

Wesley Scott Biddy
“Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Eucharist: A Proposal for Pentecostals”
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Introduction

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen devotes a chapter of his *Introduction to Ecclesiology* to exploring a distinctively Pentecostal approach to ecclesiology, and it is telling that he begins by asking about such an approach, “Is there any?”¹ The question is quite justified, echoing the questions posed by Paul D. Lee in light of Pentecostalism’s history:

If Pentecostalism is a movement, is it useful or valid to talk about ecclesiology at all? What does ecclesiology mean to a Pentecostal? At first, Pentecostals were so busy spreading the “good news” of the fresh outpouring of the Spirit “in the last days” that they became unconcerned about forming a denomination. The premillennial urgency of the imminent Kingdom made Pentecostals focus on their readiness, through personal conversion and regeneration, thereby rendering any ecclesiological deliberation rather irrelevant or at least secondary.²

Indeed, the influence of this early strong eschatological bent—which has by no means completely dissolved over the movement’s continued life span, but persists as a quickening element in much of its common piety—likely helps to account for a relative dearth of doctrinal, philosophical, or systematic theological reflection that has characterized Pentecostalism historically. Of course, recent decades have seen this trend changing, to be sure.

Nevertheless, when we come to consider Pentecostal sacramentology, the question, “Is there any?” could be asked with as much justification as in the case of ecclesiology, of which sacramentology is a part. My own initial answer is, Yes: it is still largely in an undeveloped form, but the resources latent in Pentecostal spirituality hold

¹ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 72.

² Paul D. Lee, *Pneumatological Ecclesiology in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue: A Catholic Reading of the Third Quinquennium (1985-1989)* (Dissertatio Ad Lauream in Facultate S. Theologiae Apud Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae in Urbe, Rome, 1994), 15; quoted in Kärkkäinen, 72-73. Kärkkäinen identifies M.L. Hodges’s *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective* as “the only substantial contribution” to general scholarship on ecclesiology to come from the Pentecostal world (p. 73).

much potential for developing a conscious theological appreciation of the sacramental character of worship in general, and of those ecclesial rituals that have historically been explicitly recognized as “sacraments” in particular. My goal in this thesis is to investigate that potential so as to demonstrate how, if shaped in a certain way, this area of Pentecostal theology can aid doctrinal rapprochement between Pentecostals and other groups of Christians in the face of some existing divisions. I intend to direct my focus to the Eucharist, but first I must clear a space for talking about sacraments generally from a Pentecostal perspective. That will consume the first part of the paper, and in the second and third major sections I will proceed to engage some theologians of other traditions to determine where Pentecostalism might be able to appropriate some of their ideas.

I. Pentecostalism and the Idea of a Sacrament

The Council of Trent defined a sacrament as “a symbol of something sacred, a visible form of invisible grace, having the power of sanctifying.” Despite the fact that the sacramental teaching—particularly regarding the Eucharist—articulated by the Council was clearly shaped by polemical concerns, I presume that most Protestant Christians could interpret this definition in a way that would render it acceptable to them (the proper meaning of the phrase “having the power of sanctifying” would probably be the most disputed point). At any rate, I find it valuable as a place to start, if nothing else. I also value Paul Tillich’s way of differentiating between a sign and a symbol, both of which are important terms in any discussion of sacraments. According to Tillich, a sign “bears no necessary relation to that to which it points,” while a symbol

participates in the reality of that for which it stands. The sign can be changed arbitrarily according to the demands of expediency, but the symbol grows and dies according to the correlation between that which is symbolized and the persons who receive it as a symbol. Therefore, the religious symbol, the symbol

which points to the divine, can be a true symbol only if it participates in the power of the divine to which it points.³

I will assume these definitions of “sign” and “symbol” as I use the terms in this paper.

It seems fair to suppose that Pentecostals, generally speaking, tend to think of practices like baptism, celebrating the Lord’s Supper, and footwashing more as signs than as symbols, usually treating them as an outward response to an inward grace that *has already been received*. It is understood that we undertake these *particular* actions simply because they are ordinances of dominical institution: Jesus instructed us to carry them out, and so we do, but our obedience in that regard does not create the occasion for a dispensation of grace; the grace—which, in a usage not uncommon to post-Reformation thought, refers almost strictly to the forgiveness of sins—has already come to us before our responsive action, and does not come thereafter or therein.

However, Frank D. Macchia, a Pentecostal, has argued that the common Pentecostal understanding of glossolalia shares much with the ways that older, “mainstream” denominations conceive of how God works among us in the sacraments.⁴ In both cases, alongside the symbolic human action, there is an outward sign of something that God is doing for a person or group that humans cannot genuinely do for themselves, though the genuineness of its occurring is known only by faith.⁵ Likewise, whether in a Pentecostal “altar service” or at a communion table, those who encounter the living Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit leave believing that they have been

³ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Reason and Revelation*, in *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), I: 239.

⁴ Frank D. Macchia, “Tongues as a Sign: Towards a Sacramental Understanding of Pentecostal Experience,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 15.1 (Spring 1993), 61-76; see also his “Sighs too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Glossolalia,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992), 47-73.

⁵ After all, there is no way to prove that one who speaks in tongues is not simply babbling nonsense on his or her own impetus, or, say, that the bread and wine undergo a change by Christ’s becoming present in the Eucharist.

granted a blessing that will sustain them as they re-enter the world on the pilgrimage of Christian life. The example demonstrates that Pentecostals have theological resources for exploring two key ideas in sacramentology: (1) that divine-human encounters take place in, with, and under *signs*, and (2) that these encounters may rightly be regarded as moments in which God dispenses *grace*, a word that many Pentecostals are not accustomed to using for blessings besides forgiveness.

Certainly there is nothing inherently resistant in Pentecostalism to the idea that God grants the Church blessings beyond that of forgiveness of sins. On the contrary, when early Pentecostals claimed a “third blessing” of baptism in the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues, they assumed it to be over and above the “second blessing” of sanctification that Wesleyan-Holiness revivalists preached could enhance the “basic” Christian state of justification. Indeed, it seems central to Pentecostalism, also, to believe that God employs particular signs to declare and manifest God’s presence in and intentions for the world. The “full gospel” it proclaims is usually taken to involve five theological motifs: (1) justification by faith, (2) sanctification, (3) baptism in the Holy Spirit, or Spirit-baptism, as evidenced by speaking in tongues, (4) provision of divine healing for all under the Atonement, and (5) the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, which is usually regarded as an imminent event.⁶ The third and fourth of these *explicitly* involve *signs* of God’s work in the believer, and both are regarded as pointing to the fifth—they are eschatological signs. Insofar as Pentecostals hold that God’s gracious blessings are often bestowed precisely under specific signs, they do profess a sacramental understanding of the divine economy.

⁶ Because of these particular motifs, the “full gospel” is also called the “five-fold gospel.” Of course, none of them belong exclusively to Pentecostals, but historically the five taken together have been used by Pentecostals as a self-identifying credo.

Yet, many Pentecostals are uncomfortable with the word “sacrament” because they associate it with a “High Church” liturgical worship format that they consider frozen by excessive formality, restricting God’s freedom to encounter and bless the faithful, or because they think it bespeaks a ritual that people of other traditions superstitiously hold to be imbued with quasi-magical power. Even when this kind of misunderstanding of the theology behind “High Church” liturgy is not present, there is often still a sense among Pentecostals that the word “sacrament” is burdened with too much baggage to be very useful in ecclesial communities that stand under the shadow of Zwingli’s denunciation of Roman Catholic sacramentalism.

I, for one, think otherwise. In my view, the term “sacrament” can be useful even for Protestants who reject the majority of Roman Catholic teaching about the seven sacraments and their nature and proper use, if two things are borne in mind. First, as Edward Schillebeeckx observes, theologians of the post-World War II era have widely recognized that “the sacraments are first and foremost symbolic acts or activity as signs.”⁷ This recognition allows us to talk about the Eucharist, for example, as a sacrament, using different categories than the Aristotelian terms of substance and accident. The latter have deeply informed past sacramentology and have become bound up with theological disputes over what occurs in the consecrated elements. Of course, that is certainly an issue worthy of the most serious consideration, and the Aristotelian categories are still useful for framing the discussion. But it is not the only issue to be considered, and the older terms, which have to do with ontology, aid us little in describing and analyzing sacramental *symbolic activity*. Thus, we can leave them aside for at least this task, which we may now take up separately from ontological questions

⁷ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist*, trans. N.D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 97.

about the sacramental elements. I find this especially beneficial from the perspective of Pentecostal theology, because I believe that a Pentecostal sacramentology will have to begin with an account of sacraments as *events of a divine-human encounter that take place through symbols*. I will try to sketch out what such an account might look like in what follows. Once that is accepted, I think, it will be easier for Pentecostals to engage the other (older) issues in a profitable dialogue with Christians of other traditions.

Second, the original sense of “sacrament” offers us a fruitful way to contemplate what occurs in these events in which we encounter God in a special way. Stanley Grenz notes that in the Roman world, the Latin word *sacramentum* indicated “the oath of fidelity and obedience to one’s commander sworn by a Roman soldier upon enlistment in the army.”⁸ It was common for the soldier then to be branded with a mark that identified him as such—the visible sign of his new identity, which carried distinctive responsibilities and privileges. *Sacramentum* could also refer to the sum of money that was put in escrow—often in a temple, as it was thought of as being in the care of the gods—while a court case awaited settlement.⁹ The word “pledge” seems a good candidate for encapsulating these two meanings of *sacramentum*. I suggest that each of them might be seen to be in certain respects congruent to both a divine and a human dimension of what takes place in a sacramental event.

What occurs in the human dimension of the first meaning of *sacramentum*, theologically interpreted here as “pledge,” is captured by Grenz’s characterization of

⁸ Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 513. It is often pointed out that the Latin Vulgate uses *sacramentum* to translate the Greek *mysterion*, but I see little relevance in that for a discussion of the rituals most commonly referred to as “sacraments” because the New Testament never uses the word *mysterion/sacramentum* to refer to rituals. Rather, it uses the term in the same sense in which it is used in the Septuagint, i.e., to refer to the secrets or hidden plans of God, sometimes with the understanding that these have now been revealed. See John Franklin Troupe, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1917).

⁹ Grenz, 513.

sacraments as “acts of commitment,” a term also employed by Pentecostal thinker Kenneth J. Archer.¹⁰ When we perform these actions, we pledge to God the commitment to obedience that properly belongs to the whole of a Christian life. And as the Roman soldiers allowed themselves to be branded as a physical symbol of their consigning themselves over to the army, so when we make our pledge we employ designated visible signs—the sacramental elements—in a particular concrete act of obedience, i.e., obeying Jesus’ instruction that we should engage in these specific practices (the dominical ordinances).

Grenz, a Baptist theologian, remains faithful to the Zwinglian heritage of sacramentology in affirming that these acts of commitment are *primarily human acts* performed as an outward, symbolic response to God’s gift of salvific grace to believers. Yet he does not deny a place to divine operation in these moments. Grenz writes,

Through these acts, we confess our faith in a special manner. They are enacted pictures or symbols of God’s grace given in Christ . . . [so that] acts of commitment become visual sermons, the Word of God symbolically proclaimed. Through our participation we not only declare the truth of the gospel, however, we also bear witness to our reception of the grace symbolized. Hence, through these rites, we “act out” our faith. The acts of commitment become enactments of our appropriation of God’s action in Christ. As we affirm our faith in this vivid symbolic manner, the Holy Spirit uses these rites to facilitate our participation in the reality of the acts symbolized.¹¹

It seems safe to say that, on Grenz’s view, even if the initial liturgical move of the sacred drama belongs to us, the final (and surely more important) aspect of what occurs therein is a work of the Holy Spirit.

Still, to say this is not yet the equivalent of affirming a personal presence of Christ at, for example, the Eucharist, which *is* affirmed in almost all the churches that did not

¹⁰ See Kenneth J. Archer, “Nourishment for Our Journey: The Pentecostal *Via Salutis* and Sacramental Ordinances,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13.1 (October 2004), 79-96.

¹¹ Grenz, 516.

fall under Zwingli's sway. Those who aver some version of the doctrine of Real Presence often appeal to Christ's promise to be with us "wherever two or more are gathered" (Matt. 18.20; see 28.21). This notion speaks to the divine dimension of "pledge" that I have mentioned: as all the promises of God in Christ are Yea and Amen (2 Cor. 1.20), we should believe that the presence of the crucified and risen Son of God with us at the Eucharist is a promise of which we have the greatest assurance.

I am sympathetic to the reasoning here. It might be objected—perhaps in the name of "biblical purism"—that while Christ promised to be with us, he did not say that he would do so in any special way at the Eucharist. That is, one might contend that the belief in a special Eucharistic presence is a development of the post-New Testament era, and therefore it has less warrant than first-order truths drawn directly from Holy Scripture. On such a supposition, Christ's injunction to the disciples in the Upper Room to hold the Lord's Supper "in remembrance of me" was understood by the earliest Christians to refer to a mere memorial. But that is quite simply inaccurate.

Sharing a fellowship meal with someone had great significance in the ancient world, especially in religious contexts, where the participants assumed the presence of, or their communion with, a particular deity or dead ancestors during the meal. This is precisely why Paul forbids the Corinthians to participate in such rituals with pagans (1 Cor. 10.18-21): the idols at pagan feasts do not represent gods who truly exist, but demons participate in the scene and become the actual objects of worship just because it is idolatrous; to eat this kind of meal with their worshippers would be an expression of solidarity with them in that worship. Paul contrasts the pagans' partaking of the table of demons and being partners with them (vv. 20-21) with the Christian Eucharist, wherein

the cup that is drunk and the bread that is broken are a *κοινωνία*, a sharing in or participation in, the blood and body of Christ (v. 16). One cannot do both, because what one does in such acts is an expression of a reality in which the person participates—if a person participates in the expression, he or she necessarily thereby becomes a participant in the reality, for the reality is both enabled by supernatural means (whether the agent be God or demons) and concretely effected by the sign: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (v. 17).

In fact, the apostle claims that in the church he addresses, some have gotten sick or died because they have not honored the nature of the Eucharist celebration (11.29-30). Here we have a sin that brings about different consequences than do other sins that the people should avoid, which clearly suggests that something unique pertains to the situation in which this sin is committed. The Corinthians have not just been rude or insincere or forgetful in their meetings. Simply to act without “good worship-table etiquette” would be no different from the unchecked use of glossolalia in the congregation; to conduct a mere memorial celebration improperly would be like forgetting other elements of what Paul has passed on to them. The Corinthians have been immoderate and forgetful, but those sins have not been diagnosed as the cause of illness and death, as the sin regarding the Eucharist has. Paul certainly believes that in the Lord’s Supper, more than a mere memorial or casual Sunday dinner is taking place. This is perhaps most clearly evidenced by his comparison of the Eucharistic *κοινωνία* with Temple sacrifice, wherein he asks rhetorically, “Are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar?” (10.18). God was understood to reside in a special way in the Temple, such that sacrifices made and eaten at the altar were quite literally made and

eaten in God's presence. The logic of his analogy works to indicate that Christ is likewise present among the believers in their Eucharistic eating and drinking.

Furthermore, we must take account of what Jesus' instruction about the Lord's Supper, "Do this in remembrance of me," implied for the early Church. In Hebraic thought, Scott McCormick, Jr. explains, this ritualistic kind of remembrance, or *anamnesis*, was not chiefly a human undertaking, nor was it merely a memorial in the sense of "calling to mind again," for the action actually provided a means of "bringing up into the present the effects of something done in the past:"

True, functions of human memory might be involved in this powerful linking of past and present: for example, a memorial or cultic recounting of event such as the exodus, wherein the past event was "actualized" or made a contemporary, redemptive reality for the worshipers. But just as it was a really redemptive link, God's own action was basic and necessary for the human or cultic remembering to be thus effective. To cause the effects of some past deed to appear freshly in the present, whether redemptively or with negative force—this presupposes sovereignty, a moral control of history, a control that is God's alone.¹²

McCormick proceeds to argue that

When it is said that the church celebrates the Sacrament *unto the remembrance of Jesus*, it means emphatically that God thereby ushers into the present the effects of Jesus' past and completed sacrifice. The effects of his obedience unto death are made a present reality. That is to say, salvation in Christ is made a present reality. This is precisely what was given to the disciples in the upper room: salvation in Christ as a gift received in faith. In this interpretation of *anamnesis*, the continuity between the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper is therefore maintained and stressed. . . . What the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper holds for us is God's salvation coming to us repeatedly: his re-creating, life-giving gift being repeatedly offered and repeatedly received. . . . What the Sacrament of the

¹² Scott McCormick, Jr., *The Lord's Supper: A Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 78-79. McCormick (p. 79, n. 10) cites the observation of Brevard Childs that "the dynamic connection via tradition (i.e., via Israel's memory) between present time and historically fixed events of the past must be understood in the sense that history, by God's own action, is made to be redemptive history: his redemptive action in past and unrepeatable events is not static but rather continues." See Brevard Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, in *Studies in Biblical Theology No. 37* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1962), 66-70, 74-80, 83-89.

Lord's Supper holds for us is God's salvation coming to us repeatedly: his re-creating, life-giving gift being repeatedly offered and repeatedly received.¹³

Here, "salvation in Christ" does not refer to something accomplished as a strictly past event, nor does this notion of making a past action's consequences effective for the present involve a repetition of the past action itself, nor is it implied that salvation in Christ cannot be maintained over time unless the *anamnesis* is carried out regularly (as if the ceremony were a magical rite that must be performed at certain times in order to keep a person safe). Instead, "salvation in Christ" names the state in which we carry out our lives, so that our identity is to be the people who accept salvation by our continual reliance upon God in faith. We concretely and repeatedly accept that identity, proclaiming it to each other and to the world (1 Cor. 11.26), by celebrating the Eucharist. And because our salvation comes from a *living* Christ who is a life-giving spirit (1 Cor. 15.45), it comes from a Christ who is *present* to us and among us.

This presence is effected and made effectual for believers by the Holy Spirit, who is also a gift from the Father and with whom the Son is always united in work. In worship, when we encounter Christ through the Spirit, we experience his presence as real, and it necessarily effects change in us because we encounter him as active Lord and Savior—if the experience is real, then it cannot fail to affect us profoundly. As I have said, we leave that encounter, whether it takes place at the Communion table or in an

¹³ McCormick, Jr., 81-82. This conception of the link between the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper accords with the Jewish understanding of the link between the Passover Seder and the original Passover on the night that the exodus began. As A. J. B. Higgins explains, "The precept to tell the children the meaning of the festival (Ex. 12.26f; 13.8) is the basis of the Passover Haggadah, by which the memory of the event is to be kept fresh, and each individual in every generation is to feel that he shares in the deliverance from Egypt" (*The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, *Studies in Biblical Theology* series [London: S.C.M. Press, 1952], 36). He notes that this approach to the seder was current in Mishnaic times, making reference to the stipulation in the *Mishnah Pesachim* 10.5 that at the meal "[e]veryone must regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt" (46). The fact that Jesus was likely familiar with the Mishnaic seder practices allows Higgins to construct an interesting comparison between them and the Synoptic depictions of the Last Supper (45-47).

“altar service,” knowing that we have been granted a blessing that will sustain us as we re-enter the world. Of course, the common Christian name for this blessing is “grace.”

According to the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, “Grace is God’s favor towards us, unearned and undeserved; by grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills,” and sacraments are “given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.”¹⁴ Frankly, I do not see anything in those statements with which a Pentecostal ought to disagree. Granted, they suggest that forgiveness of sins can come through the sacraments, an idea that may initially bother some believers of Zwinglian stripe, but why should anyone suppose that God would not encounter a person while he or she is participating in the sacraments, dealing with the person’s heart and forgiving his or her sins? If Pentecostals prize the belief that God freely operates among us whenever and in whatever ways it pleases God to do, then there should be no problem affirming that God may grant us forgiveness or any other blessings in a sacramental context. It is by all means appropriate to believe that when we “communicate”¹⁵ with God in worship, we are granted spiritual sustenance in the encounter. When this happens in sacramental events—in which we encounter the Holy Spirit in a special way, as Pentecostals believe it happens in other forms of worship (such as glossolalia)—the moment is a kind of crystallization of the life in the Spirit that constitutes our everyday graced existence. The provision of grace remains with us as we leave the altar, and it must be added here that it does so not merely to edify us in a personal spiritual way, but to equip us to carry out the work of God in the world. This is

¹⁴ *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corp., 1979), 858, 857.

¹⁵ I am consciously punning on the word “communicate” here: I intend the special liturgical sense of the word, “to participate in Holy Communion,” to be available as well as the more general meaning, “to be in communication.”

the meaning of referring to the Eucharist celebration as the Mass (*missia* in Latin, from *missio*, “mission”¹⁶). To celebrate the Mass is to assent to and rejoice in the economy of salvation—the Trinity’s mission to us—and to accept a commission for our own lives.

A post-communion prayer from the Book of Common Prayer that contains an acceptance of this commission reads,

Almighty and everliving God,
we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food
of the most precious Body and Blood
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries
that we are living members of the Body of your Son,
and heirs of your eternal kingdom.
And now, Father, send us out
to do the work you have given us to do,
to love and serve you
as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.
To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.¹⁷

The first four lines of this prayer acknowledge that God has in fact fulfilled God’s pledge to be with us in Christ here and now. Lines 5-7 also point to the divine dimension of the second meaning of “pledge” from *sacramentum* that I am seeking to use, the deposit put in escrow while a legal suit was in progress. Obviously, the legal setting of this deposit prevents its serving as a very precise metaphor, since we are still talking about a matter of grace rather than legalistic obligation, but here is what I mean. In the sacramental event, God gives us an assurance of who we are, children whom our heavenly Father loves and whom he will one day draw into perfect, eternal communion with him; we get a taste of that communion *now* as a deposit, a pledge of our future status before God. We return our own deposit/pledge by giving “honor and glory” to the triune God, understanding that

¹⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), §1332.

¹⁷ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 366.

in this life we cannot (and usually do not try hard enough to) offer praise as God deserves from us, but in anticipation of that eschatological communion in the eternal future in which we will adore, enjoy, and glorify God more perfectly, as we were created to do.

I have given some attention to Stanley Grenz's description of the sacraments as human acts of commitment wherein the Holy Spirit also operates, a description approaching the understanding of sacraments as events of a divine-human encounter that take place through symbols, which I have claimed will be important to articulating a Pentecostal perspective on sacraments. Indeed, some Pentecostal scholars have recently made similar claims in promulgating the notion that baptism and the Lord's Supper are means of grace.¹⁸ When it comes to sacramentology in ecclesial groups that have traditionally followed the Radical Reformers, I think that Grenz and these Pentecostals are among those whose ideas afford a good opportunity for dialogue with other, older traditions because they somewhat counteract the Zwinglian tendency to strip down God's role in the following of dominical ordinances. It has become clear, I am sure, that I agree with much of what they have to say, though I favor an understanding of the Eucharist that may be yet one step farther from the extreme strain of Zwinglianism, and thus a step closer to some of the older churches' views, than theirs is. However, I hope to show in the next section that taking that step need not be difficult for Pentecostals, and would in

¹⁸ Most of these, to my knowledge, put footwashing in the same category. See, for example, John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 61* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991]) and Frank D. Macchia, "Is Footwashing the Neglected Sacrament? A Theological Response to John Christopher Thomas," in *Pneuma* 19.2 (Fall 1997), 239-49. Additionally, Kenneth J. Archer has explicitly called Spirit-baptism "a sacramental ordinance of Pentecostal churches" ("Nourishment for Our Journey," 88). This perhaps goes further than the claim I have been making, namely, that the Pentecostal understanding of glossolalia as experienced in Spirit-baptism is in many ways analogous to a more traditional understanding of what occurs in the sacraments. To call Spirit-baptism (at least where this is understood to be definitively signified by speaking in tongues, as it widely is in Pentecostal circles) "a sacramental ordinance" alongside baptism and the Eucharist introduces connotations of normativity with which I am not quite comfortable.

fact be beneficial in several respects, not least because it ought to be of some value in efforts at ecumenism. Ecumenical work generally proceeds most smoothly and fruitfully when points of convergence between the dialogue partners are recognized and teased out theologically. With that in mind, I now take up the task of adopting some partners whose ideas about sacraments in general, and the Eucharist in particular, strike me as widely amenable to a Pentecostal theology.

Given that so many Pentecostal groups have their historical roots in the Wesleyan Holiness movement and remain Wesleyan in much of their theology, John Wesley makes a good partner with whom Pentecostals might begin in an ecumenical conversation about the Eucharist. He served as an Anglican minister throughout his life and considered his own theology to be thoroughly consistent with Anglican principles, a fact that should remind Pentecostals of how close their branch is to that of the Anglican Church on the historical family tree of Christian denominations and movements. In the context of discussing Wesley's views on the Lord's Supper, wherein I believe there is much from which Pentecostals can profit, I will examine the specifically Anglican elements of his thought as a way of engaging that tradition, particularly as represented by Thomas Cranmer and Richard Hooker.

II. Beginning the Ecumenical Conversation: John Wesley and the Early Anglicans

With reference to John Wesley's views on the Eucharist, perhaps the first thing to recognize here is that he regards it as a means of grace. He defines means of grace as "outward signs, words or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby He might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or

sanctifying grace.”¹⁹ Wesley numbers baptism, prayer, the reading of Scripture, and preaching among such means, but he holds the Eucharist to be the foremost, “the grand channel” of grace:

Is not the eating of that bread, and the drinking of that cup, the outward, visible means whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken, and the blood of Christ once shed for us?²⁰

He eschews an *ex opere operato* understanding of sacramental efficacy, stressing that the rites accomplish nothing for the participant who lacks faith. Of course, this faith is not what causes (*ex opere operantis*) the efficacy, the dispensing of grace, any more than the mere performance of the rite is—as grace, that comes strictly and directly from God. Yet, the communicant believes “that whatever God hath promised, he is faithful also to perform,”²¹ and thus that grace will surely be given. In light of this, John R. Parris judges that “it is trust in God that is at the heart of Wesley’s positive evaluation of the Lord’s Supper.”²²

How, then, is grace imparted through the Eucharist? What role do the elements of bread and wine play, and what does it mean to call them the body and blood of Christ? Wesley consistently denies the doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation. By rejecting these, Wesley makes it clear that the gift and reception of grace through the Eucharist do not depend on the presence of the whole Christ in the elements. In fact, he disavows that Christ’s human nature is present in the sacrament at all because, he explains, “we cannot allow Christ’s human nature to be present in it, without allowing

¹⁹ John Wesley, “The Means of Grace,” *Standard Sermons of John Wesley*, ed. Edward H. Sugden, 2 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1921), I: 242.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 253.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 254.

²² John R. Parris, *John Wesley’s Doctrine of the Sacraments* (London: Epworth Press, 1963), 67.

either con- or transubstantiation,”²³ ideas that Wesley cannot accept because they ascribe a kind of ubiquity to Christ’s human nature, whereas he follows the school of thought common to Calvin, Hooker, and Peter Martyr Vermigli that Christ’s human nature is physically located only in heaven.²⁴ “But,” Wesley is quick to add, “that His divinity is so united to us then, as He never is but to worthy receivers, I firmly believe, though the manner of that union is utterly a mystery to me.”²⁵ Wesley does affirm that Christ is *personally* present at the Supper in his *divine* nature. One can find expressions of this conviction in such lines from the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*²⁶ as these:

And lo! the Lamb, the Crucified,
The sinner’s Friend, is come!
His presence makes the feast;²⁷

and

If chiefly here Thou mayest be found,
If now, even now, we find Thee here,
O let their joys like ours abound,
Invite them to the royal cheer,
Feed with imperishable food,
And fill their raptured souls with God.²⁸

Thus, at the Eucharist Christ himself comes to the faithful and applies to them the graces that he made available through his life and work on earth.

²³ Wesley, *The Letters of John Wesley*, Standard Edn., ed. John Telford, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), I: 118.

²⁴ See Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 3rd edn., ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols. (London: John Mason, 1829-31), X: 121.

²⁵ Wesley, *Letters*, I: 118.

²⁶ The *Hymns* were jointly published by John and Charles Wesley, and as Parris recognizes, it is difficult to determine (a) the extent to which a given hymn reflects the thought of both brothers, and (b) “how much weight to place on these hymns as a source of doctrine” (p. 70-71, n. 25). Still, I agree with him that it seems acceptable to use them as illustrations of positions John Wesley espouses in his doctrinal works, as I try to do here.

²⁷ “Hymn 81” in J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*, 2nd American edn., ed. Timothy J. Crouch, O.S.L. (Cleveland, OH: Order of Saint Luke Publications, 1990), p. 180.

²⁸ “Hymn 91” in *ibid.*, p. 182.

On this point, it is instructive to take note of a passage of a letter from Susanna Wesley to her son, to which Wesley replied that he substantially agreed with her opinion

that the divine nature of Christ is then eminently present to impart, by the operation of His Holy Spirit, the benefits of His death to worthy receivers. Surely the Divine presence of our Lord, thus applying the virtue and merits of the great Atonement to each true believer, makes the consecrated bread more than a sign of Christ's body; since, by His doing so, we receive not only the sign but with it the thing signified—all the benefits of His Incarnation and Passion. . . .²⁹

To my mind, these remarks are as theologically rich as anything Wesley himself writes on the subject, and the sophisticated ideas they convey are central to his view, as will become clear in the discussion below. Now, Wesley suggests that Christ's presence and activity are effected through or in the Holy Spirit, as we see in a prayer of epiclesis from the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*:

Come, Holy Ghost, thine influence shed,
And realize the sign;
Thy life infuse into the bread,
Thy power into the wine.

Effectual let the tokens prove,
And made, by heavenly art,
Fit channels to convey thy love
To every faithful heart.³⁰

This epiclesis indicates not only the Holy Spirit's role in transmitting the divine gifts of the Eucharist to communicants, but also two other elements of Wesley's understanding of how those graces are conferred, both of which he inherited from the Anglican tradition. The ideas go under the names "virtualism" and "instrumentalism," and they are tied together in the tradition by a third, "receptionism."

²⁹ Quoted in Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, 3 vols. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1878), I: 82.

³⁰ "Hymn 72" in Rattenbury, p. 177.

Virtualism lies behind the prayer for divine “life” and “power” to imbue the elements. The doctrine “denie[s] that any change in the elements [takes] place, but maintains that the faithful [receive] the power or the virtue of the body and blood of Christ.”³¹ In the words of the Non-Juror Robert Nelson, whose views seem to have influenced Wesley, what the faithful receive is not “the gross. . . substance, but. . . the spiritual energy and virtue of his holy flesh and blood, communicated to the blessed Elements by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost descending upon them.”³² On virtualism, references to the power or virtue or spiritual energy of Christ’s body and blood essentially function as *names for the graces* won for us by the breaking of his body and the shedding of his blood. These graces are applied to us by the living Christ himself and are called his body and blood because they owe their subsistence to his physical body and what was done in it. Therefore, virtualism does *not* involve a merely metaphorical understanding of the consecrated Eucharistic elements as Christ’s body and blood. Here, referring to the graces as body and blood is metonymous rather than metaphorical speech. Metaphor and metonymy both express non-literalistic meanings, but in different ways, and the fact that virtualism employs the latter rather than the former is significant. Metaphor involves simply *conceiving of one thing in terms of another*, where an analogical *transferral of meaning* takes place from *x*, which belongs to one context or domain of usage, to *y*, which belongs to a separate domain of usage; metonymy involves *referring to one thing through another*, where there is an association between *x* and *y* that

³¹ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 409.

³² Robert Nelson, *A Companion for the Fasts and Festivals of the Church of England with Collects and Prayers for each Solemnity*, 23rd ed. (London: F, C, & J Rivington, 1773), 511. Parris notes that “Wesley’s fondness for the epiclesis dates from his contact with those Non-Jurors who insisted on the primitive character of this ‘usage,’ as they termed it, as an essential part of the eucharistic liturgy” (87).

allows one to stand for the other because they both belong to the *same* domain of usage.³³

In the case at hand, the graces that are conferred on the Eucharistic elements belong to the same domain as Christ's actual body and blood, which means that to call the graces "body and blood" is not a mere imaginative projection—the words "body and blood" are not transferred to the graces from objects to which they have no inherent relation, as would be the case if the words were being used metaphorically. Referring to the graces as Christ's body and blood is instead an instance of metonymy because those graces are *internally associated* with Christ's physical body and what was done in it for our salvation.

Virtualism, which is probably the most fitting view to ascribe to Calvin, too, is amply attested in Anglican theology. It was especially important for Cranmer, who explicitly identifies the Real Presence as "Christ and his holy Spirit be[ing] truly and indeed present by their mighty and sanctifying power, virtue, and grace in all them that worthily receive."³⁴ Among Anglicans after Cranmer, one sees the same thought at work in Hooker's Eucharistic theology,³⁵ as well as in that of John Johnston and Thomas Brett, two clergymen who profoundly influenced the Anglican Communion Service of 1718

³³ See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (London: Chicago University Press, 1980), esp. 36-37, and Edward P.J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), esp. 397-98, 410.

³⁴ Thomas Cranmer, "An Answer Unto a Crafty and Sophistical Cavillation Devised by Stephen Gardiner Against the True and Godly Doctrine of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ," *Writings and Disputations of Thomas Cranmer*, ed. John Edmund Cox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1884), 3; see also "Disputations at Oxford" in the same volume.

³⁵ See Richard Hooker, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (hereafter *LEP*), in *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker*, ed. R.W. Church and F. Paget, 7th edn., Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon, 1888).

and who stressed the “power” and “effect” of the body and blood of Christ conveyed to the elements by the Holy Spirit.³⁶

Cranmer’s phrase “in all them that worthily receive,” and Wesley’s assertion that Christ in his divinity “is so united to us then, as He never is but to worthy receivers,” illustrate the role played by “receptionism” in their understanding of what occurs at the Communion table: receptionism holds that “while the bread and wine continue to exist unchanged after consecration, the faithful communicant receives together with them the true body and blood of Christ,”³⁷ which is to say that the Real Presence of Christ, in Hooker’s words, “is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament”³⁸ as he or she eats and drinks in faith. Now, this statement of Hooker’s should not be taken completely at face value because, like Cranmer before and Wesley after him, he does want to allow for an objective, *personal* presence of Christ at the Eucharist. Cranmer, for example, believes that at baptism “Christ himself cometh down upon the child and appareleth him with his own self” and at the Eucharist personally feeds the communicant with spiritual sustenance. He, Hooker, and Wesley insist that the faithful not only receive the graces won by Christ, which virtualism emphasizes, but they are also united to Christ’s person through their sacramental “participation in his body and blood.”³⁹ A belief in Christ’s *objectively real presence* enables Wesley to posit that the Lord’s Supper can be a *faith-granting* ordinance. Christ

³⁶ Nicolas Joseph Reina, *The Development of the Teaching on Real Presence and on the Notion of the “Sacrament of the Sacrifice” in the Eucharistic Theology of the Anglican, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic Churches and its Implication for an Ecumenical Eucharistic Service among these Three Churches*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 1983, pp. 57-61.

³⁷ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 409.

³⁸ Hooker, *LEP* Book V.lxvii (p. 352).

³⁹ Reina points out that “the key tenet in Cranmer’s system was the indwelling of Christ in us and our indwelling in Christ through the reception of Holy Communion” (p. 22). For the same in Hooker’s thought, see *LEP* V.lxvii (esp. pp. 349, 352).

is not only present subjectively—i.e., encountering those who seek to have their faith bolstered by “meeting him” at the altar. He is *truly there* in the Spirit, and thus is able to (and sometimes does) cause a person of meager faith to grasp the fact that he is present and at work, thereby granting the person an increase of faith. But, for Wesley, Christ’s presence is not restricted to the elements, and it does not profit those who totally lack faith and thus are in no way disposed to receive him.

Wesley seeks to retain a link between Christ’s presence and the elements without admitting a substantial change in them—hence he joins Calvin, Cranmer, and Hooker in subscribing to the theory of instrumentalism, which takes the bread and wine to be “instruments and organs by which the Lord gives us His Body and Blood,”⁴⁰ though they themselves are not that body and blood. Here it is the symbolic act of Christ’s feeding and of our eating and drinking that makes the sacrament. Or, to focus on the elements themselves, they are symbols (in the Tillichian sense) of grace because they are made to participate in the spiritual reality of the gift of grace to us, which we accept (again, symbolically) precisely in the act of eating that bread and drinking that wine, since we thereby physically enact our spiritual acceptance of grace. This idea is suggested by the lines of the epiclesis quoted above that contain a prayer for the elements to be made “effectual tokens” and “fit channels” to convey grace to those who receive them. Parris identifies receptionism and instrumentalism as links between Hooker and Calvin, and both notions, alongside virtualism, link the two thinkers both to Cranmer and to Wesley.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1956), 218; this is Niesel’s description of how Calvin understands the presence.

⁴¹ Parris, 7-10. Hooker insists that the consecrated bread and wine “contain in *themselves* no final force or efficacy, they are not physical but *moral* instruments of salvation” (*LEP* V.lvii [p. 257]); they are “causes

If Pentecostals could adopt this general understanding of Christ's presence and action in the Eucharistic event, it would strengthen their ties to the Wesleyan theology from which Pentecostalism first developed, and in so doing it would also establish a point of theological convergence with the Anglican tradition that might open the way for further dialogue between Pentecostals and Anglicans, despite the menacing gulf that appears in many ways to separate Christians from "Low-" and "High-Church" traditions such as these. In fact, it would also link a Pentecostal view of the Eucharist to the Reformed view at the point of virtualism, to which Calvin adhered, as has been noted. I submit that Pentecostal theology can appropriate the view of the Eucharist described above wholesale if a few easy moves are made beforehand. Indeed, I recommend that it do so, for two key reasons: (1) I believe that here we have a biblically and theologically sound description of what occurs at the Eucharist as a sacramental event, and (2) if the Eucharist is the most important symbol of Christian unity, then it is crucial to make every effort to reach as much agreement as possible about the meaning of this symbol.

To my mind, the following steps would do much to pave the way for a Pentecostal appropriation of the Wesleyan-Anglican view. First, Pentecostal theology must openly affirm a dynamic conception of grace and acknowledge that God desires to, and in fact does, bestow it upon us whenever we encounter God in worship—indeed, this occurs *sacramentally* because worship and the bestowal of grace are accomplished by the use of external signs. The charismatic nature of much of what characterizes Pentecostal worship—the uplifting of hands in praise and self-surrender to God, speaking in tongues, dancing, laughter, etc.—provides rich material for a hermeneutic of worship, and of the

instrumental upon the receipt whereof the participation of his body and blood ensueth" (*LEP* V.lxxvii [p. 352]). These two statements rather sum up the overall picture that virtualism, instrumentalism, and receptionism combine to give of the role the bread and wine play in this sacrament.

giving of divine blessings, through signs. By a “dynamic” conception of grace, I mean one that does not restrict the definition of grace to the forgiveness of sins. Consider Bernhard Häring’s assertion that

Grace (*charis*) means the graciousness of God in turning his countenance to man. It is a sign of God’s nearness, a word of love which arouses in us the answer of love. Grace means gentleness, the attractive energy of true love; it means alliance, a reciprocal relationship which, however, remains wholly the gift of God. On man’s part it is received with the awareness that it is an undeserved gift and this awareness energises us, teaches us, disciplines us, gives us orientation to our whole life.⁴²

Pentecostals certainly hold to this idea of how we relate to God, and there is nothing strange about giving it the name “grace.”

Second, Pentecostal theology should recognize the special sacramental character of certain rites in which Christians have always believed God to operate each and every time they are faithfully performed by the gathered community, baptism and the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper being the foremost among these. Paul is abundantly clear that these practices unite believers to Christ and to one another in unique ways, and we must never diminish their proper significance out of zeal to correct fellow Christians who may have assigned them too exclusive a significance, or assigned too much importance to the role of ministers in carrying them out, or erred in some other way regarding them.

Pentecostals who neglect the real value of these practices—a value vividly and consistently assigned to them in the New Testament—ought to acknowledge that by doing so, they cheat themselves every bit as much as some Christians cheat themselves by denying that the *charismata* are available to the Church today.

Third, the Real Presence of Christ, at the Eucharist, for example, should be understood by Pentecostals—if in no other way than this—in terms of Christ’s personal

⁴² Bernhard Häring, *The Sacraments in a Secular Age* (Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1976), 98.

involvement in bestowing grace on the faithful whenever we encounter God in the special moment of worship. The paradigmatic biblical episode to uphold here is the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples gathered at Pentecost. Peter testified to those who witnessed that event that Jesus himself, “Being. . . exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, . . . has poured out this that you both see and hear “ (Acts 2.33). When we speak of the Holy Spirit’s work among us in any capacity, it is surely right to attribute it to the personal agency of the risen and glorified Christ into whose hands the Father has placed all things (e.g., Matt. 11.27). Seen in this light, the Real Presence of Christ, he who works in and among us in all things, is not a strange doctrine to posit in a Eucharistic context; rather, it is a doctrine that should be posited in *every* Christian context. As for a special kind of Presence becoming realized during the Eucharist, I must again point to the biblical meaning of *anamnesis*: if Jesus instructed us to observe the Lord’s Supper and referred to it as an *anamnesis* of him in a way that nothing else is so called in the New Testament, who are we to dispute with him about its unique character?

I have said that these steps would pave the way toward embracing the Wesleyan-Anglican view of the Eucharist discussed above. I see no reason why Pentecostals in general should have difficulty taking any or all of them, and Kenneth J. Archer has recently written about the sacraments in broad scope from a Pentecostal perspective in a way that would seemingly provide support for all three. He describes the Pentecostal “way of life” in narrative terms as a journey along which people continually receive grace in the form of spiritual nourishment and progressive conformity to the image of Christ, especially by means of periodic encounters with his Spirit during worship that Archer

calls “significant crisis experiences.”⁴³ Archer accurately characterizes the Pentecostal conception of the *via salutis* as “a dynamic pneumatic soteriology.”⁴⁴ it recognizes that the Holy Spirit is present in and with believers always, but it particularly celebrates those episodic eruptions of the Spirit’s immanent presence in the worshipping community that have a markedly redemptive character. Archer argues that these experiences “aid us in our salvific journey because they give the Holy Spirit necessary opportunities to keep the community on the right path,” and that Pentecostals ought to see the “sacramental ordinances”—those “acts of commitment” that are directly connected to Christ and his promises in Scripture—as contexts in which one may expect such experiences to occur.⁴⁵

Archer does not say much directly about Christ’s presence at sacramental events, but it seems implicit in his schema that Christ has some personal involvement in all of them. One of the major tasks of his essay is to connect a sacramental sign with each of the five points of the “full gospel,” and he primarily speaks about the five points by their connection with the person of Jesus: Jesus is our Savior, Sanctifier, Spirit-Baptizer, Healer, and Coming King, and his work among us in each of these capacities is dynamically symbolized and enacted through sacramental ordinances, each ordinance being bound up with a particular sign. The sacramental signs correlated with Christ’s operational offices in the “five-fold gospel” are: (1) Savior—baptism, (2) Sanctifier—footwashing, (3) Spirit Baptizer—glossolalia, (4) Healer—anointing with oil, (5) Coming King—Lord’s Supper.⁴⁶ Therefore, the sacraments are acts of commitment performed in

⁴³ Archer, 85.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, especially 82-83 and 90-95. Archer points out that in carrying out this task, he is following and further developing the recommendation made by John Christopher Thomas in his presidential address to the Society for Pentecostal Studies, “Pentecostal Theology in the Twenty-First Century,” *Pneuma* 20.1 (Spring 1998), 3-19: 18-19.

obedience to Christ, but the totality of what occurs therein seems by no means less dependent on his involvement than on ours. The sacraments effectively mediate Christ's presence and grace "when inspired by the Holy Spirit,"⁴⁷ and Archer never indicates that he thinks that the faithful should not *expect* this inspiration to be provided.

I regard most of what Archer has done here as a positive move, both for the sake of a healthy Pentecostal spirituality and for the prospect of Pentecostals widely adopting a sacramentology that might aid ecumenical work with non-Zwinglian traditions.⁴⁸

However, Archer fails to address with adequate thoroughness the key question of how one should understand the relationship between Christ's presence and the sacramental signs—for example, how is that presence related to the bread and wine in the Eucharist? This particular question has tremendous importance in ecumenical discussion about the Lord's Supper. I have attempted to offer at least a preliminary answer that I believe Pentecostals can accept, arguing on behalf of a particular notion of Christ's Eucharistic presence that strikes me as (1) biblically and theologically sound, and (2) ecumenically valuable for its retention of the traditional belief that the risen Lord is really present among the faithful at the Supper and that the benefit of that presence is communicated to them through the Eucharistic elements.

⁴⁷ Archer, "Nourishment for Our Journey," 86.

⁴⁸ I only say that *most* of what Archer has done here is positive partly because, as I stated above (n. 18), I am not comfortable with calling Spirit-baptism a sacramental ordinance, as most members of other traditions surely would not be. Also, I have serious reservations about the appropriateness of the last two of the full gospel's tenets, at least as they are usually interpreted: the idea that miraculous physical healing has the same availability to all people as justification by faith seems patently false—the fact that Christians who pray for such miracles are denied them every day has the stubbornness of the obvious—and I would be hesitant to include in what purports to be a definitive *credo* anything that so forcefully appears untrue; similarly, even though I take it to be a normative Christian belief that Christ "will return in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end," I do not think that Pentecostals ought to identify themselves by an expectation that this event is *imminent*. That is to say, I am by no means sure, as Archer and Thomas seem to be, that the full gospel (again, at least according to the traditional and still common interpretation of its five tenets) is such a good paradigm for defining or shaping Pentecostal identity, and therefore I do not share their enthusiasm to build an understanding of the sacraments around it.

III. Extending the Conversation: Roman Catholic Eucharistic Doctrine

Of course, not every interpretation of the Real Presence has an equal likelihood of gaining acceptance in Pentecostal circles. The Council of Trent dogmatically bound the doctrine of the Real Presence to the doctrine of transubstantiation, the traditional understanding of which is, at least at present, completely unacceptable to most Pentecostals. According to Trent, “the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist truly, really and substantially contains the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and thus the whole Christ,” and the Council called for the excommunication of anyone who “should say that they (body, blood, etc.) are only (present) as in a sign or figure or (only) by (their) efficacy” or who “should deny [the] wonderful and unique changing of the whole substance of bread. . . and of the whole substance of wine” into the whole Christ, “which change the Catholic Church very suitably calls transubstantiation.”⁴⁹ Here we see the belief that Christ is corporeally present in the consecrated elements, a belief rejected by many of the Anglicans and by Calvin and Wesley, as it is by Pentecostals, who have inherited a disapproval of it from their predecessors in Protestantism. Directly related to this point of Catholic teaching is another that presents a stumbling-block in ecumenical dialogue, and that is the *sacrificial character* of the Presence of Christ as the substantial reality of the Eucharist. I will address both of these aspects of Catholic doctrine, and I begin by examining a portion of Pope John Paul II’s 2003 encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia Vivit* (“The Church Lives from the Eucharist”) that offers some helpful discussion of the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass in particular.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Schillebeeckx, 37-38.

Throughout the letter, John Paul explores the ways in which past, present, and future are drawn together in this sacrament. That is adumbrated beautifully in his statement near the beginning that

[the Church's] foundation and wellspring is the whole *Triduum paschale*,⁵⁰ but this is as it were gathered up, foreshadowed and “concentrated” forever in the gift of the Eucharist. In this gift Jesus Christ entrusted to his Church the perennial making present of the paschal mystery. With it he brought about a mysterious “oneness in time” between that *Triduum* and the passage of the centuries.⁵¹

The Eucharist *makes the paschal event present* in a rich sense: it brings its meaning and effect to us *here*, so that the reality is present in our midst, and *now*, out of the historical past from which that meaning and effect have been extended and communicated to us.

This transhistorical extension is what enables the priest to act *in persona Christi*, “putting his voice at the disposal of the One who spoke [the words of institution and consecration] in the Upper Room” (5) as he acts “in specific sacramental identification with the eternal High Priest who is the author and principal subject of this sacrifice of his, a sacrifice in which, in truth, nobody can take his place” (29). The extension is a tying of the present action of celebrating a particular Eucharistic meal, shared by specific persons in a specific place, into the sacrificial act of Christ on Calvary, just as the Last Supper was tied into that sacrifice; or, perhaps, it would be better to say, the sacrifice of Calvary is diffused into both the Last Supper and our “re-presentation” of it. However it should be phrased, it is Christ who acts in all of this, effecting the transhistorical extension by which “the sacrifice of the Cross [is] perpetuated down the ages” (11). In the words John

⁵⁰ The term *Triduum paschale* refers to the three days—Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday—in which Christ instituted the Eucharist and underwent his passion and death, leading up to the resurrection of Easter Sunday.

⁵¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia Vivit* (2003), Internet resource available from <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_17042003_ecclesia-de-eucharistia_en.html>, accessed 4 September 2005; par. 5. Subsequent references to this work will be given in parentheses, cited by paragraph numbers.

Paul quotes from the Catechism, “all that Christ is—all that he did and suffered for all men—participates in the divine eternity and so transcends all time.”⁵²

The re-presentation described in paragraphs 11-13 includes three things to note: (1) *presence*, i.e., the presence of the person of Christ with the faithful and of his work to and in them; (2) *the present*, which does not cut us off in any degree from Christ and his work, despite the fact that our time is separated from that of Christ’s life on earth and from the “future-eternity” we do not fully share with the ascended Christ, because God through him in the Holy Spirit brings to us in the present the gifts of times otherwise inaccessible to us; and (3) *presenting* as an action. By this point, what I mean by the first two should be fairly clear. John Paul states that “through a real contact” between the self-sacrificing Lord and the Church in the Eucharistic celebration, “The Eucharist. . . applies to men and women today the reconciliation won once for all by Christ for mankind in every age” (12). Christ’s person and work, historical realities that “participate in the divine eternity,” are made present to us here and now in the Eucharist. The third element I have mentioned in the Eucharistic “re-presentation” is the *presenting* of sacrifice that this celebration involves, both Christ’s sacrifice and the Church’s.

It must be understood, the Holy Father explains, that

The Mass makes present the sacrifice of the Cross; it does not add to that sacrifice nor does it multiply it. What is repeated is its *memorial* celebration, its “commemorative representation” (*memorialis demonstratio*), which makes Christ’s one, definitive redemptive sacrifice always present in time. The sacrificial nature of the Eucharistic mystery cannot therefore be understood as something separate, independent of the Cross or only indirectly referring to the sacrifice of Calvary. (12)

The Eucharist is able to take the form of a sacrifice because Christ, who is the principal agent effecting what takes place there, stands before the Father everlastingly as the Lamb

⁵² See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1085.

slain on our behalf and as “a gift to the Father,” making intercession for us. In that intercessory role, he communicates to us a pledge and foretaste (see 18) of the Father’s “own paternal gift, . . . the grant of new immortal life”(13). He also “ma[kes] his own the spiritual sacrifice of the Church, which is called to offer herself in union with the sacrifice of Christ.”

Several aspects of this exposition merit attention. First, it explains how the Last Supper (i.e., the first Eucharist) is mystically connected to the crucifixion as well as to all repeated celebrations of the Lord’s Supper—a connection that, by implication, links those subsequent celebrations to the crucifixion—so that both the original Eucharistic event and every reenactment or “commemorative representation” of it participate in the one sacrifice of the cross. The explanation depends upon the two-pronged concept that what occurred in the *Triduum paschale* (a) is *unified*⁵³ and (b) *transcends time* to participate in the divine eternity. Now, many if not most non-Catholics are unlikely to accept this idea, which John Paul simply asserts without arguing for it (as is fitting, since his intended audience is Catholic and presumably already believes that the Church’s teaching about the sacrifice of the Mass is correct). However, the idea is at least plausible, and so even if a non-Catholic does not subscribe to the premises on which the claim of a mystical connection between the Last Supper, the crucifixion, and repeated Eucharistic celebrations rests, he or she should not make the all-too-common mistake of alleging that there is no basis for the Catholic doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass. Likewise, the Pope’s helpfully clarifying comments ought to put to rest the equally common and misinformed objection that this doctrine posits that Jesus “has to die again” every time a

⁵³ That is the thrust of John Paul’s claim that the *Triduum* is “gathered up, foreshadowed and ‘concentrated’ forever in the gift of the Eucharist.”

Mass is held. They also provide a useful reminder that according to the Catholic view, Christ himself, by his own action, functions as “High Priest” at every Eucharist, even as he upholds the mystical connection between what he did in the *Triduum* and the Church’s ever-repeated celebrations of it—the Church and her priests do not perform anything in the Mass independently of Christ and his own direct, personal operation.⁵⁴

Of course, not all of the difficulties that many Protestants, including Pentecostals, find with the Catholic position on the Eucharist as sacrifice are due to misconceptions. However, it is worth noting that John and Charles Wesley give every appearance of understanding the Lord’s Supper in terms of communicants making contact with the ever-present reality of Christ’s sacrifice and presenting themselves to God as “a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12.1) in reciprocation. Their hymns contain ample attestation to this belief,⁵⁵ as can be seen, for example, in these verses of Hymn 137 in J. Ernest Rattenbury’s collection *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*:

Ye royal priests of Jesus rise,
And join the daily sacrifice;
Join all believers in His name
To offer up the spotless Lamb.

On Him, who all our burdens bears,
We cast our praises and our prayers,
While to Thee alone we live,
Implunged in His atoning blood.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ In the language of Trent, “the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different” (quoted in *Catechism* 1367).

⁵⁵ As I have already acknowledged, the question of the extent to which the brothers’ hymns are a reliable index to their theology is in order, but that John held this belief about the Eucharist is clear enough from other evidence: it is an important part of Daniel Brevint’s *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, a précis of which John wrote and appended to this collection to serve as its Introduction—according to Egil Grislis (“The Wesleyan Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper,” *Duke Divinity School Bulletin* 28 [1963], 99-110: 103), this abridgement/rewriting of Brevint’s work bears enough of John’s mark that it should be regarded as a statement of his own position.

⁵⁶ “Hymn 137” in Rattenbury, p. 195.

The first two stanzas of Hymn 139 in this volume focus on the believers' worshipful self-sacrifice:

God of all-redeeming grace,
By Thy pardoning love compell'd
Up to Thee our souls we raise,
Up to Thee our bodies yield.

Thou our sacrifice receive,
Acceptable through Thy Son,
Ourselves we offer up to God,
While we die to Thee alone.⁵⁷

On the other hand, the first two stanzas of Hymn 5 focus on the Savior's sacrifice:

O Thou eternal Victim, slain
A sacrifice for guilty man,
By the eternal Spirit made
An offering in the sinner's stead;
Our everlasting Priest art Thou
And plead'st Thy death for sinners now.

Thy offering still continues new;
Thy vesture keeps its bloody hue;
Thou stand'st the ever-slaughter'd Lamb;
Thy priesthood still remains the same;
Thy years, O God, can never fail;
Thy goodness is unchangeable.⁵⁸

Here we see again the idea that Christ stands before the Father everlastingly as the Lamb slain on our behalf, which, as discussed above, also lies behind the Catholic doctrine of Eucharistic sacrifice. In the Catholic as well as the Wesleyan version, participants in the Eucharist both receive the benefits of Christ's sacrifice and reciprocate that self-surrender by offering themselves to God as servants. In the words of Daniel Brevint, whose treatise on the Eucharist John Wesley condensed and used to introduce the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, "When we offer ourselves, we offer, by the same act, all that we have, all that we

⁵⁷ "Hymn 139," *ibid.*

⁵⁸ "Hymn 5," *ibid.*, p. 162.

can do, and therein engage for all, that it shall be dedicated to the glory of God, and that it shall be surrendered into God's hands, and employed for such uses as God shall appoint."⁵⁹ Similarly, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that in the Eucharist, "the lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering. . . ."⁶⁰ The convergence between these two traditions' perspectives on the Eucharist's sacrificial dimension—even if it is not complete—might be instructive for Pentecostals who would be willing to explore ways to affirm that idea in concert with Christians from whom their churches have separated.

This leaves for me to address the fact that in Catholic thought the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is inextricably tied to transubstantiation. Does this doctrine present an insuperable barrier to dialogue between Pentecostals and Catholics on the Real Presence? I think that it depends on just how one interprets the essential meaning of transubstantiation. In his book *The Eucharist*, Schillebeeckx describes a trend in post-World War II Catholic theology that recasts talk about transubstantiation into the grammar of "transfunctionalization," "transfinalization," or "transignification," wherein the substantial change that occurs in the consecrated elements applies not to their underlying physical reality, but to their function, end, and meaning. This is still a genuinely *substantial* change because the meaning that a thing holds for those who conceive of it is essential to the concept of that thing: "In their *being*, things have a meaning for someone (God, man), an original meaning which belongs to the reality itself, since, without this 'having meaning for,' something is not what it *is*."⁶¹ It would be easy to suppose that since the matter at hand has to do with "meaning," it is a subjective

⁵⁹ Rattenbury, 161.

⁶⁰ *Catechism*, §1368.

⁶¹ Schillebeeckx, 112-13.

matter—what something means for me may not be what it means for someone else, and neither of us is objectively correct or incorrect about its “real” meaning, because ultimately there is no such thing. It would be easy, but mistaken. Schillebeeckx explains that within a given sphere, a thing may be essentially changed, so that a new thing comes to be from it, when a new meaning is authoritatively conferred upon it. For example, when a government designates a colored cloth as a national flag, that cloth “is really and objectively no longer the same.” If a person were to come to that country and say, “That is not the national flag; it is just a cloth,” then that person would be really and objectively wrong. In the same way, in the Eucharist, when the Lord declares that the bread is his body, he authoritatively confers a new meaning upon the bread that truly remakes its basic reality.⁶² The meaning is that Christ is present to, in, and among the believers gathered to perform the Eucharistic *anamnesis* of him, giving them the gift of himself. This is a real presence, but it is only real (or unreal) *for persons* at the level of interpersonal encounter, because that is the purpose for which it becomes real at all: the only way that it could be unreal for a person would be for him or her to be uninterested in the personal encounter with Christ that the sacrament occurs precisely to provide, and thus for the person to take himself or herself completely out of the sphere in which this reality actually takes place.

Schillebeeckx explains that

On the basis of these general principles, it is therefore possible to say that eucharistic transubstantiation cannot be viewed in isolation from the sphere of

⁶² Ibid., 113. J. de Baciocchi, the first Catholic theologian to describe this understanding of transubstantiation in detail, maintains that “Christ’s word, without altering these gifts as far as their empirical purport is concerned, entirely changes their *social and religious destination*,” “because the *new function* is *really* exercised, Christ making himself present and truly giving himself, the change of bread cannot be reduced to a subjective fact in the believer” (“Présence eucharistique et transubstantiation,” *Irenikon* 32 [1959], 139-61: 150; quoted in Schillebeeckx, 109).

giving meaning in sacramental signs. Because of the paschal context (“Take and eat, this is my body”), it must moreover be situated within the sphere of reality of Christ’s *gift of himself* that is meaningful and capable of being experienced, a remembrance, both doing and speaking, of Christ’s death and resurrection. The level of physics and the philosophy of nature can therefore be disregarded. Transubstantiation is inseparably a “human” *establishment of meaning*.⁶³

To my mind, these statements help to set aside some of the difficulties posed by the need to engage Catholic teaching about transubstantiation; I cannot see a reason why Protestants, including Pentecostals, could not accept this line of thought. Here transubstantiation is situated within the doctrine of the Real Presence and is given a very serious treatment without raising the contentious issue of *exactly what* it means for Christ to be present—indeed, there is not even a strong push for the idea that Christ’s physical body is rendered literally, spatially present in the elements. Of course, I have been quite selective in quoting Schillebeeckx, who goes on to say that while transubstantiation and transignification are indissolubly linked, they are not identical,⁶⁴ nor does he claim that the former is reducible to the latter—an idea that Pope Paul VI denounced during the Second Vatican Council.⁶⁵ But I have been selective on purpose, because I want to bring out a description of transubstantiation that might be acceptable to open-minded Pentecostals, using statements from a Roman Catholic that can be interpreted to this end, even if that interpretation does not fully represent the view of the one who made the statements. Not all Catholics approve of explicating transubstantiation in terms of

⁶³ Ibid., 133-34.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 149-51.

⁶⁵ Even if he leaned in the direction of this claim, as some interpreters think he did, Schillebeeckx could not have explicitly stated it without condemnation after Pope Paul VI had issued the 1965 encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (“The Mystery of Faith”). In that document the pope denies outrightly that transfinalization and/or transignification exhausts the normative faith-content of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and he insists that the formulas promulgated by the Council of Trent are indispensable to expressing what occurs in the Eucharist (Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei* [1965], Internet resource available from <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_03091965_mysterium_en.html>, accessed 14 October 2005; see especially pars. 11 and 24).

transignification (to put it lightly), but I doubt that many would deny the tie between them. Therefore, if Pentecostals could accept the latter idea, it would create a platform of common belief with Catholics on which to hold discussions of the notion of a change in the Eucharistic elements. One must start an ecumenical conversation somewhere, and I believe that this is as good a place as any.

IV. Further Considerations

Thus far I have focused on how Pentecostalism might be able to appropriate ideas from theologians of other traditions, but I believe that Pentecostalism may have something constructive to “bring to the table,” as well. I began this paper by noting the strong emphasis on eschatology that has characterized Pentecostal thinking throughout the movement’s history, an emphasis that is visible in the fact that the Pentecostal “full gospel” includes the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as one of its five theological motifs. Assigning such importance to this doctrine, then, is for many Pentecostals central to what distinguishes them as a group. As I also pointed out above, Ken Archer has suggested connecting each of those motifs with a “sacramental ordinance,” and he pairs the expectation of the *parousia* with the Lord’s Supper. Despite the reservations that I have expressed concerning certain aspects of his approach,⁶⁶ I find promise in that pairing because it links the Supper with what is for Pentecostals in general a primary doctrine, and thus the pairing highlights the importance of the Supper. Given such an approach, it makes sense that Pentecostals might develop a particular appreciation for the eschatological significance of the Eucharist. However, it should also be pointed out that virtually wherever one looks in the Christian tradition of theological reflection on the Eucharist’s significance—including its expressions in liturgies—one can find ample

⁶⁶ See notes 18 and 48, above.

attestation to a belief that celebrating the Supper has a vital connection with the final coming of God's kingdom, or with our final entrance into and eternal enjoyment of it. Therefore, even as an understanding of the Eucharist takes shape as *distinctly Pentecostal* by virtue of its emphasis on the eschatological dimension of the celebration, it can at the same time take shape as an *ecumenical understanding* if attention is paid to the seemingly ubiquitous tradition of eschatological themes in Eucharistic liturgies and in theological assessments of the meaning of the Supper.

Pentecostals have always believed that the “fresh outpouring” of the Holy Spirit that first caused their worship to be marked by the exercise of certain New Testament-age *charismata* was a sign of the approach of the end-time kingdom. The earliest Pentecostals saw that outpouring as a kind of repetition of what occurred on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and they interpreted it in the same way that the earliest Christians interpreted their experience, viz., as a fulfillment of prophecy. Indeed, even the term “outpouring,” used commonly in Pentecostal circles to describe the phenomenon that started their movement, is borrowed from the passage of scripture (Joel 2.28-32) that, in his sermon to the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2.16-21), Peter quotes and claims to have been fulfilled by what happened to the Christians that day, which is a prophecy about God “pour[ing] out [God's] Spirit on all flesh” and causing people to prophesy “in the last days.”⁶⁷ And just as the Pentecost event did for the early church, so the charismatic experiences of the early Pentecostals sparked a missionary movement fueled in no small part by the urgency of eschatological expectations. Being aware of these similarities,

⁶⁷ It is interesting that Peter actually adds the words “in the last days” to the beginning of the passage he quotes from Joel, although the original passage implies an eschatological/apocalyptic setting, in any case. It is probably true that, more often than not (and perhaps always), interpreting prophecy requires using a measure of hermeneutical creativity.

Pentecostals viewed themselves as taking part in a movement toward the restoration of the church to its early state even as they saw the operation of *charismata* in their midst as an eschatological sign. In that way, they were looking backwards as well as forwards in time, with the charisms (particularly glossolalia) functioning symbolically⁶⁸ to direct their gaze in both directions—a vision that remains important today.

It is regrettable that Pentecostals have not carried the exegetical impetus of their restorationist ideal further in at least one instance: they might have applied it to the text that follows Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, where it is written that the believers devoted themselves to, among other things, “the breaking of [the] bread” (v. 42), which is most likely a reference to the Eucharist. As Luke and Paul use this phrase in their writings, it appears to be more or less a technical term for the sacred common meal wherein the *anamnesis* of Christ takes place.⁶⁹ Perhaps many Pentecostals have not understood the reference to breaking bread in 2.42 as indicating the Eucharist, or perhaps as a whole they have not sought to follow the first Christians’ example by devoting themselves to celebrating the Eucharist as the latter did; however, given this understanding of the reference, I submit that Pentecostals would do well to employ the same hermeneutical standards for the end of Acts 2 as they use for the earlier part of the chapter. That is to say, they would do well to include Eucharistic devotion as part of their restorationist ideal

⁶⁸ Again, I am using “symbol” in the Tillichian sense.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Luke 22.19; 24.30, 35; Acts 2.42, 46; 20.7; 1 Cor. 10.16; 11.23-24. If the usages in Acts are read in light of those in Luke—and they probably ought to be, given that Acts is the sequel to the Gospel—it is easy to see why “breaking bread” likely functions as a technical term in St. Luke’s vocabulary (biblical exegetes differ on whether Acts. 27.35 presents an exception). In 1 Cor. 11.20 Paul explicitly identifies the breaking of bread as “the Lord’s supper,” and given the context of his present argument, there can be no doubt that he is speaking about the Eucharist. See also Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: Epworth, 1971), 170, n. 131 and Joachim Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, 3rd ed. (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 113f. (ET *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966]).

just as they interpret the Holy Spirit's "reinstatement" of the New Testament-age charisms in their worship as part of a restoration of the ways of the early church.

Furthermore, Pentecostals can turn to the New Testament for ideas on the Eucharist's eschatological significance—a significance that is in fact integral to the original meaning of *anamnesis* as it relates to the Supper. This is because, as Joachim Jeremias has persuasively shown, in the New Testament the Eucharistic *anamnesis* is held to be not only a memorial at which Christ is present (in whatever sense), but also a prayer for his return and the consummation of the eschatological kingdom. Geoffrey Wainwright sums up Jeremias's view as follows: "Jesus instituted the celebration of the eucharist not in order to remind the disciples of Him but to remind *God*; but when God remembers, He acts; He is therefore being asked to remember the messiah (i.e. Jesus, who has already begun the work of salvation) by bringing in the kingdom through the *parousia*."⁷⁰ Working from this premise, Jeremias maintains that the proclamation of the Jesus' death of which Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 11.26 "is not therefore intended to call to the remembrance of the community the event of the Passion; rather this proclamation expresses the vicarious death of Jesus as the beginning of the salvation time and prays for the coming of the consummation."⁷¹ In the same vein, he understands Christ's command to repeat the Eucharistic rite to mean: "Keep joining yourselves together as the redeemed community by the table rite, that in this way God may be daily implored to bring about the consummation in the *parousia*."⁷²

Of course, he overstates his case a bit when he claims that the Supper is not intended as a memorial of the Passion, but in any event, there is no antagonism between

⁷⁰ Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, 64-65.

⁷¹ Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 253.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 255.

conceiving of the Supper as a memorial of the Passion and as a prayer for Christ's return; they are entirely compatible—even naturally related—dimensions of a rite with roots in the Passover celebration that already contained similar retrospective and prospective elements.⁷³ Ray Carlton Jones, Jr. synthesizes this very well in a passage worth quoting at length:

In conjunction with the biblical concept of *anamnesis*, the Jewish Passover-massot feast has three functions which must be stressed: (1) Passover is a *confirmation* of the *presence* of God—here and now with his people; (2) Passover is a *proclamation* of the message of salvation (the *past*); and (3) Passover's intercessory *prayer* reminds God of his promise (*future*). In other words, all of the different (temporal) aspects which are tied up with the Hebrew verb *zkr* [“to remember”]⁷⁴ stand forth with clarity in the Jewish Passover Feast. Passover is an *anamnesis*, which (1) points *back* to the mighty deeds of salvation history (this is the *content* of praise and thanksgiving), (2) realizes God's *presence* in the present in that one offers something to God (namely praise and thanksgiving) while *God remembers Israel*, and (3) points *forward* in time on the basis of the divine promises in history. In the same way, the Christian Eucharist points back in time to God's act of salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; at the same time the presence of Jesus is experienced in the congregation as a present reality; and finally, the Christian Eucharist points forward in time to the [second] coming of Jesus.⁷⁵

It is useful not only to recall the Eucharist's connection with the Passover, but also to examine how it fits within the wider biblical network of concepts that are related to each other in what they suggest about the significance of sacred meals. As Geoffrey

⁷³ Hence, it is equally misguided for John T. Pless to contend, on the other hand, that “[w]hile it cannot be denied that the Lord's Supper does have a relationship to eschatology (cf. Matthew 24.29 and Mark 14:25), it must be maintained that the Lord's Supper is not primarily eschatological but rather historical. Eschatological interpretations of the Supper run the risk of cutting the Lord's Supper loose from its historical meanings and transforming it into the object of endless speculation, if not fantasy” (“Implications of Recent Exegetical Studies for the Doctrine of the Lord's Supper,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* [April-July 1984], 203-220: 216).

⁷⁴ Far more is connoted by the Hebrew word than the English translation conveys; see H. Eising, “*zkr*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. I. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, 14 vols. to date (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-), 4: 64-82. The Septuagint uses the Greek word *anamnesis* to translate the Hebrew words for “memorial” or “remembrance,” which derive from *zkr*. See also J. Behm, “*Anamnesis*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1979) 1: 348-49.

⁷⁵ Ray Carlton Jones, Jr., “The Lord's Supper and The Concept of *Anamnesis*,” in *Word & World* 6.4 (1986), 434-45: 438.

Wainwright demonstrates in his book *Eucharist and Eschatology*, images of eating and drinking are used throughout the Bible in connection with the themes of covenant, the giving and receiving of divine blessings, and the eschatological kingdom. After an extensive survey of relevant texts, he concludes,

Within the biblical tradition the eucharist is ranged, and in a pre-eminent place, among those *signs* which announce before men, and inaugurate among them, that reality which is included in the eternal purpose of God and which is to come true for men: it is the sign of the kingdom of God in so far as the kingdom is conceived (and it is perhaps the dominant conception) as a feast for the citizens.⁷⁶

Wainwright's observation about signs that announce and inaugurate a reality that has yet to obtain in its fullness brings us to a concept that lies at the heart of both the New Testament understanding of the kingdom of God and of a long tradition of theological reflection on the meaning of the Eucharist.

That concept is what Paul and the author of Ephesians speak of when they call the gift of the Holy Spirit an ἄρραβών (2 Cor. 1.22; 5.5; Eph. 1.13-15)—a pledge, earnest, or down-payment—of the perfection that believers will undergo and the full communion with God that we will enjoy in the final kingdom. It belongs to the dimension of eschatology that involves a dialectic of the “already” and the “not-yet” because believers have been given the Spirit in the present as the “firstfruits” (Rom. 8.23) of the transformation of our persons, while the completion of that transformation is set for the future, awaiting us as an inheritance in the age to come. Thus, the Spirit who presently operates in the church is at the same time the sign of God fulfilling past promises (2 Cor. 1.19-22; Eph. 1.13) and a promise of future glorification. It can be seen, then, that in these epistles, the ideas brought forth under the word ἄρραβών provide a pneumatologically-focused paradigm of eschatology that operates, essentially, according

⁷⁶ Wainwright, 58; see the survey on 19-42.

to the same mode as the New Testament conception of the Eucharist: it contains a fusion of temporal perspectives, recognizing the divine promises that have already been fulfilled and those that have yet to be, while celebrating God's gifts to and presence among believers in the present.

A historical examination of sacramental theology reveals that the Eucharist has long been understood along the lines of this New Testament concept of earnest or pledge of the life to come, i.e., as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.⁷⁷ Wainwright's book provides an informative study of this tradition in the Christian East and West throughout and beyond the patristic and medieval periods,⁷⁸ but in illustrating the function of the concept in connection with the Eucharist I will simply turn to the example of the Wesley brothers. I have mentioned that John Wesley used an excerpt from Daniel Brevint's treatise *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* for the preface to the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, where it serves as an exposition in prose of the hymns' doctrinal content. In the section titled "Concerning the Sacrament, as it is a Pledge of Future Glory," Brevint explains that the Eucharist has three uses, which "all aim at the same glory," viz., the redemption of the pledge with our transformation and entrance into everlasting fellowship with God:

The first is, to set out as new and fresh the holy sufferings which purchased our title to eternal happiness; the second is, both to represent and to convey to our souls all necessary graces to qualify us for it [since in our earthly, unperfected state we are "neither of age to enjoy our inheritance, nor able to bear the weight of eternal glory"]; and the third is, to assure us that when we are qualified for it, God will faithfully render to us the purchase. . . . [A]s the kingdom of Israel was once

⁷⁷ It is worth noting that this is not precisely the same as the idea we see in the writings of Luke and Paul that connects the expectation of the *parousia* with the Lord's Supper, because the notion of redeeming the pledge after death—i.e., attaining heaven, undergoing glorification, and living forever in the presence of the Lord—is distinct from that of Christ's returning to establish the kingdom. However, the notion of pledge under discussion here associates the Supper no less intimately with biblical eschatological themes.

⁷⁸ Wainwright, 42-56.

made over to David, with the oil that Samuel poured upon his head, so the Body and Blood of Jesus is *in full value*, and heaven with all its glory *in sure title*, made over to true Christians by that bread and wine which they receive in the Holy Communion. . . .⁷⁹

One aspect of the Eucharist's "instrumental" operation, then, is to *prepare* a communicant for the heavenly banquet, yet he or she enjoys it proleptically *now*, as the earthly celebration participates in the celestial one.

Several of the Wesleys' hymns express this last point. It shines through clearly in, for example, Hymns 103 and 93:

Title to eternal bliss
Here His precious death we find,
This the pledge, the earnest this,
Of the purchased joys behind:
Here He gives our souls a taste,
Heaven into our heart He pours. . . .⁸⁰

By faith and hope already there,
Even now the marriage-feast we share,
Even now we by the Lamb are fed
Our Lord's celestial joy we prove,
Led by the Spirit of His love,
To springs of living comfort led. . . .⁸¹

However, this exultation in the "already" does not come at the expense of an awareness of the "not yet:"

He tasted death for everyone:
The Savior of mankind
Out of our sight to heaven is gone
But left His pledge behind.

His sacramental pledge we take,
Nor will we let it go;
Till in the clouds our Lord comes back,
We thus His death will show. [. . .]

⁷⁹ Rattenbury, 137-38.

⁸⁰ "Hymn 103," *ibid.*, p. 186. This and the following belong to a grouping of hymns labeled "The Sacrament a Pledge of Heaven," corresponding to the section of Brevint's treatise with a similar title.

⁸¹ "Hymn 93," *ibid.*, p. 184.

Now to Thy glorious kingdom come;
(Thou hast a token given,)
And while Thy arms receive us home,
Recall Thy pledge in heaven.⁸²

These verses thus capture what we have already seen of the multiple dimensions of the Eucharist's eschatological significance. The hymn just cited reflects the early tradition in which the Eucharist serves as a prayer for the *parousia*. Also, the Wesleys' acknowledgement in Hymn 93 of the Spirit's role both at the Eucharist and in bringing Christians to glory provides a useful reminder of the pneumatological content of the New Testament's use of "pledge" while demonstrating that there is by no means any opposition between applying the pledge-concept to the Spirit and applying it to the Eucharist. Both are gifts operating to signify and to realize God's fulfillment of past promises, God's current presence and work among believers, and the earthly stages of the process of transformation and glorification that will be completed for Christians in the *eschaton*. Indeed, the Spirit operates *through the Eucharist* (among other ways, of course—including, Pentecostals would stress, through the *charismata*) to accomplish those ends. This gives us a clearer picture of what it means to call the Eucharist a "sacrament" (*sacramentum*, "pledge") according to the sense I described in the first section of this thesis, because it sheds light on the divine side of the exchange of pledges between God and us that occurs in a sacramental event.

It is my contention that on the basis of their self-identification as an ecclesial group that particularly emphasizes the importance of eschatological themes in Christian doctrine and spirituality, Pentecostals are especially suited also to emphasize the ways in which the Eucharist symbolically announces and inaugurates an eschatological reality.

⁸² "Hymn 100," *ibid.*, p. 185.

One way to make that emphasis might be to hone in on the analogy between the *charismata* and the Eucharist⁸³ as symbols by which God's gracious operation among the faithful is enacted, proclaiming that operation as a fulfillment of biblical promises about the end-time fruition of God's plans for us.⁸⁴ This would allow Pentecostals to make a constructive contribution to Eucharistic reflection alongside the appropriation of ideas from other traditions that I have proposed would benefit Pentecostal sacramentology. However, it deserves to be stated that even in thus developing a distinct perspective on the Supper, Pentecostals would also be accepting an ecumenical understanding of it, because the church has almost always and everywhere professed explicitly that the rite has eschatological significance.⁸⁵

That profession is confirmed in the most far-reaching multilateral statement of convergence yet produced by the modern ecumenical movement, the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order text "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (Lima, 1982), which affirms that "The eucharist opens up the vision of the divine rule which has been promised as the final renewal of creation, and is a foretaste of it."⁸⁶ As I interpret it, BEM's account of the meaning of the Eucharist does not disagree in substance from the account of it that I have proposed here (though it touches upon much that I have not addressed). Indeed, BEM offers illuminating comments on several of the themes that have been raised in the preceding discussion and that would likely be of special interest

⁸³ There is, in fact, an etymological relationship between the Greek *χάρισμα* and *εὐχαριστέω* from which these respective words come: they have a common derivation through the verb *χαρίζομαι*, meaning briefly "to give or do something good or pleasant [to or for someone]."

⁸⁴ Here Pentecostals would be acting on the precedent of Peter at Pentecost (and of the early church thereafter), just as they have sought to do in their hermeneutics since the movement began.

⁸⁵ This is where Wainwright's study, mentioned in n. 78 above, is so instructive.

⁸⁶ "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry," Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), E22.

to Pentecostals, such as the Holy Spirit's role in the sacrament. It is worth quoting some of these comments at length:

The Spirit makes the crucified and risen Christ really present to us in the eucharistic meal, fulfilling the promise contained in the words of institution. . . . The bond between the eucharistic celebration and the mystery of the Triune God reveals the role of the Holy Spirit as that of the One who makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive. Being assured by Jesus' promise in the words of institution that it will be answered, the Church prays to the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit in order that the eucharistic event may be a reality: the real presence of the crucified and risen Christ giving his life for all humanity. [. . .]

The whole action of the eucharist has an "epikletic" character because it depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit. [. . .]

The Holy Spirit through the eucharist gives a foretaste of the Kingdom of God: the Church receives the life of the new creation and the assurance of the Lord's return.⁸⁷

Many Pentecostal churches do not include any form of the prayer of epiclesis in their celebrations of the Lord's Supper, probably because they tend not to think of the elements as undergoing a consecration that would make them vessels of Christ's actual presence and instruments through which God dispenses grace. If that tendency were to change, then it would be entirely appropriate to include the epiclesis as an invocation of the Holy Spirit on the gathered community as well as on the elements, which, as BEM points out, was a feature of early church liturgies.⁸⁸ It is also noteworthy that those liturgies did not assume that the consecration was effected through either the words of institution or the epiclesis alone; rather "the whole 'prayer action' was thought of as bringing about the reality promised by Christ."⁸⁹ I would put my own spin on that idea as follows: the Eucharist should be understood primarily in its character as a sacramental *event*—given an acknowledgement that sacraments, in Schillebeeckx's words, "are first

⁸⁷ Ibid., E14, E16, E18.

⁸⁸ Indeed, it is preserved in certain modern ones. See, for example, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 375.

⁸⁹ BEM, Commentary E14.

and foremost symbolic acts or activity as signs”⁹⁰ and ““interpersonal encounters between the believer and Christ”⁹¹—and therefore what takes place in its consecration can only be understood with reference to the worship-event/encounter as a whole.

Conclusion

I have proposed in this thesis that a Pentecostal treatment of the sacraments must embark from an open recognition (1) that divine-human encounters take place in, with, and under *signs*, and (2) that these encounters may rightly be regarded as moments in which God dispenses *grace*—notions that are latent in Pentecostal spirituality in the first place, as we can see from the way glossolalia is believed to function, for example. If this is done, and if the original biblical meaning of the Eucharistic *anamnesis* of Christ is recovered and embraced, it should be easy to move a step closer to the understanding of the Eucharist as sacrament shared by some other Christians. As a start, I have advocated the theological framework that describes what occurs in the Eucharistic event by a synthesis of the concepts of virtualism, receptionism, and instrumentalism—a framework with a history of ecumenical support. I have also suggested how focusing on the eschatological import of the Eucharist would provide Pentecostals with frame of reference within which they might develop a distinctive take on the sacrament while embracing a tradition common to the entire church.⁹²

⁹⁰ Schillebeeckx., 97.

⁹¹ Ibid., 101. He explores this idea at length in his book *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963).

⁹² I am grateful to Geoffrey Wainwright, my thesis advisor, for directing my attention to the ways in which the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist could be explored.

Because Pentecostalism is historically rooted in Wesleyan theology, Wesley (and, through him, contemporary Methodism⁹³) makes for a natural choice as an initial dialogue partner, and I think that the emphasis he places on the role of the Holy Spirit at the Eucharist would meet with special approval among Pentecostals. Of course, once we examine Wesley's views on the Eucharist, we immediately see his conformity both with an important aspect of the Reformed view, and especially with a certain school of thought that is perhaps distinctively Anglican. That provides today's Pentecostals and Anglicans with a current of thought about this sacrament that occupies a significant place in both of their traditions, and recognizing that commonality could profit ecumenical discussions of a shared theology of worship, which one might not expect would be likely for two groups of Christians with such different liturgical practices. All of this, in turn, creates a window of opportunity—however small at first—for conversation with at least some Roman Catholics in their approaches to the Eucharist. Certainly, there will be many points of disagreement along the way, and probably increasingly so as one progresses in dialogue back toward the trunk of the historical family tree of Christian denominations and movements. However, we may also discover many more points of agreement than we might have thought we would, and thus discover both something more of the mystery of unity that God has given to the Church, as well as ways to work and pray for the more complete fulfillment of Christ's prayer to the Father that we "all may be one" (John 17.21).

⁹³ This is not to say that contemporary Methodism subscribes to a unitary understanding of the Eucharist that is strictly consonant with Wesley's views. However, to the extent that trends in Methodist thought continue to take their cue from him, it is useful to turn to Wesley for discussion points.

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