have when I was partaking, and someone else is leading, and I am focused.

### ***The Lord's Supper Is Momentary***

Most clergy participants described the rite as a "moment" (sixteen responses). The word moment occurs sixty-eight times in the interview transcripts. For example, C5 intends the congregation to encounter God in the Lord's Supper and looks for "that sacred moment of blessing for laypersons distracted from God in their hectic daily lives." When describing the moment, the clergy participant's answers varied. The Lord's Supper is sacred because it is a moment of reflection (ten responses), unity (six responses), repentance and renewal (five responses), and connection to Christ and His work (four responses). It is sacred because it is a moment of blessing (C5), grounding (C6), two-way communication (C5), expectation (C11), understanding (C6), healing and deliverance (C9), and Selah (C10). It is also sacred because it is a moment to teach (C4, C10) and to soothe pain (C8).

### ***The Lord's Supper Is Mysterious***

While most clergy participants considered the Lord's Supper rich in significance and more easily described the moment (*avec plusieurs raison d'être*), many also experienced it as mysterious (eleven responses). For instance, C11 asserts, "There's *something* pretty powerful about the Lord's Supper. I'm powerfully changed! *Something* in me happens because of it. And there's *something* powerful that happens between us and with God." The

clergy participants agree that the “something” is significant, life-changing, devoid of superstition, and, beyond description, or mysterious.

There are two interdependent parts to the Lord’s Supper performance: what the clergyperson does liturgically and what occurs mysteriously. C9 remarked, “When I’m leading Communion, and I’m seeing people eyeball to eyeball, I am trying my hardest to make this real for them in different ways.”<sup>14</sup> Reflecting on the experience, “When I’ve experienced Christ’s presence in Communion, I have taken myself captive and chosen to look at Christ’s sacrifice. I feel a deeper connection with Him when I fully consider it logically and with my heart. That’s what Communion does for me and what I’m trying to do for my congregation.” As to the mysterious, C9 expands,

I believe Christ is present without the transubstantiation part of it. I do think *something* is going on. I get it. I can’t explain it. We need to get it, and we need to understand it. I can’t wrap my head around this becoming Christ’s flesh as I eat the bread. But *something* is going on here. There is a meaning beyond my understanding.

Similarly, C6 admits to misunderstanding the Lord’s Supper before seminary graduate studies and feeling it was obligatory and boring: “I never really got it. I didn’t understand why Jesus instituted the sacrament and how it was supposed to benefit us. It wasn’t until I studied other positions that I noticed the Lord’s Supper’s beauty.” C6 ties a new appreciation for the Lord’s Supper to pneumatology: “Communion represents all the things we believe about the Holy Spirit: The Spirit indwells us and fills us, and the Spirit of God brings unity. There is a lot to this, and we are missing it.” Like C9 and C11, C6 points out that,

Unlike other traditions that believe something happens in the spiritual realm as we participate in Communion, Pentecostals view the Lord’s Supper symbolically. I don’t know how far to go with that. I’m not advocating a Catholic view of the Eucharist, but I think there is more to it than, “This is a symbol of something, and

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<sup>14</sup> Nine participants talked about trying to explain the rite so the congregants understood it.

I'm going to pause for thirty-five seconds and remember that thing and then carry on with my day." It brings us *into something*. I don't know; I feel like there is much more here than we ever spent time on when I was a kid.

While C3 discerns the connection between the congregants' and God's presence in the Lord's Supper (but less so as the clergy person leading the performance), C6, C9 and C11 experience "something more." C8 states emphatically, "Communion is a powerful ritual because I also experience it powerfully."

Aside from a burden because of the logistics, the Lord's Supper is more than symbolic, more than what was taught (or learned), and more than plain remembering; it is a powerful ritual experience, discernably a connection between congregants and God. Regarding the rite's mysterious nature, C16 explains, "Again, in some sense, it's like trying to explain the unknowable." Sixteen participants seem to know "there's something more" experientially. C6 curates and performs the rite creatively (that is, differently each month), seeking scripture readings and approaches to explore the "into something more" suspicion. The searching performances critique what C6 described as the "anemic understanding" Pentecostals typically hold (or at least the regrettable early understanding of the rite). Similarly, C4 tries "to mine the scripture for anything that might be a semblance or a parallel, or imagery that could provide a rounder knowledge, understanding and biblical appreciation for what the Lord's Supper really is." After giving several pre-Communion teaching examples, C4 stated, "My simple encouragement is, let's not be unaware of God's presence at this moment."

Beyond describing what the Lord's Supper is not (that is, transubstantiation), what the clergy participants do liturgically, and what they understand logically, they describe "what's going on" (that is, the mysterious part of their experience, the heartfelt part of the experience) as something more, unexplainable, with meaning beyond their understanding,

something Pentecostals are missing. What's most interesting is that the Lord's Supper brings us *into something*: Christ's presence.

### ***The Lord's Supper Is a Meeting with Christ***

In one way or another, most clergy participants described the Lord's Supper as a meeting with Christ. C17 explained, "By calling you to His Table, God invites you into His family. And here is the sign of His family. He's having a meal with you. Communion could be your first contact with God."<sup>15</sup> Clergy participants said the Lord's Supper is the occasion, the Lord's Table is the place and consuming the elements is the moment Christ meets with us. C5 noted that "Communion is also our only regular opportunity for confession ... At Communion, we reflect upon what is most meaningful in our faith and open up to the Holy Spirit. Communion is a family dinner table conversation. The relating is not one-directional. The Spirit facilitates the dialogue with Jesus. I hope that after service, someone shares with me, 'During Communion, I heard God speak into my life about my job ... and I've committed to following Him.'"

Like a meeting place, C7 believes the Lord's Supper is an access point to "everything Christ's blood and crucifixion afford." During the ritual, C7 thanks God for the privilege of this access and petitions God to "renew it." C7 stated, "At the Lord's Supper, I *selah*. When I stop and listen, the Spirit makes the cross, Christ's death, His body, and blood very precious to me." C3, C9, and C14 also said they "have a deeper connection to Christ" at the Lord's Supper. C14 explained, "This is a chance for us as the body to experience Jesus. He is here by the Spirit. He is with this church. He is in the middle with us. There is a real heightened sense of His presence at the Lord's Supper. I ask: What is

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<sup>15</sup> Only one clergy participant described the Lord's Supper as a "first contact with God."



Jesus saying? What has the Lord weighed on your heart? Is there something that we need to do and that you must make right?” C16 explained,

The Eucharist is alive. It is a living thing, with the Holy Spirit coming into you at that moment around the Table. It is tangible, God manifesting Himself within you. I can’t do the Eucharist without being moved by it. I can’t receive it as a parishioner nor conduct a Communion service as a clergy member without being profoundly moved. I think the Eucharist must move you.

Similarly, C11 stated, “Unity with Christ happens at Communion. I consecrate the crackers and juice to Him, and they become Holy because they are an offering to Him. Christ only died once. Jesus is not dying again every time I take Communion. But there is definitely *something about it becoming*. I think the cracker and juice become His body and blood once we partake of the emblems.” C12 concurs, “In faith, I’m actually partaking of Christ’s presence.” According to C4, at the Lord’s Supper, “We taste and see His goodness, ingesting manna in a new way—our fresh bread and new wine, nothing stale or stagnant. At the Lord’s Supper, God’s New Covenant promises are fresh and available today.” C9 explained that a “Maranatha cry” (“Come, Lord Jesus, come”) underlies the Lord’s Supper performance: “I want the congregation to feel the peace that accompanies the coming of the Lord’s presence.”

C13 associates Christ’s presence with all Pentecostal praxis but describes the Lord’s Supper as an extraordinary occasion of Christ’s presence:

Christ is present in practice, in everything we do: the gathering, even passing the peace. So, when I talk about the Eucharist, I say the Table is the pinnacle of our gathering—it’s as though Christ is more present. I know about the Protestant and Catholic divide, but I’m not as worried about eating Jesus’ body and drinking His blood. I’m not quite there, but I think He’s uniquely present. Yeah, for sure. I’m not to the point where I believe in transubstantiation, but it doesn’t scare me. I believe Christ is present.

It is fascinating that C13 described the Lord’s Supper as the occasion where/when Christ *is more present*. Such is C13’s conviction that the weekly Eucharist replaces a regular altar

call. Similarly, C14 differentiated the Christ encounter at the Lord's Supper from other occasions, stating, "In the Lord's Supper, we are communing with Jesus. We are meeting with Him. There is a sacredness here. Jesus is real! Yes, for us Pentecostals, He is also real at the coffee shop. But Jesus is real at the Table, and this is the sacred time to really look at your life with Jesus." C15 remarked, "I think what's unique about experiencing Christ's presence at the Lord's Supper is the how. The emblems always bring us back to the place of reflecting on the cross. I don't think He's ever less willing to be present. What is changing, and I could be wrong, is that we are disciplining ourselves to become more aware of His presence by intentionally acknowledging His presence." According to C4, "Christ presences Himself or commands His presence in our sacraments."

Practically, some clergy participants prompt the congregation to become aware of Christ's presence, to notice and witness the sense of the experience. When they acknowledge that Christ is present, it has less to do with how Christ presences Himself and more to do with preparing the congregation to recognize the miracle of His presence. Most clergy participants interviewed did not elaborate on how Christ is present beyond denying they held the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. However, C4 explained the relationship between silence and prompting:

Silence is unique to most of our Communion experiences. Sombre moments don't often happen in Pentecostal worship. I think the sombreness and the silence are unique to Communion—trademarks of the event. So, I often tell the congregation three things: First, God is already here because we gather in His name. Second, we invite His presence, and He comes. Then, third, there is the in-breaking of God's presence, and you can't prepare your heart; you spontaneously respond. So, I try to open the congregation's mind to all three moments at some point in the Communion service. It's almost like God is coming, joining the meeting, and departing from us. So, He is always with us, but this alternative reality exists—a constant rhythm of coming and going.

C4 explains, "Communion facilitates the awareness of this steady rhythm. The Lord's Supper conditions us to participate in something bigger than our life now. Communion

brings us into the grand narrative of God's redemptive plan. Otherwise, in a very dispensational way, we imagine ourselves outside God's grand narrative, misplaced in a different epoch."

C14 explained, "The Spirit connects parishioners to the life of Christ in the praxis of Holy Communion."<sup>16</sup> While most clergypersons did not mention the Holy Spirit, others explained that they listened and looked for the Spirit's promptings during the Lord's Supper performance. C4 asks three questions: What am I hearing? What am I seeing? What am I feeling? Practically, C4 pays attention to external and internal signals.

Regarding the outward signs, C4 focuses on the gathered body, listening for congregational auditory and visual cues. There is often silence, a "sense of Holiness" that he described as a "Holy hush, evidence of a deep intimacy with Christ and between one another." As to internal signals, C4 and others described them as "heart promptings," a felt sense like their experience of Christ's presence at the end of a service when Pentecostals "tarry" and the moments when the gifts of the Spirit are manifest in a worship service.

Similarly, C15 described partaking of the bread and juice as the most significant aspect of the Lord's Supper:

From a natural perspective, having a picture of what it looked like and participating in the rite, not just reflecting on it intellectually but actively engaging and participating in it, contributes to the experience of Christ's presence. There is this added element of responsiveness to the Word of God when we participate with the prophetic symbols—the wafer and wine. Our physical activity is a prophetic sign of what God has done and *is* doing for us. We participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus at that moment. The Lord's Supper is prophetic. The Lord's Supper is the declaration of truth that we participate in Christ's death and resurrection.

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<sup>16</sup> Conversely, one clergy participant explained, "I'm thinking about the Holy Spirit when I'm consecrating the emblems but not when I'm performing the liturgy." Similarly, another explained, "I'm not thinking about the Father or the Holy Spirit at all."

C14 discussed feeling three things: belonging to God and the Body of Christ, peace, and communion with Jesus. C5 described discerning Christ's presence as recognizing the glorious work of God in the Body of Christ:

The hairs on my neck always go up because I know these people. I experience their faith when everybody gets out of their seats, slowly walks toward the front, and meets me at the Table. Coming forward demonstrates belief. The people in the pew say, "We believe in this cup; we believe in this bread." I'm handing each one the elements and saying, "This is Christ's body broken for you, and Christ's blood shed for you." The fact that these people are willing to receive from their Pastor alongside that guy down the row whose Facebook posts they disagree with moves me. That is holiness. That is a sacred moment. That is beautiful.

### **Closing Remarks on Clergyperson Interviews**

I have proposed four phenomenological textural descriptions from the clergypersons' perspective that can be summarized as: The Lord's Supper is a sacred, mysterious moment when Pentecostals meet with Christ. It is worth noting that the clergy participants tended to explain that their experience of Christ's presence in the Supper was not notably transubstantiation. They did, however, acknowledge that "something more," something inexplicable, occurred during the liturgy, and some explained that the Holy Spirit assisted in mediating their encounter with Christ in some way. They did not, however, explicitly link the Holy Spirit to the liturgy's performance or the Communion elements, the bread and wine/juice. They also did not expressly assign any spiritual value to participating in the body and blood of Christ. The clergy participants consider the Supper a moment in the worship service that serves several purposes. The variety and flexibility of purposes are interesting. None of the participants described the "momentary purposes" as fixed; instead, the "momentary variety" related flexibility to the rite in many instances. While they recognize the rite as a meeting with Christ, most did not utilize technical (theological, scriptural, or sacramental) language to describe the rite or their experience of Christ's

presence therein. The clergy participants also did not mention the “Statement of Essential Truths” or any Pentecostal studies (old or new) on the subject. Next, I analyze the layperson’s experience of Christ’s presence in the praxis of the Lord’s Supper.

### Textural Description: The Layperson’s Perspective

My layperson interviews provided insight into their Lord’s Supper practices, hopes, and experience of Christ’s presence as they participated in the rite.<sup>17</sup> From the standpoint of the laypersons, there are at least four textural components that comprise the substance of a Pentecostal Lord’s Supper performance:

1. The Lord’s Supper Is Serious.
2. The Lord’s Supper Is a Lingering Event.
3. The Lord’s Supper Is Connection.
4. The Lord’s Supper Is Supernatural.

#### *The Lord’s Supper Is Serious*

Like the clergy participants, in one way or another, the laypersons described the Lord’s Supper as sacred but with a slightly different emphasis, preferring to emphasize its nature as serious. L5 explained, “I take the Lord’s Supper very seriously because Jesus knew His crucifixion was coming when He had the meal with His disciples. It is a serious time to focus on Christ and try to encounter His presence with this in mind.” L5 explained that the symbolism of the rite is the most critical element of the Lord’s Supper performance.

Regarding the felt sense of Christ’s presence, L5 reports,

Blood is the most important element because His blood cleanses us. Even though I ask God for forgiveness every day, at the Lord’s Supper, we take more time to

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<sup>17</sup> L9 and L13 did not experience a felt sense of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper.

really ask for forgiveness for any wrongdoings. There is definitely a sense of His presence. When I'm drinking the wine in remembrance of His shed blood, I feel the cleansing warmth—He is cleansing me! I don't know if it's right in the bread and wine, but I think His presence is in the symbolism.

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, knowing He would be crucified as a sin offering. As such, L5 takes the rite seriously and senses that Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper is sin-cleansing. Having confessed "wrongdoings," especially the wine (symbolizing Christ's shed blood) cleanses L5. This cleansing experience means L5 "definitely" senses Christ's presence. L5 is uncertain about how Christ is present but thinks His presence is in the symbolism.

L14 described a similar experience. L14 also feels the need to ask forgiveness in advance of receiving the elements:

Before I take Communion, I'm preparing my heart. I make sure to ask God if there is anything in my heart that ought not to be there. I bring it before Him and ask for forgiveness because I feel a sense of purity when taking the Lord's Supper. And not to say that I'm perfect because I'm not. But we are taking Him in. So, I feel that I must prepare my heart before I do that. I believe He is with me when I eat His bread and drink His wine. I sense His presence and am in awe of who He is. The Lord's Supper has become a very reverent thing for me.

Whereas for L5 and L14, taking the Lord's Supper "seriously" means approaching the rite reverently, considering Christ's suffering sacrifice and their sinfulness. L11 emphasizes that the Lord's Supper is serious but focuses on what Christ's victorious sacrifice affords.

Rather than sombre, L11 feels joyous. L5 and L14's sombre Lord's Supper experience focuses on Christ's intentional sacrifice and the themes of sin and in-the-moment cleansing forgiveness (they imagine the Last Supper). L11's joyful Lord's Supper experience focuses on healing, sustaining, and thanksgiving (L11 does not imagine the suffering Christ but rather the resurrected Christ). Even though the themes and experiences differ, both consider the rite to be serious. L11 remarks,

I take Communion very seriously. But I don't take this with a sour face. [Back home], we pick up the emblems ourselves. I went to the Table dancing! I have the

joy of knowing that Christ died for me, and I have freedom. Still, today, I don't take it with a sour face. Also, I take it seriously as whatever ailment I have, and I trust God to heal me. I have been through [sickness] before, and God still sustains me. He could have taken me away. So, every time I take Communion, I ask the Lord, "Keep on healing me spiritually, emotionally and physically." So, I take Communion very, very seriously. To the point that after Communion, I put my fingers in the cup to get every drop of wine. I always do that. I tell my friends I'm taking the rest of the healing from the cup. It's a childish thing. I take it seriously.

L11's childlike faith is indicative of taking the Lord's Supper seriously. Notably, L11 thought it essential to share the strategy of intentionally fighting routinization by not allowing preoccupation with the "every first Sunday routine." L11 counters routinization by remembering,

[The juice] is the blood of Jesus. I don't need to fake anything. I don't need to pretend anything. Don't take it like you are eating crackers and that thing [wafer]. I don't. It is Christ! Eating the cracker and drinking the juice symbolize Christ doing something for me. So, I take Communion very seriously and believe that God will accomplish something in every aspect of my life.

L11 believes "partaking" symbolizes "God working in their life" and that Jesus is present in the praxis. Also, L11 adamantly stated there is no need to "pretend anything." The juice is the blood of Jesus, and the wafer is Christ's body. Notice that partaking of the elements is a personal encounter with God. L11 attributes continued well-being to the benefits of partaking in Jesus' body and blood. L11 makes clear this distinction with advice to the clergy person leading the Lord's Supper:

Those on the platform telling us to do it should find a way to make it so. People need to take this seriously. This is God's body to heal us. It's not just eating crackers and drinking juice. It is symbolic of the body and blood of Jesus! None of us saw Jesus in His slippers and opened our hearts for Him to walk in. We believed! None of us have seen the Holy Spirit, and most of us are baptized with the Holy Spirit, which means whatever the Bible says is real. Yeah, Communion is so real. That's how I take it. I take Communion seriously in the same way that I take my Christian life seriously.

L11's logic is straightforward: Since the Bible is accurate, as evidenced by L11's salvation, physical healing, and Spirit baptism, and since the Bible instructs Christians to receive Communion, taking Communion "seriously" means believing we are not just

eating crackers and drinking juice, we are receiving what the symbols represent—His body and blood, precisely what the scripture record states Jesus said about the bread and wine.

Like L5, L11 describes a concrete connection between the Lord's Supper symbols and what they symbolize. L5 believes that Christ is present in the symbolism, which means the felt sense of cleansing warmth is a sign that Christ is present and within, working through the consumption of wine. L11 argues that the symbolic connection between the Lord's Supper elements and Christ is equal to Christ's saving and healing presence in their life and the Holy Spirit's presence in their Pentecostal Spirit baptism. L3 and L4 concur, "It is not just a cracker. It is what it represents. Without the Holy Spirit, you can't understand spiritual things. When I partake of Christ's body and blood, I confess the works of grace."

Ten laypersons described the Lord's Supper as holy. Three used biblical metaphors to describe the rite's holiness.<sup>18</sup> They compared their Lord's Supper experience with the Jerusalem Temple's Holy of Holies. L1 explained, "It's important to search yourself because there is no separation during Holy Communion. You are in the inner circle, in the Holy of Holies." L2 stated that participating in the Lord's Supper

feels like you are entering the Holy of Holies, which we can do boldly. We enter boldly, not brashly, two very different attitudes. I've seen healings and heard tongues many times in our Communion services. I often listen to people quietly worshipping the Lord and praying in tongues while holding the cracker and juice—a sweet sense of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, I sense Christ's wonderful presence welling up within me and other times, washing over me.

L2 differentiates the Lord's Supper from other spiritual experiences: "The Lord's Supper is different. It makes you look more at yourself and your relationship with God and others. For me, this happens as I focus on the body and blood of Christ. It's a privilege to remember what He did for us. It is irreplaceable, indescribable, totally amazing, and mind-

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<sup>18</sup> L1 and L8 spoke of the Lord's Supper as an obligatory practice.



boggling—that God would do that for us, that He would do that for me.” L4 concurs, “Communion, in my opinion, is a wonderful occasion. I sense His presence whenever I worship. During Communion, though, I remember, ‘Jesus, your body was broken for me. You bled your blood for me.’ I am drawn to what He did, recalling the price He paid by offering His life for me. I experience His presence incredibly personally because I eat His body and drink His blood.”

In a similarly overwhelming way, L18 described, “Christ thickens His presence at the Lord’s Supper. It starts with a goosebump or two, but then the tears start coming as His presence thickens, especially when I partake of the elements. As that happens, His presence overwhelms me. Suddenly, I enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise, and then I am into that Holy place.” Three described their Lord’s Supper experience as an encounter with God’s presence, how they imagine the Israelite priests encountered God in the Holy of Holies.

Three laypersons described the holy nature of the rite indirectly. Sometimes, they do not partake of the emblems because they feel unworthy of participating in “Holy Communion.” For example, L6 explains, “Whether it was because of anger or other personal problems, I didn’t feel worthy of Holy Communion.” L10 explained, “Among other things, preparing to receive Communion involves an internal review asking, ‘Am I worthy enough to partake?’ I’ve always interpreted the pause before partaking of the emblems as your last-ditch effort to ensure you get in the right state. Due diligence is required when receiving Communion. It’s far more serious than I was led to believe as a kid.” Similarly, L3 believes that by “examining myself before partaking the bread and juice, I make sure I’m worthy of taking Communion.” L3 explains, “Pastor reminds us to examine ourselves so that we remember to confess our sins. And so now, we are really in a

position to receive our healing. Failing to examine and confess our sins means we haven't discerned the body of Christ, and the scriptures warn, 'That's why some of you are sick, and some even die. Communion is something sacred.' L4 concurs,

We cannot be casual about the Lord's Supper. We must prepare by searching our hearts. I don't want sin to stand in the way of what the Lord has in store for me. I desire the fullness of the Holy Spirit. So, if you have something to confess, do so before receiving Communion. He will hear you out and forgive you. I don't understand why somebody would oppose receiving God's presence in Communion. Communion is a deeply spiritual experience! The physical is connected to the spiritual. I gaze at the physical because we are doing something physical, yet Communion is truly spiritual. When we take the wafer and wine, I think about the spiritual aspect. I believe that transformation occurs in the presence of the Lord; that is the spiritual aspect of it — what is happening inside us! The Holy Spirit brings about the change that is taking place. I give myself over to the Holy Spirit. "Lord, have your way in me now," I say as I take Communion. "You've already paid the price. Help me now to accept what you've done for me."

L10 described the Lord's Supper experience as "sobering," something different today than she recalls believing as a child. Conflicted, on the one hand, L10 thinks the Lord's Supper "should not be practiced too frequently" and, by so doing, diminished. But on the other hand, L10 "feels like there's more to the Lord's Supper and that it deserves a lot more attention." L10 explains, "I feel like we gloss over it too easily, 'Just another thing that you do.' So, there was a long period when I just did it because that's what you do." Four laypersons expressed that the Lord's Supper means more as they age and life becomes more challenging and complex. L10 described the Lord's Supper as "one of the only regular Pentecostal service times that life's noises quiet. We get calm rather than the drowning noise of music and motivational speech." Three experience a "Holy hush" and a sense of calm during the Lord's Supper. Experiencing peace was a recurring theme. Nine laypersons spoke longingly of the serenity they experienced in the Lord's Supper, describing it as an unhurried Holy encounter.

*The Lord's Supper Is A Lingering Event*

Like the clergy participants, the laypersons described the Lord's Supper performance using a time descriptor. Whereas the clergy participants, using ephemeral language, described the Lord's Supper as a moment or an occasion, the laypersons described the Lord's Supper as lingering. Laypeople described the ideal Lord's Supper performance as unhurried. These idealized "unhurried" Lord's Supper experiences include the sense of family, entering the Holy of Holies worthily, waiting willingly on the Spirit, and surrendering to Christ's agenda, embodying a yielded disposition to Christ's presence, welcoming the "holy hush," and demonstrating "seriousness." Also, slowing down allows for abundance, unification, cleansing, and deeper introspection.

L7 remarked, "Not rushing makes all the difference. If you rush the Lord's Supper, it is not Holy Communion—neither Holy nor Communion." L4 remarked, "By taking sufficient time at Communion and focusing on what Christ did, we feel His presence differently." L6 stated, "Everything happens too quickly. If Communion is an add-on, tagged onto the end of the service, I can feel the Pastor struggling with, 'I need to dismiss the congregation.' The Lord's Supper is more than an add-on. We have to think about Jesus, ourselves, and the world. Typically, the Pastor only gives it a few minutes." L6 is left wanting by the typical Lord's Supper experience, which means the rite is no more than a "nod to Christ." L7 concurs, "It is critical that the Lord's Supper not be rushed or reduced to a routine and then forgotten. We must consider how the Spirit wishes to lead the Communion service. When the Pastor takes the time to pray, 'Please guide me. Lord, what do you want?' I can tell. The Lord's Supper isn't merely a rote ritual. I can sense the Holy Spirit leading the Pastor."

L12 explains, “When we have Communion, we cannot rush through it. We need to take the time to really realize that He sacrificed Himself for us. Otherwise, I find my church Lord’s Supper experience routine—the same scriptures repeated, and then you eat the bread and drink the juice. Exactly what people expect, ‘Oh, it’s the first Sunday of the month, and we fit in Communion.’ A rushed routine at the end of service doesn’t usher in the presence of God. With the right attention, Communion ushers us into His presence. When I have it at home, when we have the Lord’s Supper in our small group Bible study, or something like that, we take the time to usher in His presence. Without Christ’s presence, change is impossible.”

### *The Lord’s Supper Is Connection*

As illustrated, the Lord’s Supper facilitates a deep spiritual connection with Christ when unrushed. The Lord’s Supper connects participants and Christ, one another, and participants to the benefits of the Gospel. As to the connection with Christ and one another, L9 briefly explained the significance of Christ setting New Covenant fellowship around a table for a meal: “It is an occasion where Christians reflect upon His sacrifice and are to be aware of Him and His presence, but also one another.” L14 described the Lord’s Supper as “our connection to Him” and that it uniquely brings us “together as the Family of God, united under Him because we are His children.” Like the clergy participants who described unity as a reason for the Lord’s Supper’s solemnity, L15 remarked,

If there is one thing I love about the monthly Communion, it is the tradition of being together. Communion is togetherness. That said, for me, there’s nothing more intimate than sitting down with your friends and family and having a good meal, drink, and fellowship together. If anything is missing from our monthly church experience, it’s that. Let’s get out of the fast food-ness and get into experiencing closeness and togetherness. We should include Communion when our small groups get together and have supper. I think the reflection element would ratchet up the feeling of togetherness and the closeness of fellowship.

L1 believes the Lord's Supper should create unity because it leads people to mend relationships: "I think Holy Communion is the optimum opportunity for unity in the body of Christ." L1 also experiences the rite as being "brought into the Supper Table as a family member, not an outsider or observer. Knowing who I am in Christ, a child of God, legitimizes closeness and intimacy at the Table. I feel like I belong at the family meal."

As to connecting participants to the benefits of the Gospel, take, for example, L4's description:

During Communion, [Christ's] presence is manifest more often than not. We pause to reflect on what He has done. Doing so helps me feel His presence differently. I recall Isaiah 53, which emphasizes that He paid the penalty for our sins when He went to the cross. During Communion, I experienced Jesus' declaration, "Everything is finished!" He accomplished my redemption, healing, provision, everything! There is nothing else to accomplish. I remember the burden is gone. So, I accept what He has already provided by partaking in the emblems. I'm also aware that I do this in the company of others, doing and experiencing the same thing. Together, we become the body of Christ.

Even though L4 believes "Christ's presence is a constant," like for other lay participants, Communion creates a different "felt sense" of Christ's presence, which means the Lord's Supper performance affects L4's feelings and faith. L4 believes that "Communion opens people up to receive. If faith begins as a little thing, it grows. Communion builds faith because Christ is present." It grows within L4 and the co-participants. This faith-building truth means, "It is a good time to pray for healing." Like the act of receiving the elements, Communion reminds L4 that "in faith," one simply needs to receive all Christ accomplished, including healing. As L3 explained, Communion functions prophetically; together, partaking-participants "confess the works of grace."

Like 14, L17 states, "Communion is our spiritual connection with God. It's how you plug into the power of the cross." L18 also concurs, "When we plug into the power of

the cross with Communion, we receive everything that He accomplished on the cross—everything in Jesus’ name. Everything we need comes from the cross ‘in Jesus’ name’: Jehovah Rapha, our healing; Shalom, our peace; Jehovah Jireh, our provision; and so on. It’s all done, ‘in Jesus’ name.’” L18 continued, “We don’t do Communion; we receive Communion. If we do Communion, that means we can control God. We control nothing! We receive Holy Communion into our bodies just as we receive healing, peace, and provision.”<sup>19</sup> L18 remarked,

When I receive Holy Communion, I connect to the power of the cross and get the benefits of what Jesus did on the cross. Communion connects what happened on the cross 2,000 years ago to what is happening now in Jesus’ name. Everything we need comes from the cross. I receive the elements into my body, which refresh, strengthen, and nourish my soul. I think Communion should happen every time the church is open. The disciples went from house to house and took Communion five or six times daily. Not even one of them got sick.

While Holy Communion facilitates reflection, it is more than that. As for L4, L16, L17, and L18, and similar to how L11 treats the emblems, L3 believes, “Every time we eat the bread and drink from the cup, we proclaim the works of God for us; we proclaim New Covenant provision! When taking Holy Communion, I surrender to the Holy Spirit and say, ‘Lord, have your way in me now. Jesus paid the price. Help me now to receive all that you have done for me.’ We proclaim what Christ has already done for us. So with the help of the Holy Spirit, now we just receive, like the bread and wine.” Despite lifelong medical struggles, several brushes with death, and having undergone several medical procedures that resulted in life-threatening complications and dire prognosis, one layperson testified about living without further medical interventions, a miracle attributed to daily Communion:

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<sup>19</sup> L18 is quoting Joseph Prince.

Holy Communion gives grace. My power comes from Communion. It boosts my faith. Every Holy Communion, I thank Jesus for healing me. Now I'm healed! I don't see Communion as a request. Holy Communion is my thank-you. I love daily Communion because it connects me to Christ's peace. Expressing how much Holy Communion has changed my life is hard. I couldn't function without it.

With daily Communion, L16 receives grace, bolstered faith, and Christ's peace. Daily Communion means profound transformation and the ability to function despite severe physical disabilities. L16 believes Holy Communion is life support. It is holy because according to God's will, L16 receives Jesus, demonstrating a readiness "to manifest Christ's provision."

### ***The Lord's Supper Is Supernatural***

The fourth textural descriptor is that the Lord's Supper is supernatural. It is worth noting that the layperson participants explained their experience of Christ's presence in the Supper in supernatural terms—comparable with matter-of-fact Pentecostal experiences—a significant difference from the clergy participants' witness. Like many clergy participants, some laypersons defined the mode of Christ's presence as other than Roman Catholic. However, rather than describing the rite as mysterious, God's miraculous work is the "something more" of their experience.

### **Closing Remarks on Layperson Interviews**

To represent the laypersons' perspective, I proposed four phenomenological textural descriptors that combine to form the following summary: The Lord's Supper is a *serious*, *lingering* event that *connects* Pentecostals to Christ *supernaturally*. What was plain and unsurprising was that the laypersons believed how the clergy participants curated and administered the rite was consequential. In other words, a clergy participant's actions and

intentions affect the layperson's experience even though they may not determine their beliefs about the Lord's Supper. In a sense, and perhaps not surprisingly, how the rite is performed mediates felt sense in so far as the laypersons witness whether the clergyperson is in "communion with Holy Spirit," meaning that they perceive God directing/leading the performance, or that the ritual is performed by rote. The laypersons more explicitly link the performance and the Communion elements (the bread and wine/juice) with Christ's presence in a supernatural way. They more often assign spiritual value to participating/partaking in the body and blood of Christ.

Key to this experience was a deliberately unrushed and thoughtful liturgy. The sense of lingering, something akin to tarrying in God's presence at an altar, demonstrated a yieldedness to God rather than an if-this-then-that, technological or incantational disposition. In other words, the supernatural resulted from Christ's gracious presence mediated by the Holy Spirit. More than a moment in the worship service, their description of the rite was liminal, a connection to Christ and the outworking of redemption through the Spirit. Like the clergy participants, while recognizing the rite as a connection with Christ and the supernatural outworking of salvation, most did not utilize technical (theological, scriptural, or sacramental) language to describe the rite or their experience of Christ's presence therein. Like the clergypersons, the laypersons did not mention the PAOC "Statement of Essential Truths" but spoke about popular Pentecostal studies. In Chapter 4, I present the testimonies of the PAOC founders and contemporary practitioners in a constructive discourse.



## CHAPTER 4: RECEPTION HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

In this chapter, I bring together my reception history, a testimony of the PAOC founders, and my analysis of the interviews with the contemporary research participants in a mutually enriching dialogue. I consider notable differences and similarities between the reception history and contemporary experientialist dialogue, paying particular attention to the phenomenological textural description from the perspective of clergypersons that the Lord's Supper is a *sacred*, mysterious, *momentary meeting* with Christ that laypersons, however, understand somewhat differently as a *serious, lingering event* that *connects* Pentecostals to Christ *supernaturally*.

Regarding my overarching framework of theology as praxis, this chapter functions as social analysis—pastoral cycle movement (b)—but utilizes the reception history as an analytical key. This work touches on “descriptive, historical, systematic analysis.”<sup>1</sup> In the following pages, I highlight and illustrate the commonalities and differences between the research participants and founders, giving specific examples from interview data and early Canadian Pentecostal periodicals. Next, I focus the mutually enriching dialogue on the particular textural descriptors: (a) sacred, solemn, sacrament; (b) meaningful, lingering moments; (c) mysterious, supernatural, sacramental; and (d) meeting is communion.

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<sup>1</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflection*, 204.

### A Mutually Enriching Dialogue

The most notable difference between the testimony of the founders and contemporary research participants is that the founders practiced the Lord's Supper weekly. Only a minority of the research participants do so, while most celebrate the rite monthly. The founders highlighted their weekly Lord's Supper practice in their publications, listing and describing it as a fundamental element of Pentecostal worship and affirming that their faithful practice pleased God, evidenced by their blessed experience of Christ's presence and accompanying miracles, signs, and wonders. In contrast, beyond providing a link to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada's "Statement of Essential Truths," only one prominently mentions the Lord's Supper on their church website. Brother and Sister Hebden, on the other hand, highlight their Lord's Supper practice in *The Promise*, testifying, "The Lord is blessing the meetings wonderfully. Sunday morning, April 28<sup>th</sup>, we commenced to have the Lord's Supper, the Lord honoured it by sending His Holy Spirit upon us all in a wonderful manner."<sup>2</sup> Notice also Evangelist and Pastor of The Pyramid Temple in Vancouver, British Columbia, H. B. Taylor's evangelistic bulletin with the following schedule:

*"As His custom was, He went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath Day"*—Luke.  
 11.00 am—Communion Service  
 2.25 pm—"Under the Power of God"  
 Great Evangelistic Meeting at 7.30 pm  
 "THE CHURCH OF A PERPETUAL REVIVAL"<sup>3</sup>

As a "church of perpetual revival," —classically, an idealistic moniker for a Pentecostal way of being-in-the-world—Taylor hosts a weekly Communion, Revival, and Evangelistic service. Most contemporary Pentecostal churches meet only once a week. Including all three of Taylor's elements in a seventy-five-minute service is impossible. What Taylor's

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<sup>2</sup> Hebden, "Simcoe," 4.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, "The Pyramid Temple Bulletin," 1.

bulletin and the Hebdens' testimony contribute to this conversation is that a Communion service is as Pentecostal as Revivalistic and Evangelistic services. Consider J. H. Argue's summary of the Pentecostal "Teaching [on] Repentance, Confession and Restitution." He includes the Lord's Supper and Water Baptism along with Justification, Sanctification, Pentecostal Spirit Baptism, Divine Healing, and the soon coming of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Again, the reception history indicates that these seven elements (the Lord's Supper included) constitute a Full Gospel message.

It is not just that influential Canadian Pentecostals like the Hebdens and Argue independently affirmed the importance of the Lord's Supper to Pentecostal spirituality. When we keep in mind that the founders intended these publications to be both informative and evangelistic, and we take McAlister seriously and understand that he, as editor of the *Testimony*, the official PAOC paper, only published what was considered theologically non-contentious and appropriate for all audiences, we can reasonably deduce that the founders believed that performing the Lord's Supper weekly (and even more often or as often as possible) was profitable and even preferable since it reflected New Testament practice.<sup>5</sup> Of course, by way of testimony, it did more than reflect Apostolic faith. Their faithful practice of the Lord's Supper garnered Book-of-Acts results—miracles, signs, and wonders. The Hebdens' testimony continues, "Three were prostrated under the power of God. They have received the Bible evidence, speaking in unknown tongues, making five altogether who have spoken in tongues since Sunday. Praise Jesus forever for it, He who baptizes with the Holy Ghost."<sup>6</sup> The founders' contribution to this conversation is that the Lord's Supper is not a dead ritual. As Pentecostal praxis, it is a fundamental element of the

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<sup>4</sup> Argue, "Teaching Repentance, Confession and Restitution," 2.

<sup>5</sup> McAlister ("THIS MOVEMENT," 4) explained, "THIS MOVEMENT is pre-eminently scriptural and stands for the same truths as the apostles taught and practiced in the primitive Church."

<sup>6</sup> Hebden, "Simcoe," 4.

Full Gospel. Their invitation was “Come to the Lord’s Table and experience Christ’s presence,” hardly an encouragement with an implicit diminishing value.

Only C7 and C13 practice the rite weekly. C11 and C12 have occasionally done so for special occasions. C3 and C15 added weekly Lord’s Supper adherence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the isolating effects of COVID-19 on public gatherings, C3’s congregation felt the need for the Lord’s Supper more than monthly when the Public Health Authority eased gathering restrictions. In other words, C3’s congregation requested weekly Lord’s Supper observance because the rite meets a congregational felt need. C3 faithfully included the Lord’s Supper weekly primarily because the parishioners cherished it. C3 reported that “It’s sacred to them” and that the congregants meet with Jesus at the Table.

C3’s observation confirms Gee’s words that the institution of the Lord’s Supper links directly to the Master: “There is a complete failure of the Divine purpose if the believer participates in the outward ceremony and misses the Lord.”<sup>7</sup> Perhaps contemporary Pentecostals would echo Gee’s sentiment for every kind of gathering. But, rather than initiating or promoting the Lord’s Supper as exceptionally suited for every occasion (or special occasions), we either acquiesce to a request or conform to a modern Evangelical schedule.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, while stewarding the rite for the congregation’s sake is a generous pastoral response, perhaps it misses the ordinance’s beauty and its most crucial quality, sacramentality. C5 mentioned that members of other Christian denominations who have recently joined the church frequently express that they lament the loss of weekly “eucharistic celebrations.” C5 did not elaborate on why the newcomers miss the weekly Eucharist. C5 self-identifies as a “closet Anglican” who often uses the *Book of Common*

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<sup>7</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

<sup>8</sup> “Once a Month Communion is the Norm,” [n.d.].

*Prayer* to curate monthly Lord's Supper liturgies—ironically, a liturgical tradition that supports weekly eucharistic observance. I suspect C5's newcomers miss the unique sacramental beauty of the weekly Supper. Interestingly, what attracted them to a PAOC church does not suffice to replace what participating in the weekly “eucharistic celebration” provides.

All participants talked about their typical spiritual experiences by referring to the felt sense of the Holy Spirit, the source of Pentecostal sacramentality.<sup>9</sup> But, like many research participants who focus mainly on the person of Christ in the Lord's Supper performance, like C11 and C12, C5 had not given much thought to the Holy Spirit's role. The reception history carefully points to the Lord's Supper as an extraordinary occasion to experience the divine presence. Sometimes, the founders attribute divine presence to God, and others attribute it to the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Consider the Hebden's 1909 testimony: “12 September was a very wonderful day. The morning service, as is the rule there, was devoted to the reading of the Word, testimony and the breaking of bread, which gathered the dear ones around the Lord's table. The quiet holy hush that crept over the saints was a clear evidence that God was with His people.”<sup>10</sup> The body sense matches the encounter: God (holy hush), Jesus (praise), Holy Spirit (prostrated under the power).

L17, L18, and L19 have the Lord's Supper daily and desire it every Sunday. L19 shared that he recently approached his Pastor to point out that the church had not celebrated the Lord's Supper in two months, stating, “That's not acceptable.” His protest was less about transgressing a schedule and more about feeling deprived. According to L19, receiving Communion is miraculous. Not providing this means of grace, a profound

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<sup>9</sup> I opened each interview with the request to “Describe the body sense of your typical experience of Christ's presence.”

<sup>10</sup> Hebden, “A Wonderful Day,” 2.

connection to “the power of the cross,” is unacceptable. The founders might nuance L19’s protest with the reminder that the rite “takes us to the Lord Himself,” and Jesus designed the Lord’s Supper calculatingly “to draw the soul to Himself.”<sup>11</sup>

L1 and L2 (like C3’s congregation and C15) recently felt they needed to start celebrating the Lord’s Supper weekly at their midweek prayer meeting, praying to this conclusion without a clergy person’s encouragement or supervision. Similarly, L15 believes that adding the Lord’s Supper to his small group meetings “would ratchet up the feeling of togetherness and the closeness of fellowship.” Like L15, and echoing the Hebden’s report, many research participants acknowledged that the Lord’s Supper uniquely provides “stillness,” a “holy hush” commensurate with meeting the glorified Christ.

It is also worth noting that several laypersons remarked that the Lord’s Supper has become more important to them as they age, explaining that it sustains them through the chaos of difficult times—an insight that perhaps suggests, regardless of the biblical mandate, the perceived need of the rite fluctuates. Like C4, L10 thinks the Lord’s Supper performance is one of the only occasions in Pentecostal worship that provides an opportunity for “quiet and deliberate reflection.” Like C4, L10 uses the word *sombre* to describe the mood experienced during its performance.

C7 and C13 expressed a similar sentiment when they described that the Lord’s Supper has become central to the worship services they curate because they realized that it is (trans)formative—it shapes and changes us. C13 goes so far as to say the Lord’s Supper “takes the pressure off me in this teaching and information-obsessed world.” C13 believes the Lord’s Supper is “bigger and better” than just information dumping; what they have come to think is “preaching and proclaiming the word” without Communion. For C13, the

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<sup>11</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

weekly Lord's Supper replaces the altar call, and it clarifies that Christ feeds, strengthens, and sustains by His presence, not by the pastor's creativity and cleverness. C7 and C13 celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly because Jesus instructed Christians to do it whenever they gather. While Christ is present throughout the service, C13 believes partaking in Communion is the apex of the service, the crescendo of his curated liturgy—"Christ is more present at His Table." Similarly, C7 believes that "Christ gave us the Lord's Supper faultless," intimating that the rite does not conjure discord in the Church as do worship songs and teachings.

### **The Lord's Supper Is Sacred, Solemn, Sacrament**

In common with the founders, the research participants' reasons for their schedule (whether frequent or infrequent) are related to their belief that the Lord's Supper is sacred. The founders wholeheartedly agree that the Lord's Supper is a Holy Meal. However, nowhere in the reception history, to my knowledge, is *sacredness* reported as a reason for less frequent practice. The reception history offered in this study does not warn that the Lord's Supper is too holy for weekly observance, nor does it warn that clergypersons must safeguard the rite from becoming a dead ritual with creativity. Instead, the founders teach and testify that Christ makes the Lord's Supper sacred by His presence and the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the rite is a living sacrament by His presence. Discerning Christ's presence is a sacred task and every participant's responsibility.

Like many research participants, both clergypersons and laypersons, the founders cautioned about "worthy" participation in the Lord's Supper. They pointed to the Apostle

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<sup>12</sup> Hebden ("Simcoe," 4) included the following testimony: "The Lord is blessing the meetings wonderfully ... we commenced to have the Lord's Supper, the Lord honoured it by sending His Holy Spirit upon us all in a wonderful manner. Three were prostrated under the power of God. They have received the Bible evidence ... a mighty demonstration of God's power."

Paul's warning in First Corinthians 11 as the basis of worthy participation, even if they interpreted the message differently. For example, the Hebden cautioned that even if not sick, Pentecostals "should always see in the broken bread the body of the Lord Jesus broken for our healing and bodily health, as well as for salvation from eternal death."<sup>13</sup> In other words, not discerning Jesus's Body—the participant's sacred task—misses a Full Gospel provision, namely the healing virtue of the Lord's Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper. By way of Arthur Watson's testimony, the Hebden illustrate the teaching: Water baptism and the "keeping of the Lord's Supper till He comes" is a sure way to gain "more and more strength" and be "shield[ed] against the enemy who is ever trying to wound or cripple this temple of clay."<sup>14</sup> Of the clergy participants, only C11 came close to interpreting Paul's warning this way. Seven laypersons mirrored these sentiments. The clergy participants focused on personal purity or congregational unity, not healing and health. Some places in the reception history warn about discerning secret sins and confession, discord, and reconciliation, but nowhere are the themes outlined systematically.

McAlister,<sup>15</sup> Moorhead,<sup>16</sup> Kerr,<sup>17</sup> and Gee<sup>18</sup> emphasized that the Lord's Supper must be partaken of rightly. McAlister taught that proper participation occurs "in the Spirit with understanding."<sup>19</sup> Gee taught that "when partaken rightly," the Lord's Supper "carries the Church through all the externals to the very heart of her faith," namely Christ.<sup>20</sup> Purdie spoke about water baptism and the Lord's Supper being sacraments "different in nature" from other biblical ordinances and a "sign of the communion that we should have one with

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<sup>13</sup> Hebden, "At The Lord's Table," p 7.

<sup>14</sup> Watson, "Testimony," 8.

<sup>15</sup> McAlister, "Healing in the Atonement," 7–8.

<sup>16</sup> Moorhead, "Breaking of Bread," 12.

<sup>17</sup> Kerr, "Sermon," 6.

<sup>18</sup> Gee, "Study," 13.

<sup>19</sup> McAlister, "Confession of Faith," 3–5.

<sup>20</sup> Gee, "Study," 3.



another.”<sup>21</sup> However, McAlister, Moorhead, Kerr, and Gee also emphasized the Apostle Paul’s discernment warning in 1 Corinthians 11. All but C17–19 believed that participants were required to confess their sins before taking communion, noting that Jesus had already forgiven them as indicated by His final Christly declaration, “It is finished.”

The Hebden published “The Gospel Plan,” which outlines that God commands repentance, faith, baptism, healing, the second coming of Christ, the Breaking of the Bread, and the Baptism of the Holy Ghost with tongues. In the section devoted to the Breaking of Bread, they offer ten prooftexts for their practice, including three from the Gospels (Mt 26:26; Lk 22:15, and Lk. 22:19), five from 1 Corinthians (10:15; 10:17; 10:21; 11:23, and 11:30) and two from Acts (20:7 and 2:42).<sup>22</sup>

Considering the founders’ emphasis on weekly participation, I was surprised that so few clergy participants had not tried more frequent observance (at least experimentally) and that C15 admitted to never having questioned the why of the monthly Lord’s Supper interval. I was also surprised that some clergy participants believe that contemporary audiences will not tolerate the “mundaneness” of a weekly Lord’s Supper liturgy but did not have the same concern about any other aspect of the service. I was also surprised that C1 was worried that, in some way, some congregants might become religiously dependent upon the Lord’s Supper and that C16 thought that congregants might become too familiar with it, thus diminishing its majesty. None of these concerns are evident in the reception history. Another difference between the founders and the research participants is that, at least from a communication standpoint, the founders presented a consistent message in their newsletters, bulletins, and papers, giving the impression that there was a consensus regarding the centrality of the weekly Lord’s Supper performance in Pentecostal worship.

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<sup>21</sup> Purdie, “Canadian Pentecostal Bible College,” 6.

<sup>22</sup> Hebden, “The Gospel Plan,” 2–3.

Only one research participant believed that the PAOC was prescriptive regarding practice. In contrast, most of the others took liberties, thinking that the form of the liturgy was inconsequential, and some even expressed that they could replace bread and wine with anything on hand (even fish crackers and pop). Interestingly, several laypersons either requested or challenged their Pastor regarding their Lord's Supper practice, including telling me that Pastors "need to take it seriously because we do" and "the emblems are what they represent."

### **The Lord's Supper Is Meaningful Lingering Moments**

The clergypersons' second textural descriptor is that the Lord's Supper is momentary. They described the Lord's Supper as a *sacred moment*. While the founders highlight the rite as an essential Pentecostal practice, the reception history I assembled does not speak about the Lord's Supper as a moment quite in this way. Except for those who celebrate the rite weekly, the clergy participants include the Lord's Supper as part of the service once a month. As such, the Lord's Supper is not necessarily the focus of the service or necessarily connected to the overall theme. Some clergy participants introduce the rite with a brief explanation and preach an entire sermon, accommodating the time by shortening other parts or extending the service slightly. Most "switch gears" and perform the rite as a stand-alone segment.

Interestingly, as a "stand-alone" moment, different themes often surface—this time unity, another time repentance, still another healing. These themes may or may not be related to the sermon. What seems to happen is that meanings emerge. C20 explained that even though he does not give the rite much thought in advance, usually, "it gains significance while we are doing it." C4 pays attention to internal and external signals to

discern the nature of Christ's self-revelation and how the congregation should respond. Various themes, like congregational epiphanies regarding Christ's intentions for the Holy Meal, seem to occur. Several laypersons remarked that it was essential that the clergypersons leading the performance did so in a manner that demonstrated that they were attentive to the "leading of the Spirit" rather than performing the rite in a ritualistic manner. They described this quality of the Spirit's leading as what made it a lingering event. This openness and yieldedness to the "Spirit's way" facilitated the sense that what occurred was not a dead ritual but a living rite inspired by the Holy Spirit.

### **The Lord's Supper Is Mysterious, Supernatural, Sacramental**

The clergypersons' third textural descriptor is that the *Lord's Supper is mysterious*. While some research participants explained that what occurs at the Lord's Supper was beyond their comprehension and that they misunderstood the Lord's Supper and missed its beauty until they studied different Christian traditions, in contrast, the founders presented thoughtful, biblical theology and testimonies about the rite and its rightful place in Pentecostal worship.<sup>23</sup> Beyond using the term sacrament (which they take to mean mystery), the founders make clear that the sacrament is supernatural, something with which Pentecostals are acquainted. Intimately familiar with the works of the Spirit (miracles, signs, and wonders), they transpose their lived experience of the Spirit's supernatural presence onto the Lord's Supper.

If we consider the testimony of the Hebdens that the Lord's Supper especially occasions Christ's *self-revelation* "as at no other service," it begs the question, What was it about their Lord's Supper service that afforded this quality or relating? Indeed, for the Hebdens,

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<sup>23</sup> All the founders came into Pentecostalism from other Christian traditions.

this encounter with Christ elicited such a commitment to a ritual. Even though most contemporary clergy participants described the Lord's Supper as occasioning a unique experience of Christ's presence, they did not do so to the same extent as the laypersons did, and few described it in quite as vivid language as did the founders. I was surprised that so few clergy participants spoke of the work of the Spirit in the rite. While some laypersons pointed out the accompaniment of charismatic manifestations during the Lord's Supper, some were unaware that they could or should expect such encounters. Some participants (both clergy persons and laypersons) even preferred not having "uber-charismatic experiences" at the Table, hoping for a more "grounded encounter with Christ." It would seem to me that Mr. and Mrs. Hebden's reports of singing in the Spirit, being prostrated under the power of God, people receiving the "Bible evidence, speaking in tongues," and healings were commensurate charismatic manifestations that offered evidence that Christ is uniquely present in the rite. The laypersons interviewed were more apt to provide similar proofs of Christ's presence. The founders also offered silence as evidence of Christ's presence, describing the "quiet holy hush that crept over the saints" as clear evidence that God was with His people at the Table. The Hebdens did not experience routinization with weekly Lord's Supper practice. Instead, they described a growing power week to week. Most research participants practice the rite monthly, some less frequently as a routinization safeguard.

### **Meeting is Communion**

McAlister described the observance of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper by the Conference as a "very precious service." Many research participants stated that the Lord's Supper is unique; only some called it a sacrament, and none called it "The Sacrament."

Most research participants called the Lord's Supper a "Communion service." Implicitly, the research participants seem to mean to share that the Lord's Supper is a Communion experience whereby the exchange of intimate thoughts and feelings occurs between all participants: clergy person, layperson, Christ, and one another.

### **Concluding Remarks**

McAlister testified that the General Conference Lord's Supper service "finished with an outpouring of the blessing of the Lord." None of the research participants testified about a congregational encounter like this. The research participants tended to have less charismatic experiences and yet described them as profoundly spiritual. McAlister portrayed the "commensurate response" by describing the participants' praise: "The volume of praise that arose at such times to our glorious Saviour and King was truly inspiring and soul-stirring." I would describe the participants' individual responses as equally commensurate even though no research participant described a corporate reaction to experiencing Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper this way. Several participants remarked that they were not looking for or expecting uber-charismatic experiences during the performance of the Lord's Supper, "though they would be open to it." The clergy participants spoke about the Lord's Supper with fewer testimonials than the laypersons.

McAlister assigned a threefold perspective to the Lord's Supper: faith considers the past focused on the cross, hope anticipates the future focused on Christ's return, and love discerns the present concentrated on Christ's face. McAlister wisely emphasizes the Holy Spirit's role in the sacrament such that the performance becomes a charism (like lifting the golden serpent to heal the Israelites with snake bites).<sup>24</sup> I think of several concluding

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<sup>24</sup> McAlister, "Healing in the Atonement," 7–8.

questions: Does the PAOC currently have a “Full Gospel” rite in the same way McAlister did?<sup>25</sup> Would McAlister say we are partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ in “the Spirit” with “the understanding?”<sup>26</sup> And do we, like Mrs. Stephens, discern though unseen that Christ is still in our midst, making the sound of His voice heard, “Surely or truly, I come quickly?”<sup>27</sup> If we answer yes, I believe our hearts would surely reply in glad response, *Maranatha*, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

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<sup>25</sup> McAlister, “Confession of Faith,” 3–5.

<sup>26</sup> McAlister, “Confession of Faith,” 3–5.

<sup>27</sup> Stephens, “Blood Covenant,” 8.

## CHAPTER 5: A PENTECOSTAL BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK

### **The Body in Corinthian Texts**

Not only do the founders and the research participants most often use 1 Corinthians 11 as the liturgical text for their Lord's Supper performances (even if they introduce the rite with a homily using a different scripture text or only loosely quote Paul without reading the passage from the Bible *verbatim*), but throughout our history, many of the PAOC's official documents have also used it as a proof text for the Lord's Supper's inclusion as a fundamentally Pentecostal practice. My reception history demonstrates that spiritual discernment was a theological imperative at the Lord's Supper because of the founders' attention to Paul's 1 Corinthian admonition and not least because the founders believed that discerning (and for that matter, not discerning) "the body of Christ" affected the participant's eucharistic experiences of Christ's presence. I also noted that in the current experientialist conversation, Paul's warning is front of mind during the Lord's Supper performance.

### **Christ's Body from Three Foci**

Paul writes 1 Corinthians in a manner that answers the Corinthian charge that his "special understanding of the mysteries of God"<sup>1</sup> is lacking compared to their own "wisdom and spirituality" (1 Cor 2). When Paul visited Corinth, he preached "simply" (2:1–5). However,

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<sup>1</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 592.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians exercises "rhetorical skills" and literary genius that "the Greeks both crave and believe to accompany true wisdom."<sup>2</sup> Paul's use of the word body (*sōma*) forty-six times, more than in any other New Testament book,<sup>3</sup> makes Paul's warning to *not* "eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ" (11:29) noteworthy. Like Perkins, what I propose is that discerning the body of Christ entails recognizing the bread shared at the meal (11:25), the individual church member (6:19–20), and the church established by the believing community (12:12–26).<sup>4</sup>

### Jesus' Body

Worthy eating involves discerning Jesus' presence in the Lord's Supper performance. The founders intended their readers to know that, like the early church, the faithful Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper is a Holy Meal, an exceptional occasion of Christ's presence. Since Paul intended for his readers to understand that the eucharistic experience is a consequential encounter with Jesus, so did the founders. Paul reconnects Corinthian spirituality with Jesus Christ's broken body and shed blood, a cultic ritual that occasions our participation in Christ's blood and body (10:15–16). Whereas, according to Paul, the Corinthians needed to exchange their fascination with "human wisdom" for an appreciation of the Gospel, "God's wisdom and power" (1:18—2:5),<sup>5</sup> for the founders, Canadians could exchange what they judged to be adherence to dead religion for a Full Gospel Christ encounter in the Lord's Supper.

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<sup>2</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 8–9.

<sup>3</sup> This is compared to 13 in Romans, 6 in 2 Corinthians, 1 in Galatians, 8 in Ephesians, 2 in Philippians, 7 in Colossians, 1 in 1 Thessalonians, 5 in Hebrews.

<sup>4</sup> Perkins, *First Corinthians*, 145. Similarly, Winninge ("The Lord's Supper," 585) sees a threefold implication.

<sup>5</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 66.



The clergy research participants described their experience of Christ's presence in the rite as sacred and mysterious, acknowledging that Christ participates in the performance and that they can tell that their congregants genuinely meet Christ there. Still, they used equivocal language, unable to clearly describe how they participated in (partook of, experienced) Christ. They preferred to acknowledge that "something is going on" and for that to define the experience negatively (what it is not) but not commit to typical definitive Pentecostal language like supernatural or miraculous because the eucharistic experience, in some sense, was beyond or hidden. Laypersons talked more easily about their experiences of Christ's presence using unequivocal language.

### The Partaker's Body

Second, worthy eating involves discerning my body. The founders intended their readers (individual church members) to know that, like the early church, the Pentecostal practice of the Lord's Supper requires self-examination regarding personal holiness. Paul intended that the Corinthians test themselves regarding their faith. Elsewhere, he asks, "Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test" (2 Cor 13:5). Paul reasoned that the Corinthian believers needed to discern that they embody Jesus. The Corinthian self-testing included repenting of "religious and moral licentiousness."<sup>6</sup> In other words, Paul reconnects Corinthian spirituality with physical bodies. Contrary to Corinthian heterodoxy, human bodies matter; therefore, what the Corinthians do physically is consequential spiritually and *vice versa*. Since Paul emphasized self-examination regarding personal holiness, the founders also did so, stressing that an embodied faith recognized Christ's indwelling presence.

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<sup>6</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 475.

The founders' Full Gospel Christ experience was that discerning the body rightly in the Lord's Supper embraced a two-fold deliverance: soul and body.<sup>7</sup> The clergy participants acknowledged that the Lord's Supper is a self-reflexive experience, a sacred moment focused on remembering Christ crucified for the forgiveness of our sins and an opportunity to confess sins. However, they did not explicitly connect embodying Christ ("Christ Jesus in you") with eucharistic self-reflexivity or participation. On the other hand, the laypersons spoke about their experiences of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper as a profoundly intimate connection with Jesus—taking Christ's body and blood into their bodies. Partaking of Christ's body and blood (the bread and wine) was consequential to their Lord's Supper preparatory work. They wanted their holiness to match Christ's (1 Pet 1:15–16; cf. Lev 11:45). This kind of self-reflexivity readied them to experience Book-of-Acts blessings, miracles (physical healing), signs, and wonders.

### The Church Body

Third, worthy eating involves discerning the church body. The founders intended their readership to know that Jesus was present in their gatherings, resulting from grasping the "full simple Gospel."<sup>8</sup> Christ's discernible presence among Pentecostals was the essential Full Gospel marker that what they did corporately pleased God. When Pentecostals worshipped in "one accord," Christ poured out his Spirit as he did on Pentecost (Acts 2:4). Evidence of this outpouring was real-world spiritual blessings. Paul intended that the Corinthians address the "schisms within the church."<sup>9</sup> Disunity is a mark of infantile folly, not Spirit-wisdom come-of-age. Like the "members of a body" (1 Cor 12:12), the

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<sup>7</sup> McAlister, "Confession of Faith," 3–5.

<sup>8</sup> Argue, "At Evening Time," 6–7.

<sup>9</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 53.

Corinthian believers form one body, “knit together in the Spirit.”<sup>10</sup> Or, to use Paul’s eucharistic imagery, “Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf” (10:17).<sup>11</sup> In other words, Paul reconnects individual bodies (many) to the church body (one) (12:12–13). Church bodies matter; therefore, how the Corinthian believers treat each other is consequential spiritually.<sup>12</sup> Since the Lord’s Supper is an exceptional occasion of Christ’s presence (all participating in His blood and body, regardless of social status), how the Corinthians embody unity before, during, and after the rite also matters (Acts 1:15; 2:42).

The founders also believed that church bodies matter; as last-day believers, God pours out the Spirit of prophecy on everyone (Acts 2:17–18). There are no divisions: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). While in unity (not sameness, but rather a oneness), God commands a blessing (Jn 17:11b–19); as such, using God-given spiritual gifts, everyone “contends for the faith once delivered to the saints”<sup>13</sup> and “disapproves all issues that divide and confuse God’s people to no profit,” but rather, together, Pentecostals “aggressively evangelize” the world.<sup>14</sup> Some clergy participants described the Lord’s Supper performance as a profound connection with the congregation, especially when the assembly comes forward to receive the emblems from the pastor. While the laypersons also remarked that the synchronicity of partaking in the emblems together was a unifying experience, they overwhelmingly spoke about their experience in personal terms.

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<sup>10</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 53–54.

<sup>11</sup> Vondey, *People of Bread*, 141–94.

<sup>12</sup> Bender, *1 Corinthians*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Argue, “At Evening Time,” 6–7.

<sup>14</sup> Griffin, “1919,” 32.

### The Lord's Risen Body

Worthy eating involves discerning Jesus' presence in the three "realms of interpretation" for the "body of Christ" in the Lord's Supper performance. These three locations of Christ's sacramental presence are tied theologically to a fourth Pauline body focus, the risen Lord's body (15:35–56). The founders (particularly Moorhead, Kerr, and Gee) intended their readers to know that, like for the early church, the faithful Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper occasions an encounter with Jesus the risen and ascended Christ. Since Paul intended for his readers to understand that the Lord's Supper does not simply commemorate "Jesus dead," but rather Jesus' death overcome by resurrection life, so did the founders, who longed for a genuine encounter with "the risen Christ alive in the churches today through the powerful presence and gifts of the Spirit."<sup>15</sup> With language reminiscent of 1 Cor 11:23, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the Good News which he received and passed on, and they heard, accepted and took a stand upon, as of first importance, is that according to the eyewitness testimony of many, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (15:3–8).<sup>16</sup> Later in the chapter, Paul explains the difference between the natural and spiritual body and that each has its unique glory (35–44). Paul continues, "If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being;' the last Adam, a life-giving spirit" (44b–45).

As previously mentioned, the clergy research participants acknowledged that Christ is present in the performance and that they can discern that their congregants truly encounter Christ there. Like the founders, there are a variety of positions on the mode of

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<sup>15</sup> Macchia, "Pentecostal Spirituality," 665.

<sup>16</sup> The language of 1 Cor 15:3 is reminiscent of 11:23.

Christ's presence; still, the characterized perception is that the rite is sacred, mysterious, serious, and supernatural. The ambiguous vocabulary makes their description imprecise.

Since the eucharistic experience was, in a way, beyond or hidden, the clergy participants did not label the Christ encounter as one with the "risen Lord" or the "Spirit of life."

Instead, most of the research participants envision "Christ crucified." What is also true is that even though Kerr (literally) and Gee (spiritually) explicitly link Christ's sacramental presence (body and blood) with the bread and wine/juice (the material elements themselves), the laypersons more than the clergy persons did so. The laypersons' experience more closely reflects Paul's "sensible" notion that giving thanks, blessing, and partaking of the cup and broken bread is participation in the blood and body of Christ (1 Cor 10:14–16).

### *Summary*

Disparaging Christ's Body distorts the Gospel. All three (Jesus' body, the partaker's body and the church body) are sacramental bodies, locations of Christ's presence. These three locations of Christ's sacramental presence are theologically possible because of the fourth Pauline focus, the risen Lord's body. All three distorted body images fail to discern the Body of Christ—places that occasion Christ's presence. All three distortions are Corinthian errors that misinform their religious praxis, thus lampooning the performance of the Lord's Supper.<sup>17</sup> The irony is that the Corinthians, who considered themselves both "wise and spiritual,"<sup>18</sup> failed to discern Christ's Body correctly in all three ways. They also failed to distinguish the unique glory of Christ's risen body from their earthly bodies (15:42–44).

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<sup>17</sup> This is not inconsequential considering the Lord's Supper performance proclaims Christ's death until he comes.

<sup>18</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 573.

The same qualities the Corinthians pined for and flaunted a counterfeit of with their distorted body images—true wisdom and a genuine encounter with the “eschatological Spirit”<sup>19</sup>—Jesus intended to be “nourishment at the eucharistic meal.”<sup>20</sup> Instead of demonstrating profound wisdom and attaining mystery-heightened spirituality, the Corinthian imprudence satirized the liturgy: the proclamation of a non-gospel, neither wise nor spiritual, which befittingly invoked a curse rather than the blessings God intended with the sacrament.

### Judging Bodies Rightly

The Corinthian problem is anything but simple. While I agree with Garland that “Paul is not trying to instruct the Corinthians on the meaning of the Lord’s Supper,”<sup>21</sup> that is, Paul does not develop here a fully orbited liturgical or sacramental theology of the Eucharist, I do not agree that Paul only aims to address “selfishness.”<sup>22</sup> While it is likely that when the Corinthians were eating the Lord’s Supper, “they divided along socioeconomic lines, each one eating his or her supper, and those with plenty ignored those with little or nothing,”<sup>23</sup> this was not the only body indifference that treated Christ’s Body contemptuously. Garland aptly notes that “social questions clearly dominate the beginning (11:17–22) and the ending (11:27–34) of this section,”<sup>24</sup> but the social questions Paul raises throughout the book are not limited to one kind of social impropriety. Corinthian misbehaviours (plural) contradicted what Christ intended to remind those with whom he supped (11:17). The

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<sup>19</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit*, 283.

<sup>21</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 533–34.

<sup>22</sup> Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 535) writes, “The only question that Paul raises is this: Does what is done proclaim the Lord’s death or does it advertise our selfishness?” Paul does indicate other matters are left unaddressed in verse 34.

<sup>23</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 533.

<sup>24</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 533.

Corinthian contradictions denied the Gospel and, therefore, rejected Christ.<sup>25</sup> Paul's concern was that each misbehaviour (even all mischiefs together), including the blasé view of Christ's broken body, personal sin, and disunity, jeopardized the integrity of the ritual worship. In other words, "judging the body rightly" is a prerequisite of worthy participation in the Lord's Supper, and all three bodies require attention.

My phenomenological analysis of the contemporary experientialist dialogue and reception history reflects Paul's multifaceted concern. Many sacred moments arise from the research interviews as the participants reflect on their experience of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, including holiness, connection, purity, unity, etc. All three bodies should be discernment focal points in the liturgical admonition to self-reflexively discern the body of Christ (11:28–29).<sup>26</sup> In other words, a Pentecostal Lord's Supper liturgy should include elements that direct attention to the work of the Spirit in all three locations of sacramental presence: Jesus' body, the partaker's body and the church body.

### Guilty Bodies of His Body and Blood

Paul's use of the phrase, "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you" (11:23) makes clear that Paul intends for the Corinthians to know that Jesus established the Lord's Supper praxis (something that Gee makes clear in his "Study No. 9," and what the research clergy participants say that they intend to convey in their performances). Whatever else unworthy participation might be, at the very least, it demonstrates disdain for Jesus and

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<sup>25</sup> Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 441), quoting Fuller notes, "'me' stand for Jesus in his whole redemptive significance: it is the eschatological redemptive event that is recalled in its dynamic power" ("Double Origin," 68).

<sup>26</sup> Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 440) says, "The purpose of the *anamnesis* directive is not a reminder for God, but for human beings."

His instructions.<sup>27</sup> Like Paul, the founders wished to convey the same message: *Jesus* requires Pentecostals to participate in the sacrament discerningly, or as McAlister put it, “in the Spirit with understanding.”<sup>28</sup> The founders were concerned with linking their religious practices to the New Testament church since they sought to regain the Book-of-Acts experiences, the spiritual blessings of miracles, signs, and wonders.<sup>29</sup> But Paul does not only speak of blessings. Paul warns that those who unworthily share in the Lord’s Supper risk the curse of being “guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord,”<sup>30</sup> a staggering charge. The founders understood Paul to teach that blessings and curses are a reality of both Covenants. As the reception history demonstrated, much of their teaching regarding the Lord’s Supper drew from the Old Testament and often contrasted the New Covenant ordinances with the Old, establishing the New’s superiority over the Old. And since the purpose of regularly observing the Lord’s Supper, something the Corinthians and likely all Pauline communities did,<sup>31</sup> was to promote reflection, then just as the Israelites could only uphold what they understood of the previous Covenant, so, too, the New Covenant also requires discerning participation in its rites to achieve their intended end, Pentecostal blessings rather than curses (11:25).<sup>32</sup>

The founders testified and taught about the Lord’s Supper. They sought to anchor their experiences of the wonder-working power of Christ with theology rooted in the Bible. It would have been easy for them to drop the rite if it had only been a dead ritual without the power to change people (2 Tim 3:5) in favour of other practices yielding supernatural

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<sup>27</sup> Silva (“Eat/Drink,” vol. 2, 292) notes that W. Schmithals (*Gnosticism in Corinth* [1971], 250–256) suggests that there was an attempt to “modify or replace the sacramental meal that had been handed down to the Corinthians; a meal having as its content someone who had been crucified was perhaps considered shocking and, in the light of their new-found strength, nonsense.”

<sup>28</sup> McAlister, “Confession of Faith,” 3–5.

<sup>29</sup> Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 100.

<sup>30</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 834.

<sup>31</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 196.

<sup>32</sup> Silva, “Covenant,” vol. 1, 698.



results. St. Luke highlighted that, like the apostles' teaching, fellowship, and prayer, devotion to the Lord's Supper was an essential element of Book-of-Acts spirituality, which, according to Acts 2:42–47, resulted in *many* awe-inspiring signs and wonders performed by the apostles (2:43). The founders were not timid to speak of both blessings and curses, but this is not the case today.

### Recognizing the Bread

Not recognizing the bread is unworthy praxis.<sup>33</sup> The unworthy Corinthian eating and drinking at the Lord's Supper was an extension of their sinful eating and drinking practices in other Corinthian socio-religious contexts. Certain Corinthian factions "sought to prove their 'strength' and 'freedom' by deliberate participation in sacrifices to idols (1 Cor 10:14–20)."<sup>34</sup> Paul explains that you can only have communion with either God or the demons—not both (10:20–22). Green has convincingly argued that 10:14–22 is one of the most emphatic biblical statements regarding the theological significance of the Lord's Supper.<sup>35</sup> Green points out that verses 16–17 clarify that, like Paul, the "Corinthian Christians already believed that the Eucharist was in fact a 'communal participation' in Christ's body and blood" because earlier Paul himself had instructed them in this regard.<sup>36</sup> According to reports Paul received (11:17–18), the Corinthians did not allow the truth of their "communal participation with Christ's body and blood" to affect their activities of daily living. What is likely is that Paul intended the warning in 11:27–28 (using blood and body,

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<sup>33</sup> Regarding the Corinthian charge, Keener (*1–2 Corinthians*, 99) explains, "Their transgression was a failure to recognize the 'body' (11:29) – not just the bread pointing to Jesus' physical body on the cross (11:24) but the spiritual body of those who died with him (10:16–17; 12:12). By treating members according to worldly status rather than God's perspective (cf. 1:16–28; 4:7–10; 6:4; Jas 2:2–4), they were dishonouring Christ's own body."

<sup>34</sup> Silva, "Eat/Drink," vol. 2, 292.

<sup>35</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 195. Green also points out that 1 Cor 10 is not often referred to by founding American Pentecostals. This is not the case for Canadians.

<sup>36</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 196.

the same language in 10:16) to safeguard against ongoing harm from this continued *foolish* misbehaviour.<sup>37</sup> Even though the Israelites (followers of Moses), ancestors of Jesus' followers, experienced a baptism of deliverance (10:1) and ate divinely-provided spiritual food and drink, still "God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness" (10:5). Paul explained, "These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did, or worship idols as some of them did" (10:6–7). What evil things? Feasting, drinking, indulging in pagan revelry (Exod 32:6), sexual immorality, testing Christ, and grumbling. In other words, if Paul's teaching in 10:14–22 was a rebuke in the "starkest terms,"<sup>38</sup> then Paul intended "communal participation with Christ's body and blood" to be an essential focus of the discerning remembrance with which participants in the Lord's Supper should engage moving forward (11:23–32) if they wished to avoid unworthy participation and the commensurate curse.<sup>39</sup> Or, as the contemporary experientialist conversation goes, the Lord's Supper is sacred; it is what it represents (Christ's body and blood), and we need to take it seriously.

As Green has argued, Paul wishes to correct the Corinthians by "directing their attention to the definitive 'counterreality' of Christ encountered in Christian worship, particularly in the celebration of the Lord's Supper."<sup>40</sup> Failure to "discern and embody" this sacramentality is the antecedent of all the other Corinthian body distortions—all sinful behaviours and the commensurate curse of sickness and death.<sup>41</sup> Green summarizes the

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<sup>37</sup> Bender (*1 Corinthians*, 166) explains, "The lesson is clear: if those of the past who experienced God's salvific action and supernatural provision were not immune from divine judgment for falling back into idolatry and disobedience, then the 'wise' and 'knowledgeable' and 'spiritual' Corinthians will not be immune from such judgment if they do the same and even drag along others in their wake (8:9–11)."

<sup>38</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 197.

<sup>39</sup> Keener (*1–2 Corinthians*, 99) explains, "The regular reenactment of the Lord's Supper was no doubt intended to have the same effect, conscious of the Lord's presence and act of redemption which is not how the Corinthians were acting."

<sup>40</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 197.

<sup>41</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 197.

argument succinctly: “To put it another way, if the Corinthians had discerned the Lord’s body, if they had recognized what it means to share in Christ’s body and blood, they would not—and indeed could not—have split into factions, or given themselves to promiscuity, or dared to flirt with idols, or despised the weaker members of the community, or abused the charismata.”<sup>42</sup> Like Paul and the founders, PAOC clergy persons should speak more about encountering Christ in the Lord’s Supper performance. Doing so reflects the founders’ testimony, and laypersons’ experiential intuitions.

Spiritual discernment is vital to the Lord’s Supper praxis. It begins with discerning and acknowledging that Christ is present in the performance and that his presence is spiritual food and drink (10:3–4).<sup>43</sup> Gordon T. Smith articulates the concept well. He says that it is “not an act of mere mental assent as though the bread is only a token, a kind of mnemonic device,”<sup>44</sup> rather, Paul’s language implies recognizing “real communion with Jesus’ body and with his blood (1 Cor 10:14–17).”<sup>45</sup> Smith notes “that the genius of the sacramental vision is that the glory and grace of God are revealed to us and comes to us through materiality and that the incarnation, the embodied word of God, the real live *physical* Jesus, is the means by which God’s grace is known.”<sup>46</sup> Green’s interpretation of 10:14–22 comes close to Smith’s, and so does the testimony of the founders. Not only does Gee define the rite’s “divine purpose” as meeting Christ in “hallowed communion,”<sup>47</sup> he

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<sup>42</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 197–98.

<sup>43</sup> Keener (*1–2 Corinthians*, 84–85) remarks that “Paul is not antisacramental in 10:1–4, but does challenge complacency by showing that baptism (cf. 1:13–17; 15:29) and the Lord’s supper (the focus here; 10:14–22) no more protects them from divine judgment for idolatrous suppers than had their equivalent done among the Israelites” (84). He goes on, “In Paul’s usage, however, [spiritual food] more likely means ‘from the Spirit’ (cf. 2:13–3:11; 12:1; 14:1, 37; 15:44–46; probably even Rev 11:8), that is, ‘corresponding to the source you now depend on, the Spirit’ (cf. 12:13; 2 Cor 3:17)” (85).

<sup>44</sup> Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental, Pentecostal*, 87.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental, Pentecostal*, 87.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental, Pentecostal*, 87. Cf. Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 474.

<sup>47</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

goes on to explain that while discerning Christ's body includes the church body,<sup>48</sup> "more particularly still, we are to 'discern the Lord's body' by realizing closeness and reality of communion and relationship with the Lord at such a time."<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Keener believes, "The 'sharing' (*koinonia*) 'in Christ's body' plays on the two senses of his body: his physical body given on the cross as a sacrifice (11:23–24; cf. 5:7) and his body the church (10:17; 12:12; cf. Did. 9.4)."<sup>50</sup> Having laid the foundation that the Lord's Supper occasions "closeness and reality of communion and relationship with Jesus" (Jesus' body, the first body type), Gee identifies three self-reflexive foci: (a) repentance for personal transgressions (the participant's body, the second body type), (b) identification and reparation of relational disunity between church members (the church body, the third body type), and (c) mending spiritual disconnection (spiritual discipline aimed at tending all three). Gee emphasizes Christ's spiritual presence because it reflects the foundation of Pentecostal spirituality: "the Holy Spirit's presence among the people of God to transform them, especially during corporate worship."<sup>51</sup>

The founding Pentecostals longed for a genuine encounter with "the risen Christ alive in the churches today through the powerful presence and gifts of the Spirit."<sup>52</sup> It is with this discernible "glorious yet solemn truth in view" that Pentecostal self-reflexivity occurs.<sup>53</sup> Failure to discern the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper is to miss what Jesus purposed for the rite, what Gee diagnoses as "a serious condition of the soul," resulting from "thoughtlessness, irreverence, and carelessness."<sup>54</sup> The testimonial hook in the early

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<sup>48</sup> Gee ("Study," 3) continues, "... a breaking of bread service should always be a heart-searching time as to whether we are transgressing the laws of unity with any other member of His body." Gee continues, "Then there is the great type also of the unity of the mystical, spiritual body—the Church." (4).

<sup>49</sup> Gee, "Study," 13.

<sup>50</sup> Keener, *1 Corinthians*, 88.

<sup>51</sup> Stephenson, *Types*, 119.

<sup>52</sup> Macchia, "Pentecostal Spirituality," 665.

<sup>53</sup> Gee, "Study," 13.

<sup>54</sup> Gee, "Study," 13.

periodicals described life-giving supernatural encounters with Christ in the Lord's Supper. McAlister, with Gee, Kerr, Moorhead (et al.), along with Brother and Sister Hebden and Argue, boldly made the connection between their supernatural experiences at the Lord's Supper and Christ's presence—it was a solemn event, an Ordinance of a higher order.<sup>55</sup>

Stephenson reminds us that “a doctrine of the supper that emphasizes solely the concept of remembrance overlooks the transforming potential of the pneumatological and eschatological dimensions of pentecostal spirituality.”<sup>56</sup> When Pentecostals discern Christ's presence and yield to his transformative power, PAOC churches embody the kingdom of God relationally.<sup>57</sup> As to the nature and design of the sacrament, Stephens understood the Lord's Supper essentially as “a feast of thanksgiving and remembrance.”<sup>58</sup> As to thanksgiving, “the bread typifies the ‘bread of God which came down from Heaven, which if a man eat thereof he shall live forever.’”<sup>59</sup> Stephens believed that Pentecostals partake “of the immortal life of Jesus by eating the Heavenly Bread.”<sup>60</sup> Keeping the eschatological dimensions of Pentecostal spirituality at the forefront of the sacrament, McAlister notes, “Jesus Christ is the bread that came down from heaven ... He has prepared for all believers a perpetual feast in the Father's banqueting house.”<sup>61</sup> McAlister does not propose these as figurative statements; they are factual statements.

Early Pentecostals described an immersive Lord's Supper experience, but not because the liturgies were complex.<sup>62</sup> With the right conditions, Pentecostals experienced

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<sup>55</sup> Purdie, “Canadian Pentecostal Bible College,” 6.

<sup>56</sup> Stephenson, *Types*, 120.

<sup>57</sup> Fitch, *Faithful Presence*, 52.

<sup>58</sup> Stephens, “The Blood Covenant,” 8. Cf. Silva, “Eat/Drink; Feast; Food,” vol. 1, 655.

<sup>59</sup> Stephens (“The Blood Covenant,” 8) describes the Lord's Supper as thoughtful remembrance and anticipation.

<sup>60</sup> Stephens, “The Blood Covenant,” 8.

<sup>61</sup> McAlister, “The Sacrament,” 1.

<sup>62</sup> Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*.

God's salvation's drama in its performance.<sup>63</sup> With the help of the Spirit, Pentecostals vividly *remember* and *proclaim* "the Lord's death until he comes" (11:26).<sup>64</sup> Partly, this is because Pentecostals conceived the Lord's Supper to be prophetic, "a prophecy of His second coming" (1 Cor. 11:26).<sup>65</sup> They also understood its performance as "the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:4)."<sup>66</sup> That Pentecostals associated this divine sharing with the Lord's Supper reflects Paul's notion that at the Lord's Supper, we participate in Christ's body and blood (1 Cor 10:16). Paul understands this meal as participation with the risen and ascended Christ, the corollary to the gift-character of this meal.<sup>67</sup> The Lord's Supper in the early Canadian Pentecostal contexts did not seem to risk losing sight of "Jesus' fleshly form, or evaporating to become a mere idea of Christ."<sup>68</sup> Kerr's language regarding the culpability of unworthy participation is evocative:

As a spiritual meal, a holy meal, as a memorial, we must discern the Lord's body, the Lord's shed blood. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood unworthily shall be damned, but he that eateth and drinketh worthily shall not be damned." "There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."<sup>69</sup>

When some Corinthians failed to discern the body and partook of the bread and wine in an unworthy manner, they profaned the sacrament. By violating the sacrament, the partaker

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<sup>63</sup> Keener (*1–2 Corinthians*, 98) writes, "As the Passover annually commemorated (and allowed new generations to share the experience of) the first redemption (Ex. 12:14; 13:3; Deut 16:2–3; *Jub.* 49:15), so the Lord's Supper regularly did the same for the climactic redemption." Cf. Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 441), who writes, "As Jesus has substituted himself for the Passover lamb (recall 5:7), so the memento of him is to replace the *anamnesis* of Passover itself. Further implications of this will appear in v. 26: 'The remembrance of the past is thought of as becoming actual in the present' (Klauck, "Lord's Supper," 383)."

<sup>64</sup> Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 444–45), quoting Pfitzner and Bornkamm, concurs, "There is no worship without remembering, and there is no liturgical remembering without proclamatory narrative" ("Proclaiming," 16).

<sup>65</sup> Unknown, "Statement," 4.

<sup>66</sup> Unknown, "Statement," 4. Cf. Jonathan ("The Lord's Supper," 1) who states, "Paul's understanding of this meal as a communion, fellowship, or participation with the risen and ascended Christ is the corollary to the gift character of this meal."

<sup>67</sup> Jonathan, "The Lord's Supper," 1.

<sup>68</sup> Silva, "Eat/Drink; Feast; Food," vol. 1, 655 refers to Schweizer in RGG1:12.

<sup>69</sup> Kerr "Sermon," 6.

“profanes what it symbolizes.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, profaning the sacrament profanes Jesus, the participants and the assembly.<sup>71</sup>

The Corinthian believers were undoubtedly given to philandering, including being easily seduced into believing other gospels (2 Cor 11:3–4). It is also clear that Paul taught that any gospel other than the one he preached deserved and achieved a divine curse.<sup>72</sup> For Kerr, the examination includes “apprehend[ing] the Lord’s body, the Lord’s blood, the Lord’s death, the Lord’s supper.”<sup>73</sup> Kerr continues,

That is remarkable that there should stand in connection with the spiritual and holy meal, the Lord Himself, the Lord of Heaven. No man has ascended into Heaven, so this must be the Lord of Glory that was crucified. It is the Lord that died, the Lord that was raised, that gave His blood, that gave this table, the Lord’s supper—it is the Lord’s supper.<sup>74</sup>

Kerr’s point is that it is the Lord’s supper and that this indicates that it is the occasion and place where the Christian community submits itself to his saving work in a specific way (according to His design) and shares in his body and power,<sup>75</sup> themes that should be included in PAOC performances.

The founders, Green and Smith, consider Jesus’ presence the central element of the Lord’s Supper celebration. According to Paul and the founders, a failure to discern Christ’s presence in the Supper is the root of community dysfunction. At the very least, Jesus’ body (as manifested by the transformative work of the Spirit in the sacrament) is the wellspring of a new way of living in communion. Not discerning Christ’s presence functions much the

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<sup>70</sup> Smith (*A Holy Meal*, 81) writes, “To participate in a sacrament is to participate in what is symbolized. The sacraments are really nothing other than a God-ordained means by which the church lives in communion with the living Christ. This means we believe, know, feel, and live in the ever-present dynamic that Christ is present to the church as the ascended Lord in real-time. More specifically, Christ is present to the church through the sacraments.”

<sup>71</sup> Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental, Pentecostal*, 81.

<sup>72</sup> “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse” (Gal 1:8)!

<sup>73</sup> Kerr, “Sermon,” 5.

<sup>74</sup> Kerr, “Sermon,” 5.

<sup>75</sup> Silva, “Ruler,” vol. 2, 776.

same way, but rather than leading to life, thoughtlessly, irreverently, and carelessly administering and participating in the Lord's Supper precipitates spiritual rigor mortis.<sup>76</sup> The laypersons interviewed more readily acknowledged a supernatural connection between bread and wine and Jesus' body and blood. Without demystifying the experience, the clergy persons should acknowledge Christ's mysterious and supernatural presence as the essence of the sacrament's sacred and higher nature. At the least, doing so would clarify that everyone takes the Lord's Supper seriously.

### Recognizing Individual Church Members—My Body

The contemporary experientialist conversation made clear that there was a felt sense that the Lord's Supper required personal purity. The rite is sacred, and the research participants felt the need to participate in it commensurately; they had the sense that they were taking in Jesus and, therefore, needed to take the rite seriously. For some, thoughtfully approaching the Lord's Supper opened them up to experiencing a cleansing sensation as they reflected upon Christ's sacrifice and partook of the elements, especially the wine. For others, the sense of unworthiness prevented them from consuming the communion elements. While three laypersons focused on what was already accomplished by Christ's sacrifice (and thought it was an error to confess their sins), most felt that self-examination as to their heart's condition—confessing their sins and renewing their commitment to Christ—was necessary preparatory work to accomplish before taking and eating the bread and drinking the wine.<sup>77</sup> This focus on personal sin is also a Pauline Corinthian theme. Like some

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<sup>76</sup> Gee ("Study," 13) explains, "These are symptoms of a serious condition of the soul, and the words that follow, 'for this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep,' only indicate the inevitable effect upon the physical life of an unhealthy spiritual life in the believer."

<sup>77</sup> Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 446.



Corinthians wanted to demonstrate their freedom by eating meat sacrificed to idols, a faction thought it was proof of their spiritual wisdom and heights that they fellowshiped at the Lord's Table with someone engaged in sexual practices that, even by Corinthian standards, were scandalous.

For Conzelmann, “guilty” does not imply damnation but, instead, culpability, like someone who is “accused of adultery” (11:28).<sup>78</sup> This is an astute observation of significant parallelism since Paul spends 1 Corinthians 6 and 7 expounding the egregious nature of the Corinthian Christian's sexual sin. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul defines such sexual activity as a sinful act not “outside one's body” but rather “one committed against one's own body” (1 Cor 6:18–20). Paul also makes the argument that because a believer is “joined to the Lord in Spirit” (6:17), the “body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (6:13). In this, another stark rebuke, Paul argues that sexual intercourse with a prostitute not only “joins the prostitute to the person” (6:16) in the manner of becoming one flesh, but in some way, this sexual misconduct also “joins the prostitute to Christ” (6:16). Paul's illustration is shocking, and likely not easily forgotten. It is hardly a stretch to conceive that the use of *guilty* in 11:27 and *body* in 11:29 would conjure up this shocking mental image, especially as this letter is read aloud to the gathered Christian community.<sup>79</sup> Joining Jesus' body with that of a prostitute is worth more than a footnote.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Conzelmann, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 202n107.

<sup>79</sup> Heil (*The Letters of Paul*, 2) states, “First, the original setting for the public performance of these letters was communal worship that was most likely connected to the celebration of the Eucharist. Their audiences listened to the theological concepts, particular problems, and pressing concerns Paul addressed as they gathered together, probably in house churches, for worship. Even the letters addressed to individual delegates of Paul—Titus and Timothy—were not purely personal but were also addressed to the worshipping community as a whole.”

<sup>80</sup> Conzelmann, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 202n107.

Paul derides, “Don’t you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never” (1 Cor 6:15)!<sup>81</sup>

Moisés Silva offers two further scripture references describing how the meal was being profaned. The first description is 11:21, which deals with treating the rite as their own meal, not the Lord’s.<sup>82</sup> The second is 5:11: “But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with any who claim to be fellow believers but are sexually immoral or greedy, idolaters or slanderers, drunkards or swindlers. With such persons do not even eat.” Paul says, “What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. ‘Expel the wicked person from among you’” (12–13). Not only permitting such people to participate in the Lord’s Supper but believing that this kind of openness is a mark of spiritual wisdom is a social concern equal to selfishness. This permissiveness also reflects pagan culture (“with such persons do not even eat; judge those inside”).<sup>83</sup> Not only is the Supper the Lord’s, but the elements of celebration (the Lord’s body and blood, bread and cup) are also. At least some of the Corinthian believers were partaking of the elements unrepentant of sexual sin and other violations.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps more shocking is that the Corinthian congregation not only “tolerated such behaviour” but believed tolerating “was evidence of superior wisdom.”<sup>85</sup> The point is that Christians do not belong to God in some disembodied spiritual state in this life; instead, “their bodies, i.e., their complete earthly existence, belong to him (1 Cor 6:13).”<sup>86</sup> Thiselton suggests, “The focus remains on *Christ, and Christ crucified*, as proclaimed

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<sup>81</sup> Hallstrom (“A Spiritual Meal,” 1007) reminds us that Origen, like others from antiquity, believed that the eucharistic preconditions one must observe included faith purity “and recommends sexual abstinence.”

<sup>82</sup> Silva, “Ruler,” vol. 2, 292.

<sup>83</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 534.

<sup>84</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 200–203. See also: “jealousy and quarrelling” (3:3); “lawsuits” (6:7); “causing the weaker Christian to stumble” (8:1–3, 12).

<sup>85</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle*, 201–2.

<sup>86</sup> Silva, “Ruler,” vol. 2, 776.

through a self-involving sharing in the bread and wine. If stance and lifestyle make this empty of content and seriousness, participants will be held accountable for so treating the body and blood of the Lord.”<sup>87</sup> Paul is addressing a complex problem.

Gee describes the Lord’s Supper celebration as “a trysting-place between the betrothed and the Bridegroom.”<sup>88</sup> He notes that Paul uses “strong and striking” language to “pull up short some Corinthian believers who were partaking unworthily.”<sup>89</sup> When we participate in the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner, Gee asks, “Do we not provoke the Lord to jealousy? (1 Cor 10:22).”<sup>90</sup> His remark that the guilt of a “divided heart” would cause “Divine Jealousy to blaze at the Lord’s Table”<sup>91</sup> is a striking rebuke! Paul’s comment on the divine judgment that has befallen the Corinthians clarifies how seriously Christians must treat the Lord’s Supper.<sup>92</sup> “The one who established that covenant and Supper...presides as Lord of that table.”<sup>93</sup> The judgment fits the sin.

Conzelmann writes that the individual that “offends against the elements offends against the Lord himself,”<sup>94</sup> explaining that the offence occurs because the Corinthians break “sacral law,”<sup>95</sup> pointing out that the nature of the Corinthian offence is twofold: it has to do with the “act of administration and of participation in the Supper.”<sup>96</sup> Along with a focus on the church body, Conzelmann concedes that Paul might also have the Corinthians’ bodies in mind since both are temples of the Holy Spirit.<sup>97</sup> While Gee, like Conzelmann<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 890. Cf. Fee, *The First Epistle*, 560.

<sup>88</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

<sup>89</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

<sup>90</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

<sup>91</sup> Gee, “Study,” 3.

<sup>92</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 556.

<sup>93</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 555.

<sup>94</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 202.

<sup>95</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 202.

<sup>96</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 202 (cf. 194, where he states “The Corinthians destroy its character by their conduct.”).

<sup>97</sup> Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians*, 202n105) remarks that “the same applies to both 3:16 & 6:19.”

<sup>98</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 202.

and many of my research participants, makes explicit that he does not believe in the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation,<sup>99</sup> he nevertheless espouses “more than a weakly memorialist view of the Lord’s Supper,” to borrow Green’s words.<sup>100</sup> Even though Pentecostals typically define their view of the Supper negatively (not transubstantiation), we understand our Spirit encounters as “sacramental,” actual encounters with Christ.<sup>101</sup> The clergypersons described their experience of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper as sacred and mysterious. Still, they could more explicitly define the encounter positively, not simply what it is not.

### Recognizing Church Bodies

We can also see the abuses at Corinth as the church’s inability to recognize itself as Christ’s body during the Lord’s Supper (cf. 1 Cor 6:15; 10:16; 11:29; 12:27).<sup>102</sup> Like Garland, Fee states that the Corinthians offend the Lord because the “rich dishonour the poor.”<sup>103</sup> Fee’s focus is corporate wholeness, the church body.<sup>104</sup> Conzelmann rightly argues, though too narrowly, that “the principle of unworthiness” is related to misusing the Lord’s Supper for their “own supper.”<sup>105</sup> Thiselton more broadly states that Paul’s primary point is that “attitude and conduct should fit the message and solemnity of what is proclaimed.”<sup>106</sup> The Corinthians “too often thought inaccurately and behaved unfittingly.”<sup>107</sup> Therefore, they

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<sup>99</sup> Gee, “Study,” 4.

<sup>100</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 327.

<sup>101</sup> Macchia, *Justified*, 285; Yong, *The Spirit*, 298.

<sup>102</sup> Silva, “Eat/Drink,” vol. 2, 292.

<sup>103</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 618.

<sup>104</sup> See also Lenski, *Interpretation*, 457–58.

<sup>105</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 194.

<sup>106</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle*, 889.

<sup>107</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle*, 889n100.

were given to unworthily celebrate the Lord's Supper since they embodied a manner that "does not accord with the gospel."<sup>108</sup>

Conzelmann states that 1 Cor 11:28 "moves from principle to application."<sup>109</sup> He says, "The object of this self-examination is not one's inner state in general, but one's attitude to the sacrament, that is, the propriety of the participation, whether one 'distinguishes' the body of the Lord. It is the criterion of existence in the community."<sup>110</sup> Lenski notes that the context indicates that Paul has two things in mind regarding self-examination (or "testing"): first, "faith in Christ's words which are used in the very institution of the sacrament, v. 23–25," and secondly, "the removal of anything from the heart that would clash with the reception of Christ's body and blood. This is done by true contrition and repentance."<sup>111</sup> Kerr agrees:

How shall we come? Having examined ourselves, having found ourselves to be in the faith. As a spiritual meal, a holy meal, as a memorial we must discern the Lord's body, the Lord's shed blood ... We are God's children, and for that reason if we stay aside, if we drop down from the supernatural under that plan, with discerning the Lord's body, it will be to our judgment. He judges us that we may not be condemned with the world. This is God's judgment. I was judged on the cross. He was my substitute.<sup>112</sup>

Corinthian non-wisdom influenced how they behaved. Their creed and conduct proclaimed something other than the Gospel they received from Paul, proving to be a crisis with dire consequences. Failure to locate Christ crucified at the centre of their Lord's Supper praxis resulted in denying what bread and cup symbolized, identifying and judging lifestyles that contradicted the sacrifice of Jesus, and valuing those who made up the body of Christ. A

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<sup>108</sup> Silva, "Evil; Good; Worthless," vol. 1, 341.

<sup>109</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 202.

<sup>110</sup> Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 202.

<sup>111</sup> Lenski, *Interpretation*, 480.

<sup>112</sup> Kerr, "Sermon," 6.

blasé view of personal sin, corporate unity, and the work of Christ on the cross is a failure to pay careful attention to the Gospel. The result is judgment.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Considering my exploration of earlier reception history, my research interviews, and the biblical text that Pentecostals most often used as the liturgical text for their Lord's Supper performance, "eating worthily" involves self-examination that discerns three bodies: Jesus' body, the partaker's body, and the church's body. By locating these three body discernments in 1 Corinthians, Pentecostals can better navigate the rite with biblical-theological language sufficient to express their perceived body sense of Christ's presence in the performance. In other words, since most of the PAOC clergy participants interviewed use 1 Cor 11 as a liturgical text for their Lord's Supper performance, Paul's admonition to the Corinthians (Bible) can inform how Pentecostals gathered for the Lord's Supper (Community) discern "what is given" in their experience of Christ's presence (Spirit) a momentary, sacred, and mysterious meeting that laypersons understand to be a serious, lingering that connects Pentecostals to Christ supernaturally.

To participate in the Lord's Supper worthily, we must "judge the body rightly."<sup>113</sup> This old-time Pentecostal sentiment was an essential warning to the first Pentecostals and remains important since each body is sacramentally Christ's body. McAlister, Gee, Kerr, and Stephens would be concerned that our "Statement" omits Paul's warning. They would also be troubled that contemporary Pentecostals do not make clear that the mystery of Christ's presence (that is, something more) in the Supper is a supernatural encounter with

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<sup>113</sup> Gee, "Study," 13.

Christ. We do more than remember that Jesus died for us; we experience this profound truth again.

Along with Water Baptism, the Lord's Supper, according to McAlister and Purdie, is "the sacrament," different than other scriptural ordinances, of a higher nature. Macchia reminds us that Christians "repeat the meal ... as a feast that celebrates the excess of the Spirit in anticipation of the eschatological banquet."<sup>114</sup> The Supper occasions our "deepening participation in Christ in the presence of the Spirit."<sup>115</sup> All authentic liturgical acts must involve our "bodies and our senses—our hearts and minds."<sup>116</sup> We must not fail to discern this truth because we must embody it for the world. The price is too great. The final words go to Gee:

And so the Breaking of Bread is to be entered upon prayerfully and thoughtfully; the perfect sufficiency in Christ of which it speaks in no wise allowing any carelessness in the life of the believer but rather continually bracing the soul to closer walk with God, as it likewise reveals those boundless stores of Divine Grace for us all in the One who said as He first gave thanks and break the bread and to the cup, those words of Eternal Love,—“For You.”<sup>117</sup>

It is to thoughtful prayer that I now turn.

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<sup>114</sup> Macchia, *Justified*, 285.

<sup>115</sup> Macchia, *Justified*, 286.

<sup>116</sup> Lathrop, "Liturgy, Preaching, and the Sacraments," 646.

<sup>117</sup> Gee, "Study," 13.

## CHAPTER 6: PRAYERFULLY MAKING PENTECOSTAL SENSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

I started this project by asking, in what ways does the Lord's Supper's praxis uniquely reflect, contribute to, and perpetuate essential Pentecostal spirituality? I proposed the following building blocks to answer this question. First, aligned with the Cleveland School of Pentecostal Studies, I have offered a historiographical account of the Lord's Supper from the perspective of the earliest Canadian Pentecostals. By first reckoning with the founders' Lord's Supper praxis, I am giving due weight to "their discerning openness to the work of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> In other words, I have considered the founders' testimony about their experience of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, which most clearly reveals the "heart" of the movement regarding the sacrament.<sup>2</sup>

Second, having paid attention to the founders' testimony, I considered a contemporary Pentecostal witness from the perspective of clergypersons and laypersons.<sup>3</sup> By undergoing this phenomenological inquiry, I reflexively illustrate the essence of the lived experience of the research participants. To use Jean Luc Marion's words, through testimony, I glimpse "what is given" (the phenomenon) in the research participants' eucharistic Christ encounters.<sup>4</sup> With this information, I assessed to what extent the contemporary experientialist conversation reflects the founders' testimony. While there are

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<sup>1</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 74–75.

<sup>2</sup> Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, 551.

<sup>3</sup> Cartledge, *Mediation*, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Marion, *Being Given*, 216–19.



commonalities, several differences also exist. These similarities and differences form the mutually edifying conversation that informs the practical theological task of this project. Therefore, this theological endeavour (including both self-reflection and description) is defined by its relation to the cultural system that constitutes Canadian Pentecostalism.<sup>5</sup> Since both the founders and research participants understand 1 Corinthians 11 as an essential Lord's Supper liturgical text, I offered an exposition of the passage, paying particular attention to the Apostle Paul's use of the word "body" to gain a fuller understanding of what it means to discern the body of Christ and thus worthily participate in the rite.

I considered the Holy Spirit's role in the rite in Chapter 6, "Prayerfully Making Pentecostal Sense of the Lord's Supper." Since the invocation of the Holy Spirit is typical of Pentecostal spirituality generally but less commonly explicitly prayed in the Canadian Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper, I propose that a eucharistic *epiclesis* could serve as a familiar way to meaningfully orient participants toward a rich pneumatological understanding of the sacrament. This current chapter is similar to an exercise in liturgical criticism, where "sacramental and liturgical theology merge" to improve praxis.<sup>6</sup> Adding a thoughtful eucharistic *epiclesis* in the Pentecostal Lord's Supper performance is the healthy process of undergoing "reforming criticism," ensuring that our liturgies "clearly serve the gospel of which the sacraments are meant to be ritual expression."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Frei, *Types*, 2, 38–39.

<sup>6</sup> Lathrop, "Liturgy, Preaching, and the Sacraments," 647.

<sup>7</sup> Lathrop, "Liturgy, Preaching, and the Sacraments," 647.

### Rites, Rituals, and Pentecostal Sacramentality

While Pentecostal spirituality is Christocentric, rooted in a fourfold gospel,<sup>8</sup> I agree with Frank Macchia's deduction that Pentecostals place "the weight of this concentration on the risen Christ alive in the churches today through the powerful presence and gifts of the Spirit."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, many Pentecostals believe the sign of spiritual vitality is the felt sense of Christ's presence. Cartledge has rightly observed that Pentecostal/Charismatic theological scholarship "has considered Spirit baptism the archetypal Pentecostal religious experience and uses it to discuss experience more generally."<sup>10</sup> Measuring spiritual vitality this way shapes how we integrate and balance right "praise-confession, affections, and actions."<sup>11</sup> In other words, Pentecostals hold a Spirit-predisposition that shapes how we achieve right-Pentecostal-spirituality. To confirm this, you only need to review the required "Pentecostal Theology" course syllabus of my Master in Theological Studies in Pentecostal Studies.<sup>12</sup>

Fundamentally, Pentecostal theology is Spirit/Word, Spirit/Christ, Spirit/Church, Spirit/Believer, Spirit/Service, and Spirit/Prayer.<sup>13</sup> To borrow words from Ernest Skublics, a non-Pentecostal, the curriculum tries to "decipher and understand [make sense of] what really happened to us in the liturgical encounters when we first met God in a real formative [Pentecostal] way."<sup>14</sup> Pentecostal theology is theological reflexivity about the Pentecostal

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<sup>8</sup> Dayton, *Theological Roots*, 173–74.

<sup>9</sup> Macchia, "Pentecostal Spirituality," 665.

<sup>10</sup> Cartledge, *Mediation*, 68.

<sup>11</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 30–31.

<sup>12</sup> Griffin ("The Foundation," 85) lists three objectives for Module III: "1. Consider the Holy Spirit's role in providing the Word of God and helping us interpret the Word so that truth becomes a part of our lives. 2. To understand that Christology is the core of Pentecostal theology because it is the Spirit's primary task to ensure that Christ is viewed as the saviour and Lord. 3. To understand that theology becomes 'Pentecostal' by viewing each area through the lens of the Holy Spirit's involvement and to sense His presence with our hearts and mind."

<sup>13</sup> Griffin, "The Foundation," 6–7.

<sup>14</sup> Skublics, *Plunged into the Trinity*, 2. Words in parentheses added.

praxis associated with our experiences of particular transformative God encounters.

Cartledge explains that experience “functions more like a ‘testimony’ to an encounter in which the transcendent One becomes immanent, at least for the duration and purpose of the encounter.”<sup>15</sup> Even though the “Pentecostal Theology” course of my Master of Theological Studies teaches Spirit/Church and the “Statement of Essential Truths” section on THE CHURCH includes “the practices of water baptism and the Lord’s Supper” alongside “worship, prayer, proclamation, discipleship, and fellowship” as responses to the “shared experience of the transforming presence of God,” my phenomenological interviews suggest that, in contemporary Pentecostal praxis, Spirit/sacrament is not evident in the same way Spirit/sacramentals or Spirit/sacramentality is. What are Pentecostals to do with a prescribed perpetual praxis that claims to be a transformative encounter with Jesus mediated through the Holy Spirit in bread and wine? And to add to the conundrum, the rite is sensorially rich, involving touch, sight, sound, smell, and taste. What is evident from the interviews is that invoking the Holy Spirit in a focused way during the Lord’s Supper performance is missing from our Pentecostal praxis.

### **The Spirit’s Priority in Pentecostal Vitality**

Generally speaking, our Pentecostal liturgical priority is to cultivate a keen openness and nimble responsiveness to the inbreaking creative work of the Holy Spirit. Since Pentecostals test and measure “right Pentecostal spirituality” as we experience a sense of Christ’s presence, the sign of vitality, most Pentecostals believe that neglecting the Spirit’s priority enervates that vitality. Therefore, *most* of what we do when we gather for worship (our Pentecostal liturgy) reflects our desire for God’s immanent presence through the

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<sup>15</sup> Cartledge, *Mediation*, 66.

Spirit.<sup>16</sup> Josh Samuel explains, “Experiencing the Spirit’s immediacy is one of the primary objectives of Pentecostals when coming together for their church services and is a theological foundation of Pentecostal corporate worship.”<sup>17</sup> Pentecostals understand “good church,” what I might call liturgical vitality, as a function of the Holy Spirit’s enabling presence. This is not just wishful thinking; Pentecostals make this a matter of prayer, including pre-service and corporate prayers interspersed throughout the liturgy. Most clergypersons also point to “spiritual songs” as the most potent mode of petitioning God. Often, we begin “worship acts” with a prayer announcing to God, the devil, the saints, and visitors in the congregation that the Lord has the lead and that we serve His agenda yielded to the Holy Spirit. It is not uncommon for Pentecostal clergy persons to include four or five prayers during a worship service. Often considered, one of the best public confessions a Pentecostal minister can give is that, at the behest of the Holy Spirit, we are doing something different than planned and prepared!

### **The Eucharistic *Epiclesis***

Daniel Castelo, in his work *Revisioning Pentecostal Ethics: The Epicletic Community*, “a constructive exploration of moral theology within Pentecostalism,”<sup>18</sup> emphasizes that “*epicletic*” is both a doxological and a pneumatic term. He argues that the nature of American Pentecostal Christian communal life is *epicletic* and that its “practice-orientation” is “abiding and waiting.” To understand what he means by *epicletic*, he offers the following definition of *epiclesis*:

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<sup>16</sup> Samuel (*The Holy Spirit*, 1) argues that “one of the best ways to understand Pentecostalism is not merely through doctrinal statements, but through the ‘central Pentecostal expectation of a radical experience of the Spirit.’”

<sup>17</sup> Samuel, *The Holy Spirit*, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Castelo, *Revisioning*, 1.

The word usually is associated with the eucharistic prayer as a way of preparing the elements for their partaking by the faithful. This preparation involves “calling” the Holy Spirit “upon” the elements and communicants alike. This activity is illustrative of how the church is to be in its coming and going in relation to God, one another, and all else that is. It is a fellowship that lives its common life with the ongoing recognition that its life is Spirit-offered, Spirit-dependent, Spirit-enlivened, and Spirit-empowered. An epicletic community then is one that is disposed and characterized in a certain God-like and God-directed way. As Yves Congar titles the last section of his major work on the Holy Spirit, the life of the church is “as one long epiclesis.”<sup>19</sup>

Castelo’s definition illustrates two critical points: First, Pentecostal scholars know that the *epiclesis* has historically played an essential role in the Lord’s Supper, whether the consecration focus was the elements or communicants.<sup>20</sup> Second, Pentecostals envision Pentecostalism *epiclectically*. Since the Pentecostal *epiclectic* “practice-orientation” is “abiding and waiting,” we privilege worship to establish authority and truth claims.<sup>21</sup> *Doxology* is how we engage our sensory system of knowing and being in communion. While it is true that Pentecostals believe God permeates all things, we still invoke, discern, name, and live into this sacramental reality, what many call “life in the Spirit.”<sup>22</sup> To be clear, I am identifying that while Castelo extrapolates what is true of the sacrament to a Pentecostal ethos and in contemporary praxis, the clergypersons interviewed tend not to apply what is true generally of “life in the Spirit” to the Lord’s Supper praxis narrowly.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Castelo, *Revisioning*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Kennedy (*Eucharistic Sacramentality*, 2) writes, “Perhaps one of the most pressing needs of the Church is to recover a dynamic eucharistic spirituality, embracing not only the spiritual benefits bestowed on the communicant, but also the eucharist as a pledge and promise of eschatological hope embracing humanity and all creation, the ecumenical sign of the bringing together of all things in Christ, and the means of empowerment of Christian discipleship and mission until the kingdom of God comes.”

<sup>21</sup> Castelo, *Revisioning*, 130.

<sup>22</sup> Castelo, *Revisioning*, 130.

<sup>23</sup> American Charismatic theologian Dr. Sam Storms eliminates chapters 10 and 11 from his “Life in the Spirit” Biblical Study of First Corinthians. Further Pentecostal (and Charismatic) theological reflection is needed to emphasize the Spirit’s primacy in the Sacraments. The Lord’s Supper is a ritual expression and means of grace of life in the Spirit.

Regarding the Pentecostal praxis of the sacraments, Macchia explains that Water Baptism is the rite of “union” with Christ, and the Lord’s Supper is the rite of ongoing “communion.”<sup>24</sup> He writes, “The church is indeed a communion of saints, so there is something about the Lord’s Supper that brings to ritual expression who we are as the church.”<sup>25</sup> Theologically and liturgically speaking, the key to the ritual expression of our communion, aptly, is the *epiclesis*. Macchia expounds, “It is fitting that we invoke the Spirit as the one who works on us through the meal to bring about the remembrance and communion.”<sup>26</sup> He makes explicit that the “invocation of the Spirit should accompany the words of institution.”<sup>27</sup> No clergyperson I interviewed included an explicit *epiclesis* in their liturgy following the words of institution. For Macchia, the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in the rite’s various accents: “divine embrace, elevated communion, remembrance, and hope.”<sup>28</sup> He writes, “As we praise and give thanks during this meal, all the while remembering what he did for us, we experience the Lord embrace and admonish us.”<sup>29</sup> In addition to his use of experiential language, what is of Pentecostal significance is Macchia’s assertion that “Without Jesus as the Spirit Baptizer, there is no clear link between the *anamnesis* and the *epiclesis*. In fact, the *anamnesis* is fulfilled in the *epiclesis* in light of Jesus’ resurrection from death to mediate the Spirit.”<sup>30</sup> He states: “The *epiclesis* is thus at the heart of the meal,”<sup>31</sup> and then asks whether we typically “highlight the Lord’s Supper as an occasion for genuine Pentecostal experience.”<sup>32</sup> Or, to ask the question differently: Do the Canadian Pentecostals interviewed perform the rite expecting the Holy

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<sup>24</sup> Macchia, *Introduction*, 144.

<sup>25</sup> Macchia, *Introduction*, 144.

<sup>26</sup> Macchia, *Introduction*, 144.

<sup>27</sup> Macchia, “Signs of Grace,” 160.

<sup>28</sup> Macchia, *Introduction*, 145–46.

<sup>29</sup> Macchia, “Signs of Grace,” 160.

<sup>30</sup> Macchia, *Baptized*, 252.

<sup>31</sup> Macchia, *Baptized*, 252.

<sup>32</sup> Macchia, *Baptized*, 252.

Spirit to respond in a way familiar to their typical experiences of Christ's presence? Is the experience of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper similar to Spirit Baptism or subsequent Spirit in-fillings?<sup>33</sup> The answers were mixed, and only one clergy participant compared what occurred at the Lord's Supper with the operation of the gifts of the Spirit operative in the worship service or during an altar call.

### Where Has the Eucharistic *Epiclesis* Gone?

The fact that the vast majority of those interviewed for this study did not include an explicit *epiclesis* with their eucharistic prayers attests to how Canadian Pentecostals conceive of the Holy Spirit's role in the Lord's Supper, namely with uncertainty, as well as with unawareness of the Spirit's place in eucharistic theology or contemporary Pentecostal theology touching ecclesiology. I was surprised that the Pentecostals interviewed omitted an *epiclesis* during their Lord's Supper performance because Spirit invocations are an everyday Pentecostal praxis.<sup>34</sup> What other more liturgical churches intentionally incorporate in their eucharistic liturgies (and are caricatured as not invoking elsewhere), the Pentecostals interviewed do everywhere but the Lord's Supper. Why omit an explicit *epiclesis* in the Pentecostal Lord's Supper liturgy?<sup>35</sup> Is it because the Lord's Supper liturgy

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<sup>33</sup> Tomberlin (*Pentecostal Sacraments*, 203–204), in explaining the difference between the traditional pneumatic view of the Lord's Supper held by Calvin and Wesley and a Pentecostal view states, "The traditional Pneumatic view may be defined in terms of a reasonable faith. The Spirit is present because the Word is proclaimed. Faith is an exercise of reason. Although Pentecostals embrace the preeminence of the proclaimed Word, faith is more than an exercise of reason. Faith is experiential, and an experiential faith is accompanied by spiritual manifestations that may be perceived by the physical senses."

<sup>34</sup> Tomberlin (*Pentecostal Sacraments*, 220) writes, "The Pentecostal movement was birthed out of *epiclesis*—praying, seeking, waiting, and expecting the coming of the Holy Spirit."

<sup>35</sup> Green (*Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 285) argues that Christ's presence by the Spirit "does not wait on the power of some consecratory priestly-liturgical act" but explains, "To be sure, the liturgy is there by God's purpose to draw celebrants' attention to the Christ who directed the church to 'do this' and to a relation to him that exists in any case. Acting out liturgical rubrics remains necessary because that is the divinely given way to show us the Lord who is present just at that moment. Nonetheless, the Lord is not under the sway of liturgical rubrics." Green's point is that we should not mistake Christ's Eucharist-event design for the ability to adjure the Holy Spirit into action. God is not beholden to our powerful prayers. He graciously works this way by his design.

constrains spiritual serendipity? How creative can the Holy Spirit really be, limited by the Lord's Supper liturgy? So, where has the eucharistic *epiclesis* gone? Everywhere but the Lord's Table!

### Ubiquitous, Yet Still Required

Daniel Castelo has argued that Pentecostals extend the notion of *epiclesis* to all of life. In this way, the Pentecostal *epiclesis* is ubiquitous. He writes, "When believers recognize their lives as existentially epicletic, when they recognize that all that they have and are and hope to be is made possible by the Spirit's presence and work, then they *perform* their lives in such a fashion that they themselves can be indicative—one could even say iconic—of the divine presence in the world."<sup>36</sup> Generally speaking, I would agree that Pentecostals believe it is by the "sheer gratuity of the Holy Spirit" that our "being-in-the-world is sacramental."<sup>37</sup> But gratuity should not mean presumption! Do contemporary Pentecostals presume the Spirit's presence and work? Again the answer is no. Pentecostals prayerfully invoke the Spirit on *many* occasions, including various "worship acts." Most Pentecostals take seriously the biblical admonition to "Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere" (Eph. 6:18). We are also keen to testify about the power of Spirit-prayer and the Spirit's ensuant work.

Now, to narrow our focus: Do contemporary Canadian Pentecostals perform and participate in the Lord's Supper in a fashion that communicates (or is iconic of) the truth that Christ is present in the Lord's Supper by the work of the Spirit? It is unclear because

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<sup>36</sup> Castelo (*Revisioning*, 54) explains that "sacramentality, as it is used in relation to a human life, implies performance, enactment, and embodiment." Emphasis added.

<sup>37</sup> Castelo, *Revisioning*, 54.



the witness was inconsistent. Moreover, the clergy participants' textural description is sacred and mysterious, not a holy mystery. Like most Christian worship services, Pentecostals typically open with a call to worship and interlace the service with prayers. Not every component of a Pentecostal church service requires prayer (i.e., the announcements). Still, most do, and the prayers function like signposts signalling the transition from one significant service section to the next. Even though Pentecostals typically do not use formal labels for the different parts of their liturgy, they are clear about what they are petitioning God for at these moments, which is God's enabling presence.<sup>38</sup>

### Praying in the Spirit for the Spirit

Castelo's vision of the Pentecostal ethos makes a eucharistic *epiclesis* logical: It would help Pentecostals orient themselves in a familiar way to the Lord's Supper. In other words, as in all other Spirit invocations, the eucharistic *epiclesis* would make the Pentecostal praxis pneumatologically meaningful (that is, open to what the founders experienced, what much of the contemporary Pentecostal theology articulates, and what much of the research reveals that clergy participants intuit and laypersons anticipate) by making explicit the conviction that the Holy Spirit is present to make Communion possible.<sup>39</sup> Tomberlin agrees, "Without the *epiclesis*, we in effect signal that these actions are human work and no more."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Most of the clergy participants include a preservice prayer, an opening prayer, a prayer over the offering, a prayer of blessing over the children as they are dismissed to Children's Church, a prayer introducing the second worship package, a prayer before the sermon, and a concluding prayer.

<sup>39</sup> See, Alvarado, "Pentecostal Epiclesis."

<sup>40</sup> Quoting Gordon T. Smith, Tomberlin (*Pentecostal Sacraments*, 220) states, "The epiclesis reminds us that 'when we come to the table, we come in response to the prompting of the Spirit, we come in the Spirit, and in coming we are graced by the Spirit.'"

Macchia reminds us, “Sacramental presence is mutual presence, a *koinonia* in the Spirit in which Christ fills us with the Spirit and we give ourselves in the Spirit to him.”<sup>41</sup> The eucharistic *epiclesis* would be instructive, prophetically calling forth this *perichoretic* movement! But for the eucharistic *epiclesis* to be genuinely Pentecostal, we must curate the Lord’s Supper liturgy such that it is more than lip service. We would perform the prayer and allow for commensurate abiding and waiting. The key is imagining what happens in the Lord’s Supper like other “Pentecostal” Spirit encounters. That should be easy enough since “Pentecostals generally hold to the theological tenet that when the Holy Spirit comes upon any person or thing, that person or thing is transformed or sanctified.”<sup>42</sup> Without denying the symbolic value of the eucharistic elements, the eucharistic event—sign as performance—through the agency of the Spirit, would bring to the realization of yielded saints, that which it signifies.<sup>43</sup> Well-scripted, the *epiclesis* would teach participants that our “sacramental actions” refer “to the presence and action of Christ as the gift of the Father insofar as the gift is manifested by the Holy Spirit in the Church.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, the *epiclesis* would ascribe efficacy squarely to the presence and wonder-working power of the Holy Spirit. Stated more robustly, “The Spirit’s performance involves our performance, which is the meaning of the sacrament.”<sup>45</sup>

A eucharistic *epiclesis* demonstrates a confident relational dependence (rather than presumption) upon Christ’s “gracious presence.”<sup>46</sup> In practice, presuming Christ’s presence

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<sup>41</sup> Macchia, *Baptized*, 255.

<sup>42</sup> Alvarado, “Pentecostal Epiclesis,” 191–92.

<sup>43</sup> Macchia, *Baptized*, 253.

<sup>44</sup> Vondey, “Pentecostal Sacramentality,” 101.

<sup>45</sup> Macchia, *Baptized*, 247.

<sup>46</sup> Colwell (*Promise and Presence*, 29) is helpful here: Pentecostal confidence must remain relationally hopeful, but Colwell is correct, God’s love is irreducibly free: “God’s promise never becomes God’s prison; he who was free in the giving of the promise remains free in its fulfilment; we may confidently hope for the fulfilment of that promise, but we can never presume upon it; it never becomes our possession, ‘right,’ or due” (30).

debases (profanes) the Lord's Supper. Our actions, including omitting an *epiclesis*, risk making the sacrament's "different nature" undiscernible to those for whom we curate and administer the rite. I am reminded of two laypersons' cautions: "The clergy person need to take the Lord's Supper seriously," and "laypersons can tell when the Holy Spirit is leading the performance." Green noted that our liturgical rubrics "do not hold the Lord under sway" but "remain necessary because that is the divinely-given way to show us the Lord who is really present just at that moment."<sup>47</sup>

Castelo's vision need not become a "pansacramentalism" that "emasculates" the sacraments, as Baptist theologian John E. Colwell warns. Every meal is not the Lord's Supper. Jesus did not say of all or any other bread or wine, "This is my body broken for you, and this is my blood poured out for you." Our encounter with Christ in the Lord's Supper through the work of the Holy Spirit is unique as Christ intended. With this in mind, we should familiarly invoke the Holy Spirit for this exceptional occasion. Black reminds us, "These words of institution are words that are Spirit and life. Because they are the words of Jesus ... Jesus' word does what He says. He says, 'This is My body,' and therefore, it is."<sup>48</sup> The eucharistic *epiclesis* anticipates what happens in the ritual as we eat the bread and drink the cup. The eucharistic *epiclesis*, as do all other Spirit invocations, demonstrates our dependence upon the gracious work of the Spirit. This is iconic, in a Pentecostal way.

Experiencing Jesus in the sacrament in a transformative way through the work of the Spirit is primary knowledge of God.<sup>49</sup> Again, the research interviews revealed that most clergy participants were unclear about the Holy Spirit's role in the Lord's Supper. They

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<sup>47</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 285.

<sup>48</sup> Black, *The Lord's Supper*, 121.

<sup>49</sup> Skublics, *Plunged into the Trinity*, 2.

were also uncertain about what they should be asking of the Holy Spirit regarding the rite. The uncertainty was not primarily due to an absence of experience (that is, no body sense) since most participants felt that “something deeper is going on.” But in some cases, the lay participants interpreted the clergy persons as taking the liturgy “less seriously” than they should. Defining “something more” only in negative terms (that it is not transubstantiation) gives the impression that the pastor is not discerning what is experientially obvious to them as laypeople, namely that Christ is present in the sacrament.

### **Does Understanding Really Matter?**

Does lacking sufficient theological language to explain our Lord’s Supper praxis matter? Is not simple faith enough since the Lord’s Supper is a mystery? Or as one clergy participant stated: “Regardless of our theories, we all engage at our current level.” While this might be true regardless of our liturgical efforts, it is a haphazard approach to an ordinance whose liturgy calls for discerning participation. It also ignores what we do know, what Jesus has said about the Supper.

Moreover, if Samuel is correct that “experiencing the Spirit’s immediacy is one of the primary objectives of Pentecostals when we gather,” insufficient language regarding Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper communicates a false message about the rite, namely that Jesus’ words, “this is my body, which is for you” ( 1Cor 11:24) and “this cup is the new covenant in my blood” (11: 25), are not trustworthy.<sup>50</sup> Black’s advice regarding striking a balance between affirming the mystery and testimony of Jesus’ presence is pertinent: “We cannot comprehend the fullness of the mystery of His presence, but we can, in faith, hold on to His promise that He is there in His Supper where He gives us His body

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<sup>50</sup> Samuel, *The Holy Spirit*, 1.

to eat and His blood to drink, and by that, we dwell in Him and He in us.”<sup>51</sup> As Black points out, the fact is that the only words other than the Lord’s Prayer (Luke 11:2) that Jesus has given us to use in worship “were given on the night He was betrayed: ‘This is My body ... this is My blood.’”<sup>52</sup> Not explaining what we do know about Christ’s presence in the Supper fails to do what our most common Canadian Pentecostal liturgical text calls for: discerning participation. Not only that, even though it may be impossible to explain the mode of Christ’s presence in the Supper absolutely and forensically, the rite is a communal practice, an exercise of togetherness that begs for our best attempt at facilitating unity and communion. What good is an invitation to meet Jesus in his supper if we cannot come to the table, having faith and trusting his word that he will meet our expectations and hunger?

### **Sensibly, What Are We Doing Again?**

Wolfgang Vondey explains, “Sacramentality is a principle of ecclesial reality, an action of the community extending to any manifest encounter with Christ as the primordial gift of God, through the Spirit as the gift of Christ, in the church as the gift of Christ and the Spirit, and among the faithful as those filled with the Spirit.”<sup>53</sup> This sacramental principle is worth knowing and confessing, making discerning participation a fitting expression of our communion with the Father in the grace of Christ through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14).

Pentecostals have angst about devitalizing faith into intellectualism, sentimentalism, activism, and ritualism.<sup>54</sup> Regarding Pentecostal liturgy, often we self-diagnose

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<sup>51</sup> Black (*The Lord’s Supper*, 121) explains Gerhard’s meditation, “I believe in the presence. I am not concerned with the mode of His presence, although I know it is the most certainly present in the closest and most intimate manner.”

<sup>52</sup> Black, *The Lord’s Supper*, 98.

<sup>53</sup> Vondey, “Pentecostal Sacramentality,” 101.

<sup>54</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 30.

devitalization as succumbing to dead ritualism, that is, praxis devoid of the real presence of Christ, or at least bereft of the felt sense of his presence. For many Pentecostals, dead ritual is *hetero-praxis*, dead religion, tethered to sense-less praise-confession (*hetero-doxo*) with no discernible positive effect (*hetero-pathy*). The PAOC founders testified to the work of the Spirit in their Lord's Supper Christ encounters, which clarified to them the sacramental nature of the rite.

Regarding the contemporary experientialist dialogue, I expected more talk about the charismatic quality of the Lord's Supper performance. Some clergypersons viewed charismatic occasions as exceptions, even preferring "more grounded experiences," whatever they might be.<sup>55</sup> The tentativeness and uncertainty regarding the role of the Spirit in their Lord's Supper praxis are, as one clergy participant put it, "convicting." Why? Because, like the founders, we believe that Pentecostals should not be confused about the Holy Spirit's role in Pentecostal worship.

Some clergypersons said they sought signs of the Spirit's presence during the performance. Most, however, rather than focus on the Holy Spirit, are mindful of Jesus and perhaps the Father as though remembering the two somehow does not involve the third. In other words, the Canadian Pentecostal Lord's Supper liturgies examined were not expressly Trinitarian. Also, most clergy participants seem to view the Lord's Supper as a Christian rite (as mysterious, very sacred, etc.) that they regularly perform (some would say that they accommodate it) in an otherwise sufficiently Pentecostal service without it. The exceptions were those clergy participants who performed the rite weekly and especially two others, who, even though they observed the rite monthly when describing their praxis, cherished it differently, stating that it was a non-negotiable in terms of pastoral responsibility.

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<sup>55</sup> This contrasts with the Jonathan Black's British Pentecostal study of the Eucharist in "The Holy of Holies," 62–87.

Only one clergy participant spoke about a eucharistic *epiclesis*. They offered a prayer of consecration over the bread and juice when preparing the elements the night before Communion Sunday. I expected to hear more talk of invoking the Holy Spirit as a consecrating speech act over the eucharistic elements or the worshippers before or during the Lord's Supper performance.

Historically, we have tended to trivialize practices bereft of the felt sense of Christ's presence—even historical Church rites. Conversely, some Pentecostals have touted other traditions (even strange ones) as *suitable* Pentecostal praxis because of their seemingly Spirit-imbued nature. Pentecostals do not loathe the idea that everyday objects can become sacred, mediating God's healing presence once consecrated.<sup>56</sup> The founders discerned Christ's presence in their Lord's Supper practice. They were thus convinced not just of its importance but also its vitality, which translated into believing that weekly participation was profitable.

In contrast, most clergy participants were less convinced, preferring to describe the rite as a *momentary, sacred, mysterious meeting*—some willing only to affirm that something more was going on and that their congregants connected with God in the rite. Again, the exceptions were those who practiced the rite weekly and believed the Lord's Supper was the worship service's pinnacle because Christ is more present at the Table. Surprisingly, regarding exceptions, it was the opposite for the laypersons. Like the founders, most laypersons were more convinced of the supernatural quality of the rite, describing their body sense of Christ's presence plainly.

The "Discipleship in Canadian Congregations" report by Flourishing Congregations uncovered that for "Catholics, next to preaching/teaching/homily, the Eucharist is the most

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<sup>56</sup> See, Thomas, "Anointed Cloths," 88–112. Twice, I have pastored PAOC churches that anoint handkerchiefs for the ministry of the sick based on Acts 19:12.

important element to impact spiritual growth. By contrast, for conservative Protestants such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Baptists, and Pentecostals, only 4%, 6%, and 6%, respectively, ranked the Eucharist/Communion as the most important element to impact spiritual growth.”<sup>57</sup> The study reported that Pentecostals ranked the top six impactful spiritual growth elements as follows: preaching/teaching/homily (81.9), singing/music (50.0), small group (21.8), prayer (21.4), volunteering in my congregation (19.3), sharing testimonies (10.9) and the Lord’s Supper (6).<sup>58</sup>

When I asked the clergy participants who only performed the Lord’s Supper monthly or less frequently if they had the same routinization concerns about singing, preaching, prayer, and fellowship and had ever limited these practices, they cheekily said no. Practice shapes priority.

### **No “None-Sense” Religion**

Pentecostals teach Pentecostalism by way of cultural modelling and testimony. Terry L. Cross explains that we “witness to the encounters” of God’s presence,<sup>59</sup> “We come to discern and clarify our experiences with God in relation to God’s prior revelation in Scripture and Jesus Christ within the midst of God’s people.”<sup>60</sup> The task of the more “experienced Pentecostals” during a newcomer’s first Pentecostal experience is to teach them that “felt sense” can signal Christ’s presence. Newcomers learn that certain Pentecostal practices may elicit spiritually significant sensations, that is, signs of Christ’s presence. Cross explains, “It is important that such witness begins in the context of the community of believers so that we may better discern what we have experienced through

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<sup>57</sup> Wong et al., “Discipleship,” 6.

<sup>58</sup> Wong et al., “Discipleship,” 489.

<sup>59</sup> Cross, *The People*, 156–61.

<sup>60</sup> Cross, *The People*, 156.



the help of brothers and sisters in Christ. Once the divine encounter occurs and reflection on the experience has been guided by the Spirit and discerned by the community, we reach a level of confession or witness, first to ourselves and then to others.”<sup>61</sup> The founders highlighted these encounters in their publications, giving the readership a window into their understanding of Pentecostal sacramentality.<sup>62</sup>

Peter Neumann explains that Pentecostals value “experience of the Spirit of such significance that it is explicitly and implicitly appealed to as an authoritative resource for shaping spirituality and theology.”<sup>63</sup> Since that is true, how are we to understand its benefits? Sensory anthropologist David Le Breton states, “[s]ensory knowledge continually evolves through accumulated experience or learning.”<sup>64</sup> For the Pentecostal founders, the body sense of these spiritual experiences was the basis of the burgeoning community’s testimony about encountering God: they knew they met Christ in worship because they sensed the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. Newcomers also knew that Pentecostals powerfully felt the presence of God because they observed it in them, and these “experienced Pentecostals” testified about their embodied encounters. Like the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost, “experienced Pentecostals” explained, “This is that” (Acts 2:16), an essential testimonial qualification. Douglas G. Jacobsen describes, “Experience alone did not make one a pentecostal. It was experience interpreted in a Pentecostal way that made one pentecostal.”<sup>65</sup> Using a sensory anthropological lens, newcomers base their perception on a “bricolage between what others tell them and what they imagine.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Cross, *The People*, 156.

<sup>62</sup> Neumann’s (“Whither Pentecostal Experience,” 7) assessment applies here: “In other words, testimonies of and appeals to experience of the Spirit occupy a place of authority for Pentecostals, alongside Scripture (not to mention Christian and Pentecostal theological traditions), even when this is not explicitly acknowledged.”

<sup>63</sup> Neumann, “Whither Pentecostal Experience,” 2.

<sup>64</sup> Le Breton, *Sensing the World*, chapter 1, para. 23, location 424.

<sup>65</sup> Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Le Breton, *Sensing the World*, chapter 1, para. 23, location 434.

“Experienced Pentecostals” testify about their own experiences and interpret the newcomers’ experiences, helping make sense of them and thus making them meaningful.

While the sensory effects of Pentecostal experiences may initially be foreign, frightening, strange, overwhelming, or underwhelming, like other community norms taught through cultural modelling, they are transformed into desired sensations, a way to build Pentecostal faith and stave off doubt.<sup>67</sup> Le Breton argues, “Many novel sensory experiences can be had by those willing to learn.”<sup>68</sup> Pentecostals not only “expect to encounter God,”<sup>69</sup> Pentecostals are convinced that “experiences with God provide a basis for their faith.”<sup>70</sup> We expect newcomers to experience Christ’s presence to become Pentecostal and truly Pentecostal praxis to afford Pentecostal experiences—including the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord’s Supper.

The founders did not omit sense-talk regarding the Lord’s Supper; instead, they vividly described how they encountered Christ around the Table. Pentecostal fires burned bright during the Lord’s Supper despite the formalities of the liturgy. Like the Church in Troas, the earliest Canadian Pentecostals had weekly Breaking of Bread services on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). It was a time dedicated to testimonies, prayer for healing, and the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper was the main reason for the gathering.

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<sup>67</sup> Black’s (*The Lord’s Supper*, 181) addition of Aimee Semple McPherson’s testimony of receiving a fresh outpouring of the Spirit at the Lord’s Table has a similar effect: “I was taking the Lord’s Supper for the first time when I went down . . . under the power. I experienced an exceeding weight of glory . . . I was again lost with Jesus whom my soul loved, speaking in tongues and shaking under the power.”

<sup>68</sup> Le Breton, *Sensing the World*, chapter 1, para. 23, location 434.

<sup>69</sup> Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 219.

<sup>70</sup> Anderson, “Pentecostals Believe,” 55. Jacobsen (*A Reader in Pentecostal Theology*, 4) writes, “In short, pentecostals are Spirit-conscious, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-empowered Christian believers. In contrast to other groups or churches that emphasize either doctrine or moral practice, Pentecostals stress affectivity. It is the experience of God that matters—the felt power of the Spirit in the world, in the church, and in one’s own life. Pentecostals believe the doctrine and ethics are important, but the bedrock of Pentecostal faith is experiential. It is living faith in the living God—a God who can miraculously, palpably intervene in the world—that defines the Pentecostal orientation of faith.”

For Pentecostals, the supernatural is not primarily a matter of doctrine; instead, the supernatural is a matter of lived experience, most often experienced within a Pentecostal liturgical framework but extending outward into the world.<sup>71</sup> Glen G. Scorgie's definition is helpful: "Christian Spirituality is the domain of lived Christian experience. It is about living *all of life*—not just some esoteric portion of it—before God, through Christ, in the transforming and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit."<sup>72</sup> Rooting the concept of spirituality in the New Testament and borrowing from Gordon Fee, Scorgie writes, "Christian Spirituality is ultimately about being attentive to the Holy Spirit's voice, open to his transforming impulses, and empowered by his indwelling presence. It is always *Spirituality*."<sup>73</sup> Pentecostals tend to understand these gracious Spirit encounters as in-breakings of Christ's kingdom, present disruptions of limitations and brokenness, a foretaste of the liberty yet to come in fullness.<sup>74</sup> According to Nimi Wariboko, each disruption is

a movement toward openness to future possibilities, dislocating human lives and situations toward their future forms, nudging them toward the full actualization of their potentials. Its dislocating movement has a *novum* character signaling it as a response to the current order of things whose potentialities exceed the current structuring of individual and social existence. Grace expresses the hidden potentials of a situation, existence, or life as well as transcends them.<sup>75</sup>

In other words, and reminiscent of Moltmann's evaluation of sacramental time, Pentecostalism inhabits a gravid present enraptured by supernatural serendipity, "radically open to the continued operations of the Spirit."<sup>76</sup> I understand this Pentecostal way of being-in-the-world pneumatologically. Again, Wariboko is helpful:

The Spirit is always involved in materiality, in human sociality, animating and reanimating it to manifest and actualize maximum goodness. Transimmanence is an ethos in the social practices that constitute pentecostalism. The gritty

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<sup>71</sup> Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 287.

<sup>72</sup> Scorgie, "Overview of Christian Spirituality," 27.

<sup>73</sup> Scorgie, "Overview of Christian Spirituality," 27.

<sup>74</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 299.

<sup>75</sup> Wariboko, *The Pentecostal Principle*, 2. Cf. Marshall, "What is the Eucharist?" 501–502.

<sup>76</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, xvii.

materiality of pentecostalism is a complexly structured set of doings and being that rejects the opposition between transcendence and immanence; it is an existence that is radically oriented to continual opening and reopening. The inside always exposed to the outside.<sup>77</sup>

Pentecostal sacramentality is fundamentally pneumatological. But its liturgical expression is an *epiclesis*. An *epiclesis* is fundamental to all Pentecostal praxis. All of life, or as Vondey puts it, “the entire realm of life and creation,” is the expansive liminal “playing field” of ritual practice.<sup>78</sup> It is tragic to forget that the playing field includes the Table. The Lord’s Supper, like Pentecostal spirituality, is sacramental. We make these sacramental inclinations sensible with prayer, that is with Spirit/prayer, the *epiclesis*.

### **The Other Sacrament(al)s**

Pentecostals perform many “worship acts” that we believe depend upon God’s presence and power. Roman Catholic theology calls these other liturgical actions sacramentals, “sacred signs with spiritual effects, resembling the sacraments.”<sup>79</sup> These “worship acts” are a way the faithful expand “ecclesial space into the space of the world, unfolding it even more so that it contains the presence and power of God.”<sup>80</sup> They are like sacraments but not equal to them. To use Purdie’s logic, they are like sacraments but of a different “nature.”<sup>81</sup> Sacramental theologians explain that sacramentals are born out of the church’s faith, unlike sacraments, born out of God’s faithfulness.

Since Pentecostals readily invoke the Holy Spirit for these sacred “signs with spiritual effects” (i.e., anointing the sick with oil, laying on hands to pray for Spirit Baptism, altar calls, etc.), we clearly understand a link between the Holy Spirit and these

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<sup>77</sup> Wariboko, *The Pentecostal Principle*, 51.

<sup>78</sup> Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism*, 136–37.

<sup>79</sup> Cross and Livingstone, “Sacramentals,” 1446.

<sup>80</sup> Granados, *Introduction to Sacramental Theology*, 380.

<sup>81</sup> Purdie, “Canadian Pentecostal Bible College,” 6–7.

other biblical ordinances. I have argued that the connection between the Lord's Supper and the Holy Spirit is unclear since the research participants missed a eucharistic *epiclesis*. Rather than omitting an explicit *epiclesis* and perhaps camouflaging our belief that the Holy Spirit is essential to our Lord's Supper performance, we must include it. Gordon T. Smith's advice is especially fitting:

The church has over the centuries invested extraordinary energy in debating how effective the sacraments actually are; whether they are a means of grace; and whether the crucial factor is the faith of the church, the faith of the Christian who participates, or, in some cases, the power of the elements themselves (water, bread, or wine) when consecrated by a priest or pastor. But increasingly, Christians are recognizing that while we cannot discount the faith of the church or the individual Christian or the importance of words of consecration or indeed the significance of the elements, the crucial factor is not any of these, but rather the third person of the Trinity, the Spirit. Thus, the *epiclesis*—the prayer for the presence and anointing of the Spirit—is pivotal in the celebration of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and any other sacramental rite or practice.<sup>82</sup>

### **The Pentecostal Academic Conversation**

What is already evident from what I have presented so far is that Pentecostal scholars have begun to consider the theological significance and implications of the Pentecostal practice of the Lord's Supper, particularly the Spirit's role therein, but this developing theological conversation is missing from the current experientialist conversation about the praxis. Academics like Simon Chan, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, and Amos Yong suggest that a Pentecostal ecclesiology must consider a constructive spiritual theology of the sacraments. Kärkkäinen, whose words about the “pneumatological anemia” of the Lord's Supper praxis launched my enquiry into this subject, notes that despite longstanding and contemporary disagreements concerning the Eucharist, there is ecumenical consensus on its core dimensions and qualities, namely, the “deep expression of divine hospitality.”<sup>83</sup> He

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<sup>82</sup> Smith, “Sacrament,” 729.

<sup>83</sup> Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction*, 218.

expounds that the Eucharist is the sacrament of the gift God gives us in Christ through the Holy Spirit as Christ hosts the sacred supper.<sup>84</sup> Kärkkäinen provides a fivefold “comprehensive summary of the significance and manifold meanings of this divine act of hospitality,” of which the *epiclesis* is third.<sup>85</sup> He elucidates that the *epiclesis* has been part of the eucharistic ritual in the Christian East since ancient times. Still, Western churches have only more recently rediscovered it, noting that “the Spirit’s role is to bring Christ’s memory and presence to the church. This is in keeping with the integral link between Easter and Pentecost.”<sup>86</sup> Pentecostal scholars seem to agree.

In *Spiritual Theology*, in a chapter entitled “Signs of a Sacramental Community,” Chan suggests that no opposition exists between sacramental and eschatological communities; both embody the *visio Dei*.<sup>87</sup> He writes,

We cannot conceive of the church as a sacramental community without at the same time conceiving of it as an eschatological community. It is in the sacraments that the transcendent and historical poles of the church’s being are brought into a dialectical relationship. Baptism is incorporation into the *new* creation in Christ; the Eucharistic celebration is a constant reminder that Christ is present and also still to come (1 Cor 11:26).<sup>88</sup>

Welding together the categories of sacramentality and eschatology, Chan furnishes Pentecostals with important language. This linguistic framework facilitates our comprehension of the dynamics that transpire throughout our liturgical engagements with the divine through the sacraments. Here, Chan highlights incorporation and remembrance. But Chan also helps us understand how the sacraments function, namely that their performance brings to the foreground of our consciousness through embodied practice

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<sup>84</sup> Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction*, 218.

<sup>85</sup> Kärkkäinen (*An Introduction*, 218–19) also lists thanksgiving (*eucharisteō*), anamnesis (remembrance), communion of the faithful, and meal of the kingdom.

<sup>86</sup> Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction*, 218–19.

<sup>87</sup> Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 112–21. Chan defines a community that embodies the *visio Dei* as “on the move, whose life and mission are always directed toward the future” (112).

<sup>88</sup> Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 112.

Christ, the One “who is and was and is to come” (Rev 1:8, 4:8).<sup>89</sup> It is the experience of these embodied “objective mysteries of the faith” that Chan believes must be emphasized as the “visible expressions” of the church’s spiritual vitality.<sup>90</sup> Like Kärkkäinen’s evaluation, the Lord’s Supper is sacramental because we experience Christ and eschatological because we are incorporated into the eschatological dynamism of redemption history. Reminiscent of Stephens’s and McAlister’s words, Jürgen Moltmann describes this well,

In the presence of Christ the Lord’s supper joins the past and the future, history and eschatology in a unique way, and becomes the token of liberating grace. For the participants this means that in this meal they *remember* the death of Christ, through which God reconciled the world once and for all; *acknowledge* the presence of the risen Lord in their midst; and *hope* with joy for the coming of his kingdom in glory.<sup>91</sup>

McAlister would add that the performance is a means of great blessing when we observe the ordinance of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper and partake of the elements “in the Spirit with understanding.” As to understanding, Moltmann reminds us,

The thanksgiving and the breaking of bread are described in the words “This is my body which is broken for you.” And the thanksgiving and the drinking from the cup is described as “This is the new covenant in my blood.” The whole Eucharist is given the meaning: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26). We are bound to understand this as an identification of Christ’s presence with bread and wine and

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<sup>89</sup> Chan (*Spiritual Theology*, 112) elsewhere remarks, “The church is most truly the church as it celebrates baptism and the Eucharist. Baptism incorporates new members into the body of Christ, and the Eucharist reveals the communal nature of the Christian life (Acts 2:42–47).” Leaning on Pannenberg and Zizioulas, Chan argues that it is in the sacraments that “the essence of the church itself is alive, present, and effective.”

<sup>90</sup> Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 112.

<sup>91</sup> Moltmann (*The Church*, 256) goes on to say, “The glorification of God on earth, which is to lay hold of the whole of creation, begins in the feast of gratitude. Joy in freedom and fellowship anticipates the joy of the new creation and its universal fellowship. Understood as a eucharist in this sense, the feast of Christ’s fellowship is the great thanksgiving to the Father for everything he has made in creation and has achieved in the reconciliation of the world and has promised to accomplish in its redemption. In the eucharist the congregation thanks the triune God for all his acts of goodness and sets itself in his trinitarian history with the world. The universal meaning of the eucharist becomes comprehensible because, and in so far as, it brings to expression the song of praise through which the whole creation honours its creator, singing the hymn with which all things rejoice in him.”

the whole Eucharist, by virtue of the promise. The feast of his presence is surrounded by the remembrance of his death and the expectation of his coming.<sup>92</sup>

By Christ's presence through the work of the Spirit, performing the sacraments is a sign that "[t]he church is part of an unfolding story whose end has already been anticipated in the resurrection."<sup>93</sup>

Borrowing from J. R. R. Tolkien, Chan describes the Church's "historical finale" as a "eucatastrophe."<sup>94</sup> And it is in the liminal interim of the Lord's Supper performance that time becomes sacramental, what I describe narratively and Bialecki defines technically as "operative aporia,"<sup>95</sup> and, as McAlister described with prose: "[The Lord's Table] bridges the chasm between the suffering and the glory. One end rests on the cross and the other on the throne."<sup>96</sup> Moltmann explains, "The Christ who has torn down the dividing wall once and for all manifests himself as our future. The fellowship of the table with the One who was crucified becomes the foretaste of the eschaton."<sup>97</sup> This foretasting "is an event that liberates, opens up the future, and therefore determines the present. In the temporal sense, the crucified Jesus is present as the One who is to come in the Spirit of the new creation and final redemption. His future is not a future happening; it is a power that liberates, determines the future and opens up new possibilities."<sup>98</sup> In this eschatological-sacramental context, the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of time.<sup>99</sup> Participating in the Spirit with

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<sup>92</sup> Moltmann, *The Church*, 124.

<sup>93</sup> Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 113.

<sup>94</sup> Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 113.

<sup>95</sup> Bialecki, *A Diagram for Fire*, 46.

<sup>96</sup> McAlister, "The Ordinances," 1.

<sup>97</sup> Moltmann, *The Church*, 254.

<sup>98</sup> Moltmann, *The Church*, 254.

<sup>99</sup> Black (*Apostolic Theology*, 602–3) describes the experience of foretasting and time: "And so, as we gather around the Lord's Table in our assemblies, in reality, we are gathering with the heavenly hosts around the Lamb upon the Throne, and 'we here inherit / all that heaven can bestow.' ... That's why we hear older Pentecostals speak of healing at the Table or hear testimonies of those baptized with the Spirit in the Breaking of Bread, for at the Table of the Lord, the blessings of the Throne are poured out on His saints in a foretaste of the heavenly glory."



understanding makes Moltmann's idea discernible, similar to Wariboko's *Pentecostal Principle*.<sup>100</sup> To take McAlister's "understanding" further, Moltmann continues, "We must learn to think in a new way here: not—Christ is present in the feast here or there, but—the feast is held in his presence and carries those who partake of it into the eschatological history of Christ, into the time between the cross and the kingdom which takes its quality from his presence."<sup>101</sup> The clergy participants' phenomenological descriptor of the mysterious moment/event is fitting. Green adds,

In the Eucharist-event, the Spirit "broods over" the cosmically-enthroned Christ, the celebrating congregation, and the elements on the Table, opening the celebrants to the presence of the risen Jesus whom the Spirit makes in that moment bodily present for them with, in, and through the thereby-transfigured bread and wine.<sup>102</sup>

In *Liturgical Theology*, Chan expands on the pneumatological aspects of the rite:

The rite of Holy Communion that the church observes is not a result of some historical event that eventually produces a commemorative event. It is not the creation of the community but the creation of Jesus Christ himself. He instituted it because he actualized or fulfilled the reality that the bread and wine symbolize. He took ordinary bread and wine and lifted them from ordinary use after he prayed a prayer of thanksgiving. In the same way, the words of institution and the *epiclesis* in subsequent celebrations provide the crucial link between ordinary bread and wine and spiritual food and drink.<sup>103</sup>

Notice that Chan focuses our attention on two liturgical actions: the pronouncement of the words of institution and praying an *epiclesis*. Jesus, alive in the church today through the powerful presence and gifts of the Spirit, makes possible the transformation of bread and wine into a means of grace, that is, spiritual food, through the liturgical actions of ordinary women and men. In the same way that we understand that the Spirit's unction is available to communicate the very words of Jesus to the assembled effectively, the Holy Spirit makes

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<sup>100</sup> Wariboko, *The Pentecostal Principle*, 36–37.

<sup>101</sup> Moltmann, *The Church*, 255.

<sup>102</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, 282.

<sup>103</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 141.

effective the communication of the elements—combined, joined by the Spirit, if you will, they are a means of grace. Chan illuminates,

As Christians feed on Christ, they are being energized by the Spirit or “baked” by the fire of the Spirit to become one loaf. The Spirit plays a critical role in the transformation. This is why the Spirit is invoked in the consecration of the bread and wine so that these gifts “may be to us the body and blood of Christ.” The *epiclesis* does not necessitate any particular theory of how ordinary bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. The prayer’s assertion in its plea for the coming of the Spirit in the eucharistic meal is that *by means of* ordinary bread and wine God has given us real spiritual bread through the action of the Spirit.<sup>104</sup>

The contemporary experientialist conversation would do well to incorporate Chan’s insights. Doing so would sharpen our intuition that the Lord’s Supper performance helps clarify our perception of how things are—we are present to Christ, and Christ is present to us, and nonetheless, Christ and His kingdom are yet to come. The liturgical reminder is a beatific vision with an eschatological perspective.

Black reminds us that for centuries worldwide, Christians echo the song of angels and archangels each time they gather for the Lord’s Supper, proclaiming “Holy, holy, holy” (Isa 6:3). Indeed, it is the Lord Jesus that we see “high and lifted up” at the Table. The Lord’s Supper liturgy brings three perspectives of the beatific vision of Jesus into focus: (a) the “Thrice-Holy God” whose glory fills the Temple (Isaiah 6:4) and angels commensurately proclaim the *Sanctus*, (b) the Man of Sorrows, the same Lord but “high and lifted up in our place on the cross of Calvary,”<sup>105</sup> and (c) “The Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders” (Rev 5:1). Black describes,

The One who was high and lifted up in the glory-filled Temple is the same One who was high and lifted up in our place on the Cross of Calvary. The cross is where we find the glory of the Lord. And the Supper is where we find the cross, as we encounter the Saviour in His body given for us and His blood shed for us. Jesus

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<sup>104</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 73.

<sup>105</sup> Black, *The Lord’s Supper*, 67–68.

is high and lifted up at the Lord's table as the glorious Lord who reigns through His cross, and whose glory fills His Temple (—which is now us, His body!).<sup>106</sup>

Encountering the Saviour in the Lord's Supper is transformative and, therefore, “primary knowledge of God, that is, primary theology.”<sup>107</sup> In Pentecostal parlance, Warrington reminds us that the Pentecostal praxis is both theology and worship and must be approached with expectancy.<sup>108</sup> Or, as Black illustrates, “We encounter His holy presence, drawing near to the bread and wine where He makes Himself known (as Moses drew near the burning bush), recognizing that we are on holy ground.”<sup>109</sup>

In *Pentecostal Theology*, Chan suggested that the perennial challenge for Classical Pentecostals is “spiritual fatigue.”<sup>110</sup> Pentecostals had been avant-guard restorationists for over a century, thriving in a *life-in-tension* ethos, a cultural bifurcation Grant Wacker aptly labelled as “primitivism and pragmatism.”<sup>111</sup> It was *primitivistic* because Pentecostals pined for the “Spirit's immediacy,” and *pragmatic* because in the frenetic pursuit of the ultimate in light of the end, they demonstrated a willingness to “adjust to” the penultimate, in an “entrepreneurial form,” to work within the confines of shifting social and cultural mores.<sup>112</sup> Wacker muses, “[Pentecostal] saints started their journey in the heavenlies, but they usually knew [when] it was time to return to *terra firma*.”<sup>113</sup>

For almost a century, Pentecostals skillfully accommodated primitivism and pragmatism. Harvey Cox describes Pentecostalism's “most serious weakness as well as the

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<sup>106</sup> Black, *The Lord's Supper*, 68.

<sup>107</sup> Skublics, *Plunged into the Trinity*, 2–3.

<sup>108</sup> Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 219.

<sup>109</sup> Black, *The Lord's Supper*, 68.

<sup>110</sup> Chan (*Pentecostal Theology*, 8) writes, “The social research of Margaret Poloma indicates that the denomination (Assemblies of God) is undergoing a phase of development which Max Weber called the ‘routinization of charism’” (8).

<sup>111</sup> Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 9–10.

<sup>112</sup> Albrecht (*Rites in the Spirit*, 250) describes the Pentecostal Spirit-inspired entrepreneurialism as “pioneering innovation, adaptability, and pragmatic action.”

<sup>113</sup> Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 50.

source of its greatest strength” as the ability to absorb the “flotsam and shards of popular piety into their theology.”<sup>114</sup> Consequently, this kind of flexibility tends to create adherents who seek new experiences from without instead of renewal from within. Regarding this capriciousness, Chan writes, “But what the seekers are offered there are mostly exciting experiences whose novelty quickly wears off and which have to be replaced by new experiences.”<sup>115</sup> A century of restorationist novelty is both exhausting and spiritually disorienting. Can everything and anything be Pentecostal? If so, then is Pentecostalism really anything?

Chan argues that Pentecostals should attempt to tradition their most “valued distinctives” by emphasizing the “charismatic dimensions of the Eucharistic celebration,” thereby ensuring the charismatic renewal of the church even as the Lord tarries and the church wearies.<sup>116</sup> He writes, “The way open to classical Pentecostals is to locate the repeatable events of the Spirit’s in-filling in the sacrament of holy communion ... so holy communion is the most appropriate occasion for a fresh in-filling of the Spirit.”<sup>117</sup> Since a Pentecostal *spiritualitas* is necessarily communal, a collective ecstatic experience, Chan astutely identified and emphasized the communal nature of the meal for renewal.<sup>118</sup> The question is, do Canadian Pentecostals realize such a Spirit-potential exists? I suspect the founders did, but most research participants do not. It is a practical theological lacuna!

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<sup>114</sup> Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 287.

<sup>115</sup> Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 8–9.

<sup>116</sup> Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 8–9.

<sup>117</sup> Chan, *Pentecostal Theology*, 94. He goes on to say that Pentecostals could learn from their Methodist forebears to “appropriate experiential reality from Eucharistic observances” and come to view Holy Communion as an occasion for the “believers corporately to be given a fresh infusion of the Spirit, making them grow more and more into the charismatic Body of Christ” (96).

<sup>118</sup> Cross and Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1543. In other words, “Pentecostal *spiritualitas*” is the “quality of life” that results from the spiritual gifts imparted to all who believe in Christ in a Pentecostal way.

Consider two Pentecostal voices on the matter, Amos Yong and Frank Macchia.

Yong substantively contributes toward the idea of the church as the “charismatic fellowship of the Spirit.”<sup>119</sup> His Spirit-ecclesiology envisions (among other things) a pneumatological theology of liturgy:

The Holy Spirit transforms the community of faith from moment to moment so that it can more fully realize and embody here and now the image and likeness of the eschatological Christ. This happens liturgically (among other means) in the word of worship that is directed to God and enlivened by the Spirit of God, in the word of proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah, and in the word of consumption that is the eucharistic fellowship of the body and blood of Christ.<sup>120</sup>

Unfortunately, with this summary statement, Yong only emphasizes the Spirit’s “enlivening” role in the words of worship and not the words of proclamation and consumption. How could we describe the Spirit’s role in the words of proclamation and consumption? Yong’s silence is also a contemporary experientialist issue. Pentecostals are sure that the Spirit enlivens singing. I would also argue that Pentecostals are also sure about the Spirit’s role in preaching, prayer, and testimonials. Still, I suggest that we are uncertain about the sacraments. Yong’s long-form fivefold eucharistic vision is helpful:

1. “The Supper is a physical act wherein the word of God is consumed by the body of Christ *through the working of the Spirit*.”<sup>121</sup>
2. “Not only is Christ present to us, but that we are present to Christ.”<sup>122</sup>
3. “The Supper is thus an ecclesial and social act of solidarity whereby Jesus the resurrected Word is united with the body of Christ *through the fellowship of the Spirit*.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 151.

<sup>120</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 161.

<sup>121</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 163. Emphasis added.

<sup>122</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 164.

<sup>123</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 164.

4. “The Supper is a political and prophetic act whereby the enacted and enacting body of Christ provides and mediates an alternative way of life *through the gracious activity of the Spirit*.”<sup>124</sup>
5. “The Supper is an eschatological act whereby the people of God anticipate embodiment of the word of God according to the full image and likeness of Jesus Christ *through the resurrection power of the Spirit*.”<sup>125</sup>

Yong’s long-form explication clarifies that his vision of the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord’s Supper ascribes a vital role to the Spirit. However, again, he omits the Spirit’s role in point two. Does the Spirit not function as the means by which Christ is made present to us and we to Christ? Black, Green, and Macchia report it so. Still, for Yong, the Pentecostal practice of the Lord’s Supper is sacramental liturgy, a charism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>126</sup>

Earlier in this chapter, I introduced Macchia’s thoughts on the sacraments. He has also suggested that Pentecostals could be enriched by the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, who understands the Spirit-dynamic in the Lord’s Supper to be for “fellowship with the Holy Spirit, for the fullness of the Kingdom.”<sup>127</sup> Macchia’s pneumatological vision of the sacraments is essential to this conversation:

The justification of creation is announced and prefigured in the life of the Spirit, not only in the context of the church’s diverse witness to Christ in the Spirit but also in rituals that have sacramental significance. The justice of the Spirit is *koinonia*, or a sharing of life. The church participates as a body in the justice of the Spirit not only through *charisma* and word but also through rites of the Spirit. These are principally water baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but one could add foot-washing from the context of certain faith communities.<sup>128</sup>

Like Chan and Yong (and Green and Black, and the founders, especially McAlister and Gee), Macchia understands the Supper as a *rite of the Spirit*. Macchia states, “These

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<sup>124</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 165.

<sup>125</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 165.

<sup>126</sup> Yong, *The Spirit*, 166.

<sup>127</sup> Macchia, *Baptized*, 252–53.

<sup>128</sup> Macchia, *Justified*, 282.

practices are instituted ultimately by Christ *and* the Spirit. They are essential to the core practices of the church that we ‘bear’ as vital elements of our legacy from Christ and from the outpoured Spirit.”<sup>129</sup> Macchia believes that “the sacraments both occasion the divine embrace and celebrate and deepen one’s reception and participation in the divine presence.”<sup>130</sup> We know this presence *in* the Spirit. Macchia explains, “This meal is not only a deepening of one’s awareness of the Spirit hidden in God’s self-sacrifice in the cross in the midst of forsakenness and death, but also a celebration of the life of the resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit.”<sup>131</sup>

Whenever clergy persons curate the rite and laypersons partake of the elements, Christ hosts the Lord’s Supper as a feast that honours the overflow of the Spirit in anticipation of the eschatological banquet. Macchia believes that the Transignification view of the Lord’s Supper best articulates the mode of Christ’s presence in the rite: “Christ is present in the sharing of the meal through the Holy Spirit communing with us, bringing us to a deep remembrance of his death, nourishing us afresh by the Spirit, and bringing us to a renewed commitment to the crucified and risen life.”<sup>132</sup>

The ecclesiological significance of the Lord’s Supper cannot be exaggerated since its performance most clearly embodies “the very substance of our life together in communion.”<sup>133</sup> Macchia describes what Chan has stated succinctly, namely that the Eucharistic celebration is a logical occasion for Spirit-renewal: “Communion is the ritual context in which we continue to drink of the Spirit and plunge ever-more deeply into the Spirit-baptized life.”<sup>134</sup> Considering Yong, Chan, and Macchia, I suggest that a Eucharistic

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<sup>129</sup> Macchia, *Justified*, 282. Emphasis added.

<sup>130</sup> Macchia, *Justified*, 285.

<sup>131</sup> Macchia, *Justified*, 285.

<sup>132</sup> Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 601.

<sup>133</sup> Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 198.

<sup>134</sup> Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 198.

*epiclesis* is a key to unlocking this pneumatological significance of the sacrament in Pentecostal praxis. Notice Macchia's close association of the meal with Pentecost—experientially, the *epicletic* occasion of most tremendous importance to our movement:

The *epiclesis* of the Spirit during the Lord's Supper is significant here, because this invocation points to the fact that the sacred meal comes into being at Pentecost as the ritual means by which Christ is now present to nourish us by the Spirit and to draw us into communion (1 Cor. 12:13). The meal is sanctified as the occasion in which we are further sanctified. The meal does not just signify Christ's presence; it also signifies our presence in him, seeking spiritual nourishment in faith and committed in the unity of fellowship to being an instrument of blessing to others.<sup>135</sup>

Crediting John McKenna, Macchia states that the *epiclesis* "gives voice to the Spirit's role in the accomplishment of Christ's life-giving function in the Eucharist."<sup>136</sup>

If this represents authentic Pentecostal ecclesiology, is it identifiable in the "lived practice" of Pentecostal spirituality?<sup>137</sup> As far as my research shows, early Canadian Pentecostals highly regarded the Lord's Supper. For early Canadian Pentecostals (not unlike what Green has demonstrated for early American Pentecostals), Hollenweger's assessment that "The Lord's Supper is the central point of Pentecostal worship"<sup>138</sup> more closely reflects the truth than some secondary literature on the subject. Rather than having devoted "little attention to developing any kind of constructive theology of the Lord's supper," early Canadian Pentecostals did.<sup>139</sup> I also believe that the contemporary theological conversation regarding the role of the Spirit in the sacrament would help current clergy persons and laypersons appreciate the blessing that is this sacred meal. Participating in the Spirit and with understanding still rings true.

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<sup>135</sup> Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 335–36.

<sup>136</sup> Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 335–36.

<sup>137</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, xxii.

<sup>138</sup> Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, 385.

<sup>139</sup> Kärkkäinen, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology*, 136.



## Concluding Remarks

### *Canadian Reception History*

The reception history data gathered illustrates that not only was the rite more than an ordinance adhered to by Canadian Pentecostals monthly, but the data also suggests that the early Canadian Pentecostal leaders believed that the Lord's Table was a unique meeting place with Christ. In other words, even for Pentecostals who expected to experience the powerful presence and gifts of the Spirit at every assembly, the Lord's Supper was an exceptional occasion to encounter Jesus—a supernatural occasion *par excellence*, highlight-worthy in periodicals aimed at Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals alike. While the print testimony tantalized non-Pentecostals with promises of Full Gospel blessings, more importantly, it informed the curious that Pentecostals discern an encounter with Jesus in the Supper, a Christian ritual with which most Pentecostal outsiders were familiar, likely a cherished ritual practice from their faith tradition.

On the one hand, highlighting the Lord's Supper as an essential Pentecostal praxis lets religious outsiders know that not everything is different during a Pentecostal worship service; on the other hand, the *Testimony* columns teach why Pentecostals continue the practice. In Pentecostal praxis, the Lord's Supper is not a dead ritual. With their testimonials rooted in the Bible, the founders taught that the Lord's Supper is an essential orthodox Pentecostal praxis, not because they could trace it throughout church history, but because it came directly from Christ and continues to bring Pentecostals to Jesus, as Saviour, Baptizer, Healer, and Soon-Coming-King. Still, in Pentecostal form, the rite was not inconsequential experientially. The Lord's Supper occasioned Full Gospel experiences, Book-of-Acts blessings, miracles, signs, and wonders. Far from being a dead ritual, these divine gifts were evidence of God's pleasure regarding the founders' faithfulness in

“contending for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), a faith that profitably included weekly Lord’s Supper adherence. In other words, within the founders’ Pentecostal praxis, the Lord’s Supper rite was more than an ancient ritual mnemonic to help adherents commemorate Christ’s death. How could it be only this? The founders powerfully experienced Christ alive in their gatherings through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Testimonies of their Lord’s Supper praxis were a way to demonstrate Book-of-Acts faith and faithfulness that connected contemporary Pentecostal people with the way of the apostles and first Christians, and most importantly, with Jesus in a *full gospel* manner.

### *Phenomenological Inquiry*

I also examined how clergypersons and laypersons described their Lord’s Supper experience of Christ’s presence. My phenomenological analysis of the contemporary experientialist discourse is that the clergy participants experienced the Lord’s Supper as a *momentary, sacred, and mysterious meeting*. At the same time, laypersons understood it as a *serious, lingering event that connects* Pentecostals to Christ *supernaturally*. To what extent does my phenomenological analysis reflect the founders’ Lord’s Supper testimony? Several significant differences stand out: while all but two clergypersons considered the rite sacred, only a minority believed that Pentecostals can profitably practice the Lord’s Supper more than monthly. Few clergypersons highlighted their Lord’s Supper praxis in their communications strategies as the founders did, and some felt somewhat awkward and uncertain about their praxis. Also, some hesitated to perform the Lord’s Supper more often and thus too often, creating a dependency on the rite or thoughtless routinization of this Holy praxis. Some of the participants (clergypersons and laypersons) practiced the rite weekly, and one clergy participant said they had never considered practicing it more often than monthly. However, during the follow-up interview, they shared that they began

weekly observance and realized that their monthly practice was more of a “religious” routine.

Many clergy participants defined their Lord’s Supper theology negatively (not Roman Catholic) and described the practice as an obligatory reflective act (a memorial ordinance); however, many also said that something more profound, beyond their comprehension, occurred in the performance. Everyone acknowledged that the rite necessarily focuses the participants’ attention on Christ’s crucifixion. None of the clergy participants quickly or clearly described how Lord’s Supper Christ encounters uniquely benefitted the participants. Still, most recognized that the congregation was meaningfully connecting with God, and some laypersons spoke about meeting Jesus in a literal and vivid sense. None of the clergy participants described the elements as spiritual food or nourishment, and there was little discussion of the Lord’s Supper serving as a means of grace. When the clergy participants spoke about what they said during the Lord’s Supper performance, beyond identifying 1 Corinthians 11 as the liturgical text they most often used, none stated that the words of institution were necessary. Some believed that bread and juice/wine could be substituted by almost anything. Most clergy participants described the rite as an occasion or moment for self-reflection regarding personal holiness (or sinfulness) while remembering the price of personal salvation, Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross. However, some preferred not to dwell on confessing secret sins as preparatory work for receiving the elements, preferring instead to focus on the fact that Christ’s atoning sacrifice was once-for-all sufficient, meaning that sin, sickness, and death are already defeated and

what remains is only to appropriate Christ's finished work, something that can supernaturally occur in the Lord's Supper.<sup>140</sup>

From the clergy participants' perspective, the Lord's Supper was more than a memorial, but the "something more" was mysterious. Surprisingly, most clergy participants did not describe "something more" as supernatural or sacramental. Still, they did not expressly use theological language rooted in any Christian tradition to explain or define its enigmatic quality, and only a minority of participants pointed to scripture texts to explain or illustrate their Lord's Supper experiences. The lay participants acknowledged the rite's unique liturgical quality but, in contrast, thought it less mysterious and described it as supernatural. From the layperson's perspective, what occurs in the rite is the miraculous, run-of-the-mill fare for Pentecostals, that is, Christ is *present*, exactly as He promised. What the clergypersons described as "something mysteriously more," the laypersons identified as Christ's faithful and sensible supernatural work. In other words, the laypersons' experience of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper was generally like their other Pentecostal experiences overall. They understood the encounter to be supernatural or miraculous.

### *Biblical Framework*

Considering my reception history and research interviews, I recognized that Pentecostals approach the Lord's Supper with the Apostle Paul's 1 Corinthians 11 caution in mind, whether it is woefully acknowledging that laypersons unnecessarily limit their participation in the rite because of self-scrutiny or that some haphazardly participate in the ritual ignoring Paul's warning. Regardless, the vast majority seemed to have in mind that worthy

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<sup>140</sup> To understand the contemporary experientialist popularization of the finished work principles or "It is Finished" theology as they relate to the Lord's Supper praxis, see Prince, *Health and Wholeness Through the Holy Communion*; Johnson and Johnson, *The Power of Holy Communion*.

participation requires spiritual discernment. Not discerning Christ's body in the Supper brings about a curse, and Pentecostals interpret Paul's warning in two ways. On the one hand, and more so for the founders and laypersons, the curse is equal to missing the miraculous Full Gospel provisions in the Lord's Supper, namely (but not limited to) the healing nature of Christ's presence made available in the rite.<sup>141</sup> Dismissing the possibility of divine healing while partaking of the elements (Christ's body and blood) means you celebrate less than the Full Gospel, faithlessly, denying an encounter with Jesus Christ, our saviour, sanctifier, baptizer, healer, and soon coming king.

On the other hand, some understand that the curse results from partaking in the elements while unrepentant of all manners of sins, including fractured relationships with church members and various personal sins. Participants dare not receive the eucharistic elements (the bread and wine/juice) and thus join/implicate Jesus in such embodied sinfulness—"Jesus is pure, so I need to be pure." Again, there were exceptions to this rule, particularly those that expressed a strong "finished work" perspective.

Regardless, "eating worthily" was essential to all. As such, I proposed that implicit in the discourses (reception history and contemporary experientialist conversation), "eating worthily" involves self-examination that discerns three bodies: Jesus' body, the partaker's body, and the church's body. Since most of the PAOC clergy participants interviewed use 1 Corinthians 11 as a liturgical text for their Lord's Supper performance, even when they introduce the rite with a homily from another biblical source, by locating these three body discernments in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, I suggested that Pentecostals can better navigate the rite with biblical-theological language sufficient to express their body sense of Christ's presence in the performance.

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<sup>141</sup> See Black's (*The Lord's Supper*, 166–76) assessment of the lost connection between the Lord's Supper and Divine healing.

When believers perform the church's sacramental rites in the power of the Spirit, they profoundly encounter God:

They are reminded time and again that the Spirit within, who embraces *them* with God's favor and grants *them* foretastes of the realization of justice, came to them from the Father, from whom the Spirit proceeds, and through the Son, the righteous judge and king, the savior and the lamb. They are not just reminded, but they participate once more in the very power of these events, for they have the Spirit within. They then seek by such power and through these rites to embody this justice within their fellowship and to be nourished from it in their desire to bless others.<sup>142</sup>

This storied account of Pentecostal sacramentality and the preceding theological perspectives is grander than the space provided to the Lord's Supper in the current PAOC "Statement of Essential Truths." Still, it is compatible with the witness of early Canadian Pentecostals and the experience of the contemporary laypersons and clergypersons I interviewed. Therefore, this fuller story must be ingested as a substantial development in our Eucharistic sacramentality. Kärkkäinen's critique that the Eucharist suffers from "pneumatological anemia" is valid in the sense that the contemporary Canadian practice of the Lord's Supper lacks an explicit Eucharistic *epiclesis* that links the work of the Spirit to the rite. Unnecessary considering what the founders believed, the theological developments of late, and what the contemporary lay participants expect. Not only do those who curate and perform the rite need to become acquainted with these profound spiritual truths, but we need to practice them in a Pentecostal way, that is *epicletically*.

A Pentecostal worldview that pays attention to pneumatology and eschatology must come to bear on the contemporary Pentecostal liturgy of the Eucharist. The Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper must incorporate the *sacramental spirit* Canadian Pentecostals have witnessed historically, which is being described by Pentecostal academics recently

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<sup>142</sup> Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit*, 283.

and glimpsed only sparingly in the contemporary experientialist dialogue. It will make what we are experiencing a more vivid foretaste of what is yet to come—“Christ’s future coming and the messianic banquet that we will share with him.”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Macchia, *Tongues of Fire*, 601.

## CONCLUSION

While Kärkkäinen observed that Pentecostals had preferred the Spirit over the sacraments and that this has contributed to an unfortunate history of “pneumatological anemia” regarding a theology of the Eucharist, “the primary sacrament,”<sup>1</sup> my research has demonstrated that the Canadian Pentecostal founders nonetheless practiced the rite in a deeply *epicletic* manner, meaning they expected to meet with Christ and experience his the presence of the Holy Spirit in supernatural ways as they faithfully adhered to this essential Book-of-Acts *praxis*. They *taught* and *testified* to this effect, encouraging their magazine readership, Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals alike, that, like the disciples, they profitably celebrated the Lord’s Supper weekly.

I have also illustrated that contemporary Pentecostal theologians, including Kärkkäinen, have begun to address the pneumatological anemia. Some have explored the Lord’s Supper’s significance in light of Pentecost: Resurrection power comes to bear on Jesus’ followers as Pentecostal power; and Easter and Pentecost are pneumatological events. Indeed, we experience the realm of the Lord’s risen body, Jesus raised to be a “life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor 15:45). St. Luke describes the outworking of the experience of this power as fourfold devotion: to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer (Acts 2:42). I concur with Macchia: “A Spirit-baptized ecclesiology thus also implies a eucharistic ecclesiology.”<sup>2</sup> Both events—Easter and Pentecost—should intersect

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<sup>1</sup> Kärkkäinen, *Toward A Pneumatological Theology*, 136.

<sup>2</sup> Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church*, 199.



liturgically in the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper, as clergypersons curate and perform the rite in the same spirit they conduct all things Pentecostal, yielded to the Holy Spirit. Why? Pentecostals believe it is the Holy Spirit who enables all ministers and effective ministry—this, too, is discernment, or as Paul would say, rightly judging the body. How? With an explicit eucharistic *epiclesis*. Still, laypersons, too, are responsible for coming to the Supper discerningly, embodying Pentecostal spirituality that anticipates the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I'm suggesting invoking the Spirit during the Lord's Supper performance in connection with proclaiming the *words of institution*, reflecting the Pentecostal ethos, should be an essential aspect of the Pentecostal praxis of the Lord's Supper liturgy.<sup>3</sup> In fact, in the same way that Castelo has identified “abiding and waiting” as the “practice-orientation” of the Pentecostal ethos, Macchia has called the *epiclesis* “the heart of the meal.”<sup>4</sup> As a “movement birthed out of *epiclesis*—praying, seeking, waiting, and expecting the coming of the Holy Spirit,”<sup>5</sup> our eucharistic *epiclesis* must reflect this Pentecostal sacramentality. With an explicit eucharistic *epiclesis*, the Lord's Supper would better reflect, contribute to, and perpetuate essential Pentecostal spirituality. Rather than merely mysterious, the sacrament (a mystery) of Christ's presence would nourish us supernaturally in a way familiar to our Pentecostal senses, that is Spirit-ually.

### Future Research

Good research answers important questions and uncovers new areas to investigate. Based on the findings of this study, the following three aspects emerge as potential avenues for

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<sup>3</sup> See, Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology*, Macchia, *Baptized*.

<sup>4</sup> Macchia (*Baptized*, 252) explains, “The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom states that the work of the Spirit in the Lord's Supper is for ‘fellowship with the Holy Spirit, for the fullness of the Kingdom.’”

<sup>5</sup> Tomberlin, *Pentecostal Sacraments*, 220.

further research: other reception histories, transignification, and the Lord's Supper and Luke-Acts.

### Reception Histories

First, McAlister published "A Statement of Fundamental Truths Approved by the General Council of the Assemblies of God" in the February 1926 issue of the *Testimony*:

The Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements, bread and the fruit of the vine, is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4); a memorial of His suffering and death (1 Cor. 11:26); and a prophecy of His second coming (1 Cor. 11:26); and is enjoined on all believers "until He comes."<sup>6</sup>

Future research should consider this moment in Canadian Pentecostal history because some of the early Canadian sacramental richness is missing with this definition. In other words, does American Pentecostalism rather than British Pentecostalism ultimately influence the PAOC's stance on the sacraments even though McAlister does champion the independence of the PAOC and severs governance ties with the Assemblies of God?

Second, research attention could focus on a reception history of the PAOC's sacramental development from 1930 to the present, particularly how the second wave of Pentecostalism (the 1960 "charismatic wave" that spread within mainline Christian denomination, including the Roman Catholic Charismatic renewal) and third wave of Pentecostalism (the 1980 "prosperity gospel" that influenced many classical Pentecostals) influenced the Lord's Supper practice.

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<sup>6</sup> Unknown, *Canadian Pentecostal Testimony*, 4.

### Trying On Transignification

In Pentecostal parlance, a Spirit baptism is the open path to the profound *koinonia* experienced by participating in the signs of Christ's broken body and spilled blood.

Macchia believes that transignification best expresses the mystery of the mode of Christ's presence in the meal: "Christ is present in the sharing of the meal through the Holy Spirit communing with us, bringing us to a deep remembrance of his death, nourishing us afresh by the Spirit, and bringing us to a renewed commitment to the crucified and risen life."<sup>7</sup> Future research could explore this perspective.<sup>8</sup> More than a comparative study reviewing the different views on the mode of Christ's presence in the Supper,<sup>9</sup> a phenomenological enquiry might examine "what is given" when various well-crafted eucharistic Spirit-invocations accompany our Lord's Supper performances.<sup>10</sup> In other words, further research could address *how* such a liturgy affects our experience of Christ's presence in the praxis of the Lord's Supper.<sup>11</sup>

### The Relationship between the Lord's Supper and Luke-Acts

Since Pentecostals found their theological and practical identity from reading Luke-Acts in their first century,<sup>12</sup> exploring the relationship between the Lord's Supper and a focus on missionality through the lens of Luke-Acts would be fruitful for Pentecostals and the church broadly.

Pentecostals have been comfortable with their worship liturgies being somewhat unpredictable and flexible because this is the way of the Spirit: "The wind blows wherever

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<sup>7</sup> Macchia, *Tongues*, 601.

<sup>8</sup> FitzPatrick, "Against Transignification," 49–96.

<sup>9</sup> For a history of the development of the Lord's Supper, see Bradshaw and Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies*.

<sup>10</sup> Marion, *Being Given*, 216–19.

<sup>11</sup> Alvarado "Pentecostal Epiclesis," 194.

<sup>12</sup> Mittlestadt, *Reading*, 1.

it pleases” (John 3:8). Margaret Poloma explains that Pentecostals hold an alternate *Weltanschauung* or worldview.<sup>13</sup> This Pentecostal *Weltanschauung* embraces the New Testament narrative at face value, that is, as an account of religious experience worth seeking. Luke Timothy Johnson points out that the language of religious experience “occurs everywhere in the earliest Christian writings and points to realities and convictions of fundamental importance to both writers and readers of these writings.”<sup>14</sup> As my reception history demonstrates, Pentecostals have been quick to do what Johnson has said the academic study of early Christianity has missed, namely, Pentecostals have recognized, appreciated, and appropriated the New Testament witness of religious experience in their praxis.<sup>15</sup> But Pentecostals understand spiritual experience as the consequence of the Spirit’s presence and power.<sup>16</sup> Speaking about the Corinthian Church, Johnson convincingly argues that “For Paul and his readers, when they came together to eat (1 Co. 11:33) a meal in the name of Jesus (5:4), or the ‘Lord’s Supper’ (11:21), the power of the resurrected one was present, just as it was when they spoke by the Spirit of God (12:3) in glossolalia. Their eating and drinking was, therefore, of ‘supernatural food and supernatural drink’ (10:3–4).”<sup>17</sup> I am encouraged that the PAOC Commission used “sacramental language” to define tongues, the sign of the supernatural event of Spirit baptism. Likewise, Pentecostal clergypersons should make explicit what the contemporary Pentecostal theologians have explained and the laypersons interviewed have readily described, namely that the Lord’s Supper is an exceptional occasion of Christ’s presence, a supernatural event.

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<sup>13</sup> Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, xix, cited by Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 92–93.

<sup>14</sup> Graham, et al., *Theological Reflection*, 205.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, *Religious Experience*, 11–12.

<sup>16</sup> Johnson, *Religious Experience*, 11–12.

<sup>17</sup> This is Johnson’s (*Religious Experience*, 17) point exactly.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, *Religious Experience*, 174.

But how? Macchia writes, “Without Jesus as the Spirit Baptizer, there is no clear link between the *anamnesis* and the *epiclesis*. In fact, the *anamnesis* is fulfilled in the *epiclesis* in light of Jesus’ resurrection from death to mediate the Spirit.”<sup>18</sup> The *epiclesis* liturgically connects Easter and Pentecost, thus the Lord’s Supper to the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> More than a memorial of Christ’s suffering and death, the Lord’s Supper praxis is a profound *koinonia*, that is, participation with Christ through the wonder-working power and presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup> Just as the Passover meal heeded the miracle of the Exodus and the Old Covenant between Israel and God, the Lord’s Supper evokes a flight. The Lord’s Supper performance heeds “Christ’s exodus through the river of fire on our behalf, rescuing us from drowning and opening a path to the promised Holy Spirit.”<sup>21</sup>

Pentecostal sacramentality is the eschatological mystery of God’s promised gracious presence in the praxis of God’s people *in* and *for* the world. Discerning and testifying about this supernatural encounter portends the presentness of the kingdom of God to the world. The Church is not the Kingdom. Instead, it witnesses the Kingdom.<sup>22</sup> Sacramentally, the Church signifies that the Kingdom *is* and *is yet to come*. The founders described the Lord’s Supper as a prophecy of Christ’s second coming.<sup>23</sup> The Church prophesies its future in its sacramental praxis. Functionally, this “eschatologizing” is the Spirit self-disclosing manifestly in the church for the world.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the medium

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<sup>18</sup> Macchia, *Baptized*, 252.

<sup>19</sup> Alvarado, “Pentecostal Epiclesis,” 194.

<sup>20</sup> Macchia, *Tongues*, 599.

<sup>21</sup> Macchia, *Tongues*, 599–600.

<sup>22</sup> Macchia (*Justified*, 277) writes, “There is no critical dialectic between Jesus and the Spirit. He is the king and the Spirit is the kingdom. But, there is such a dialectic between the Spirit/kingdom and the church: thus the church is not the final word but a penultimate witness to the kingdom, which is the Spirit, and the righteous king, who is Christ.”

<sup>23</sup> Unknown, *Canadian Pentecostal Testimony*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Chan (*Liturgical Theology*, 36) explains, “The story of the church is what it is because it is the story of the Spirit who constitutes it, the continuation of the triune economy of salvation.”

of the Spirit's autobiography is the sacramental praxis of the Church. It is crucial that Pentecostals prophesy clearly.<sup>25</sup>

For St. Luke, "the coming of the Spirit was primarily associated, or even synonymous, with a call to mission, not with the ecstatic."<sup>26</sup> St. Luke narrativizes the Spirit's story in Luke-Acts: love in the Church and through it to the world. This is an area for further research. Sacramentality is not for our sake alone. Praying for and experiencing "fresh moves of the Spirit" should help to orient Pentecostal *praxis*, not merely *in* and *for* ecstatic experiences *now*, but also *beyond* them, towards eschatological hope.<sup>27</sup> In the story of salvation, Jesus' final word is: "Behold, I am making all things new" (Rev 21:5). Pentecostals, correctly-oriented eschatologically, experience a holy restlessness of sorts, knowing divine *in-breakings* and the felt sense of Christ's absence, and anticipate what is ultimately to come. Only within this eschatological tension do we eschew spiritual complacency, narcissism, and an over-realized eschatology, and become wed to (become one with) God's mission in this world. Of this, we need reminding. However, remembering is not simply a matter of doing (like remembering to do evangelism). Remembering is first a matter of being, evoking who we are, namely the body of Christ.

Reorientation happens liturgically through the sacraments, perpetually at the Lord's Supper performance.<sup>28</sup> Performed in the Spirit with understanding, the Lord's Supper is a prophetic liturgy whereby "the community of faith experiences a transformative process and is thereby compelled to be an agent of radical transformation in society."<sup>29</sup> The Lord's

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<sup>25</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 36–37.

<sup>26</sup> Twelftree, *People of the Spirit*, 82.

<sup>27</sup> Moltmann (*Ethics of Hope*, 38) writes, "The coming of the Holy Spirit is nothing other than the beginning of Christ's *parousia*. That is why the Spirit is called 'the pledge (or guarantee) of glory' (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:14) ... What begins here in the Spirit will be completed there in the kingdom of glory."

<sup>28</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 146.

<sup>29</sup> Junker (*Prophetic Liturgy*, 133) writes, "In prophetic sacramental ritual ... We are all ritual performers."

Supper is a ritual praxis that engages the gathered in a “deep relationship with the Triune God and others.”<sup>30</sup> A pneumatological ecclesiology affirms that the Spirit repeatedly and dynamically constitutes the church through *epiclesis*, not the least of which is the eucharistic *epiclesis*. Through the Lord’s Supper, the church becomes a eucharistic community, filled and refilled with the Spirit, ready to perform works of reconciliation in the world.<sup>31</sup> Sent from the Table nourished by the body and blood of Christ, a miracle of mutual indwelling occurs, and the Spirit community participates (that is, *becomes* participant) in God’s mission.

### **Final Words: Back to Personal Praxis**

As I mentioned in the “Introduction,” methodologically, this research is practice-led, initiated and rooted in my religious practice. Since my practice of the Lord’s Supper as a PAOC clergyperson is not only the genesis of this research (from where my research question arises) but also part of the hermeneutic spiral of the practical theological enquiry, this project would be incomplete without reflexively returning to my practice. Throughout this study, my eucharistic experiences continued as a theological dialogue partner. Several times, I implemented a different explicit eucharistic *epiclesis* during my Lord’s Supper performances. Early on, I borrowed three Anglican Spirit invocations.

#### *Epiclesis 1:*

We pray you, gracious God,  
to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts,  
that they may be the sacrament  
of the Body of Christ  
and his Blood of the new Covenant.  
Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice,

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<sup>30</sup> Junker, *Prophetic Liturgy*, 133.

<sup>31</sup> Stephenson, *Types*, 53.

that we, made acceptable in him,  
may be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

*Epiclesis 2:*

Send your Holy Spirit on us and these gifts,  
that we who eat this bread  
and drink this cup  
may be one with him in his self-giving,  
that through us he may comfort the broken-hearted  
and console the mourners, open the eyes of the blind  
and proclaim liberty to the captives;  
until justice flows like water  
and righteousness like an unfailing stream,  
and the city of God is among us.<sup>33</sup>

*Epiclesis 3:*

Breathe your Holy Spirit,  
the wisdom of the universe,  
upon these gifts that we bring to you:  
this bread, this cup,  
ourselves, our souls and bodies,  
that we may be signs of your love for all the world  
and ministers of your transforming purpose.<sup>34</sup>

The inclusion of the *epiclesis* during the communion rite did not in some way diminish the fact that the action of the Spirit is pervasive throughout the service. Of course, believing that the Holy Spirit enables effective ministers and ministry in the other parts of the service is not a question for Pentecostals: Christ is present when we worship Him in the Spirit and with understanding through the wonderworking power and presence of the Spirit. However, we do not presume this, in fact, for this we often pray. Nonetheless, we are moved to the

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<sup>32</sup> The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada, p. 199, cited by Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality*, 187.

<sup>33</sup> *Third Canadian Eucharistic Order: Fourth Draft*, cited by Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality*, 187.

<sup>34</sup> *Eucharistic Prayers, Services of the Word, and Night Prayer: Supplementary to The Book of Alternative Services* (Toronto, 2001), cited by Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality*, 191.



*anamnesis* through the Spirit, and Jesus gives himself in the gift of bread and wine in the power of this same Spirit. For this, too, we ought to pray.<sup>35</sup> The significance of a eucharistic *epiclesis* in the Lord's Supper in a Pentecostal service is its theological and devotional articulation commensurate with the heart of Pentecostalism. The Anglican prayers are beautiful in their own right, but now it is appropriate to conclude this project with an example of an *epiclesis* that reflects some of what I have learned through my investigation and that I suggest should belong in a Pentecostal liturgy of the Lord's Supper:

Lord God,  
as we remember the sacrifice of Good Friday,  
and the victory of Resurrection Sunday,  
may we be renewed today at this Lord's Supper  
with the Spirit of Pentecost once again.  
**[Come Holy Spirit, fill us again!]**

Spirit of Truth, help us to discern  
in this bread and wine  
Christ's broken body and shed blood for me.  
**[Come Life-giving Spirit, nourish us again!]**

Spirit of Truth, help us to discern  
your cleansing presence washing over me.  
Lord God, forgive me of my sins,  
making me a fit participant in the blood and body of Christ.  
**[Come Holy Spirit, sanctify us again!]**

Spirit of Truth, help us to discern  
Christ's presence among us.  
Lord God, pour your Spirit on all flesh,  
empowering us to proclaim and demonstrate the Good News,  
that you are making all things new.  
And hasten the day of Christ's coming!  
**[Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus!]**

We would do well to remember that the rhythm of ecclesial pneumatology is from the sacraments (visible signs of invisible grace, born out of God's faithfulness) out to

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<sup>35</sup> Kennedy, *Eucharistic Sacramentality*, 244.

sacramentals (sacred signs with spiritual effects resembling the sacraments, born out of the church's faith), within sacramentality (the character of the created world as it witnesses to and mediates God's presence). Let us never forget that "ecclesiology should shape pneumatology, inasmuch as the church is the primary locus of the Spirit's work."<sup>36</sup> As Pentecostals, we must remember that the all-embracing *epiclesis* begins in baptism and perpetually returns to the Lord's Supper; it is how "God meets all our needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19). Such a claim prioritizes our need for communion with Jesus, a disposition that while at his Table should solicit a prayer that we are well familiar with, the invocation of the Spirit, the *epiclesis* .

Holy Spirit, help me attend to the three realms of interpretation for the "body of Christ," all locations of sacramental presence. Indeed, Jesus, you were raised to be a "life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor 15:45). Father, nourish us today. *Maranatha!*

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<sup>36</sup> Stephenson, *Types*, 53.

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