THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THE EUCHARIST AND TESTIMONY: PENTECOSTAL SPIRITUALITY IN CONVERSATION WITH LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

by

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Distinctly Pentecostal contributions to liturgical theology are a relatively new phenomenon. The tradition’s emphasis on the free movement of the Holy Spirit tends to yield a perspective that formal worship structures can be limiting, stifling, and ritualistic. However, even with a stance of openness to the spontaneous movement of the Spirit, the presence of various worship practices that seek to foster such openness and freedom of human response constitutes a Pentecostal liturgy.

While this is the case, understanding the Eucharist within this Pentecostal framework of Spirit-inspired worship can be difficult, especially given its status as a sacrament in more formally liturgical traditions. This paper seeks to demonstrate that the Eucharist need not be something foreign to the ethos of Pentecostal worship through development of an understanding of the practice that corresponds with Pentecostal spirituality and connection to a thoroughly integrated Pentecostal worship practice: the sharing of testimonies.

The first chapter of this project explicates themes from practice of the Eucharist that fit well within Pentecostal thought: its promotion of pneumatological transformation, emphasis on embodiment, and cultivation of eschatological fervor. The second chapter examines the practice of testimonial exchange, extrapolating themes this distinctly Pentecostal practice might offer conversations on liturgical theology. Such themes include, the cultivation of orthopathic tendencies, a call to action rooted in storied dialogue, and an affirmation of everyday life.

The third chapter of this work brings the themes discussed in relation to the Eucharist and testimony into dialogue through utilization of Gordon Lathrop’s work on liturgical juxtaposition. By exploring how the Pentecostal practice of testimony might shape an understanding of the Eucharist (and vice versa), I hope to demonstrate how the latter is not antithetical to, but fits within, a Pentecostal understanding of worship as guided by the Spirit. Additionally, my treatment of testimony seeks to demonstrate the inherent worth of Pentecostal worship and the ways in which the tradition might shape discussions of liturgy.
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INTRODUCTION

Assessing the Problem: The Need for Pentecostal-Liturgical Reflection

With an emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s freedom to move spontaneously within their church assemblies, Pentecostals tend to evade defining their worship experience as coinciding with traditional liturgical structures.¹ Such an aversion to formalized ecclesial patterns and consequent fear of ritualized religious practices subverting the role of the Holy Spirit often produce skepticism toward weekly observance of the Eucharist and the category of sacramentality, particularly as it relates to eucharistic practice.² With this stance toward formal structures and rituals, Pentecostals typically opt for the terminology of “ordinance” over “sacrament,” as the former denotes simply those church practices performed in response to a divine command while the latter insinuates acts that, on their own, confer grace or mediate God’s presence.³ In contrast to the formal liturgical patterns and sacraments observed in Catholic and mainline Protestant churches, Pentecostals engage in worship practices that promote docility to the movement of the Spirit and a heightened expectation for congregational participation and response to such movement.⁴ Approaching the service in this way often leads to spontaneous expressions of worship typically evidenced through extemporaneous means of speech (tongues, prophecy, testimony). At the same time, just as Pentecostals are skeptical of formal worship


² Daniel Tomberlin, Pentecostal Sacraments: Encountering God at the Altar (Cleveland, TN: CPT, 2010), 156.


⁴ For example, in Chris Green’s development of a Pentecostal theology of the Lord’s Supper, he suggests that for practice of the rite to be thoroughly Pentecostal, it must leave room for spontaneous response. See Chris E. W. Green, Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper: Foretasting the Kingdom (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), 320.
structures, non-charismatic liturgical traditions can be skeptical of this seemingly free-for-all style of Pentecostal worship, believing it might incite chaos and disorder. Rather than construing these two different manners of worship as antithetical, however, I wish to bring the two into conversation through analysis of one liturgical practice and one Pentecostal practice: the Eucharist and testimony, respectively. This work primarily seeks to demonstrate how the Eucharist might better fit within Pentecostal liturgy by connecting it to the Pentecostal practice of testimonial exchange with an eye toward presenting Pentecostal themes that might contribute to broader conversations in liturgical theology. A robust conception of the Eucharist can enrich the pneumatically-oriented practices of Pentecostal worship, and a robust conception of testimony can enliven more formally structured practices. Ultimately, considering these two liturgical acts together cultivates an understanding of the Church as a community shaped by Spirit-inspired affections, an embodied presence situated within the world, and a people with an eschatologically informed call to action.

**Theological Presuppositions**

Before proceeding into the main content of this work, a couple preliminary notes are in order, beginning with some undergirding theological presuppositions: recognizing a constitutive connection between liturgy and ecclesiology, granting a reciprocal relationship between *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*, and ascribing liturgical meaning through the juxtaposition of worship practices.

In his foundational text, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, Alexander Schmemann notes the crucial relationship between liturgy and ecclesiology. Liturgy is more than simply what the Church does; it constitutes the Church as the body of Christ. While Pentecostals, with their
heavy pneumatological focus, may reject the idea of liturgy per se constituting the Church, the connection between worship and ecclesial identity remains clear, for what would any church (or the Church) be without its worship structures? While less apparent than that of other traditions, Pentecostal worship services possess an underlying liturgical pattern, which ultimately speaks to an ecclesial reality. At the heart of liturgical assemblies and Pentecostal congregations alike is the importance of a people gathered for worship in the name of Christ.6 A fundamental proposition of this work is that the particularities of such worship ultimately attest to implicit, embodied ecclesiologival notions, and it is my hope that working toward a shared understanding of the Church and its role in the world would offer a positive contribution to the ecumenical endeavor. In other words, all churches participate in worship. Liturgy, therefore, seems a fitting point for ecumenical contact.7

A second concept this paper relies on is granting a reciprocal relationship between the liturgical principles of lex orandi and lex credendi. While the primacy of lex orandi (the rule of worship/prayer) over lex credendi (the rule of belief) is important to Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and other liturgically oriented traditions,8 Pentecostal scholars have made compelling arguments that both worship practices and doctrinal beliefs alike can and should mutually inform

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6 Gordon Lathrop argues that while a multiplicity of “things” are needed for the enactment of liturgy, the most important of all is the people. Without the people, there is no liturgy. See Gordon W. Lathrop, Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 87.

7 Gordon Lathrop notes that ecumenical considerations are an important aspect of his own construction of a liturgical theology. See Lathrop, Holy Things, 4.

and condition each other.⁹ Within this dialectic, theology is permitted to shape practice, and practice is permitted to shape theology. Related to this distinction between worship and belief is that between primary theology and secondary theology, the former referring to the act of participating in the liturgy itself and the latter referring to theological reflection upon such participation.¹⁰ While I agree with arguments that the relationship between primary and secondary theology cannot be reduced to a simple explanation of one logically or necessarily coming before the other,¹¹ it intuitively does seem that embodied practices (liturgy) shape us in more holistic and fundamental ways than the mere dissemination of theological ideas.¹² While this ability for liturgy to pre-cognitively shape bodily and affective responses can be spoken of as a primary theology, there is still a sense in which liturgy is the enactment of a tradition’s underlying theology of worship.¹³ For Pentecostals, this means that, while they lack significant formal secondary theological reflection, they do possess an expansive primary theology in the form of their various worship practices and tend to communicate these experiences in a

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¹² The work of James K. A. Smith in this regard undergirds many of the arguments in this paper. In response to what he understands as a historical over emphasis on humans as fundamentally cognitive beings, Smith suggests instead that humans primarily relate to the world affectively. The implication of such a philosophical anthropology is that humans learn best through habitual embodied practices (including, but not limited to, Christian liturgy), as these ultimately shape our affections and thereby the way we relate to the world. See especially chapter one of his book *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 37-74. For a careful note on how Smith does not wish for this argument to undermine completely the cognitive aspect of human nature, see footnote 2 on page 17 of *Desiring the Kingdom*.

systematic fashion. To an extent, in the liturgy, Pentecostals often (although not always) act out what they believe. For this work as a whole, therefore, a dialectic between primary and secondary theology is important, especially for the first two chapters, which focus on the theology and embodiment of the Eucharist and testimony. This paper implicitly asks the following sorts of questions: From the perspective of Christian theology, how should one relate to God, the world, and her/himself? How does Pentecostal theology fit within such a perspective? How do Christian/Pentecostal worship practices promote such a way of relating? How might this theology better be embodied within liturgical practice?

The third theological presupposition regards the third chapter of this work. In it, I rely heavily upon the insights of liturgical scholar, Gordon Lathrop, who develops what I will refer to as a juxtapositional model of liturgical meaning in his book, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology*. Essentially, his undergirding argument is that liturgy acquires meaning through juxtaposition: of word and table, teaching and bath, praising and beseeching. For example, the meaning of the Eucharist takes shape in conjunction with the preached word. These two practices convey significance when enacted side by side in the liturgy. The same can be said for baptism alongside catechesis and liturgical prayers of praise together with prayers of beseeching. The

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14 Castelo, “From ‘Hallelujah!’ to ‘We Believe,’” 282.

15 Ibid., 68.

16 Such questions are inspired by James Smith’s arguments critiquing an academic emphasis on the cultivation of a Christian worldview. Smith notes, “Being a disciple of Jesus is not primarily a matter of getting the right ideas and doctrines and beliefs into your head in order to guarantee proper behavior; rather, it’s a matter of being the kind of person who loves rightly—who loves God and neighbor and is oriented to the world by the primacy of that love. We are made to be such people by our immersion in the material practices of Christian worship — through affective impact, over time, of the sights and smell in water and wine.” See Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 32-33 (emphasis his).

components of the liturgy cannot be thought of as isolated components but rather must be taken together as a whole to understand their deeper significance. I propose that understanding liturgical structure in this way can remedy what I assess to be a Pentecostal confusion concerning the role and place of the Eucharist within the worship service by creating space for the Pentecostal practice of testimony to shape the practice and understanding of the sacrament (and vice versa). For these reasons, I wish to explore what meaning church communities might discover if these two practices (the Eucharist and testimony) were to be juxtaposed in the liturgy.

Methodology

In addition to noting the above theological presuppositions, I will offer a brief note concerning the structure and internal logic of this work. It consists of three main chapters. In the first chapter, I will explicate a theology of eucharistic practice that coincides with Pentecostal spirituality followed by suggestions for how such theology might be put into liturgical practice. In the second chapter, I will likewise explore the theology of testimony before offering examples of how the practice might be enacted in the liturgy. In the third chapter, I will delineate what these two practices together might have to communicate to the Church at large. In this way, my explorations will begin with treatment of a thoroughly liturgical practice, move toward analysis of a prominent Pentecostal practice, and subsequently place these two practices in dialogue with

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19 In the third chapter of this work, I will explain further that, granted an argument that liturgy need not be fixed to a particular, rigid construction (contra Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 37-38), Lathrop’s model can be applied to a variety of liturgical combinations. Considering this, one might argue that the Eucharist would be better integrated into Pentecostal worship through juxtaposition with the even more distinctly Pentecostal practice of glossolalia. While drawing liturgical connections between the Eucharist and glossolalia [Cf. Frank Macchia’s discussion of glossolalia as a sacrament in *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009)] would be a worthwhile endeavor, I have chosen to explore the juxtaposition of the Eucharist and testimony because the latter is unique to Pentecostalism yet not as controversial as other Pentecostal practices, such as glossolalia. While the main impetus of this paper is greater integration of the Eucharist into Pentecostal worship, Pentecostal contributions to ecumenical and liturgical conversations remains a secondary concern. Additionally, testimonial exchange possesses an inherent liturgical structure that is readily recognizable, making it a suitable practice for considerations of Pentecostalism and liturgy. Ultimately, connecting the Eucharist to testimony is merely one way that the sacrament might be integrated better into Pentecostal worship.
each other via Lathrop’s juxtapositional model. In the first chapter, I suggest that Pentecostal beliefs can inform a Pentecostal practice of the Eucharist. In the second chapter, I suggest that the sharing of testimonies is a liturgical practice with the ability to shape one’s theological imagination. In this third chapter, I tease out the affective, theological, and practical implications of the Eucharist and testimony practiced side by side in the liturgy. The movement of this work thus begins with a focus on Pentecostal theology, moves toward a focus on Pentecostal practice, and concludes with a focus on how these two work together to shape those who engage with them.²⁰

²⁰ The structure of this paper corresponds with Steven Land’s definition of spirituality “as the integration of beliefs and practices in the affections which are themselves evoked and expressed by those beliefs and practices.” See Steven J. Land, Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 13. If Pentecostalism is primarily a spirituality, as Land argues, then it seems fitting for this work to consist of analysis of Pentecostal theology, practice, and how the two shape one’s affections.
CHAPTER 1: THE EUCHARIST AND PENTECOSTAL SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

Before delving into proper treatment of Pentecostalism and the Eucharist, a certain liturgical framework must be in place. Although uncertainty regarding formal liturgy is a common sentiment among Pentecostals, a strict bifurcation between Free Church-style worship and liturgically structured worship is overly simplistic, for Pentecostal churches possess an underlying liturgy.21 Likewise, despite opposition to sacramental theology, the expectation of an encounter with the Holy Spirit within particular Pentecostal worship practices, such as altar calls and expressions of charismatic gifts, carries theological weight regarding the efficacy of such practices.22 Pentecostals believe that one encounters God through the various components of their worship gatherings: music, preaching, prayer. Given this underlying theological notion of divine encounter within various aspects of Pentecostal liturgy, extending this concept of encounter to the Eucharist would not compromise in any way the Pentecostal emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s autonomy; indeed, doing so potentially could enhance Pentecostal theology and praxis. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how practice of the Eucharist corresponds with certain established Pentecostal beliefs (namely, pneumatological transformation, an emphasis on the body, and eschatological fervor) and to suggest how such an understanding of the sacrament might fit within Pentecostal worship. In the third chapter of this work, the theological themes and practical suggestions presented in this chapter ultimately will be juxtaposed with those presented concerning testimony in the second chapter.

21 Chan, Liturgical Theology, 189-90; Daniel E. Albrecht, “Pentecostal Spirituality: Looking through the Lens of Ritual,” PNEUMA 14, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 107-08. An underlying assumption of this work is that all church gatherings possess a liturgy. What I mean by this term will be made evident in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Methodology

This chapter will begin with an argument for Pentecostalism as a liturgical tradition and as a tradition with embedded sacramentality to justify both a greater incorporation of the Eucharist into Pentecostal liturgy and development of a Pentecostal understanding of Eucharist as more than a simple remembrance of Christ’s death. Following these discussions, I will extrapolate Pentecostal themes from the Eucharist: its ability to transform through the Spirit, the relationship between the Eucharist and the body, and the eschatological element of eucharistic participation. Finally, I will assess what the practice of the Eucharist within this theological framework might look like within a Pentecostal worship setting.23 My goal in this chapter, therefore, is to lay the groundwork for the Eucharist as a component of the Pentecostal worship experience with an eye toward further developing its relevance for Pentecostal spirituality through juxtaposition with testimonial exchange.24

Some additional notes regarding my methodology are in order. First, I purposefully use the term “Eucharist” as opposed to “communion” or “the Lord’s supper” because Eucharist carries a more theologically weighty connotation than the other terms. In this way, utilizing the term Eucharist seems fitting as I am proposing that Pentecostals should adopt an understanding of the sacrament as more than a mere memorial of Christ’s death or simple act of obedience to a divine command. Additionally, this paper seeks to demonstrate that Pentecostalism is a more

23 Castelo, “From ‘Hallelujah!’ to ‘We Believe,’” 282.

24 While connecting the Eucharist to the Pentecostal practice of testimony is this work’s main argument for greater integration of the Eucharist into Pentecostal worship practice, I do not wish for such an argument to imply that the Eucharist has significance for Pentecostals only insofar as it is connected to testimony. Therefore, a secondary aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the Eucharist qua Eucharist corresponds with Pentecostal spirituality. Connection to testimony is merely one suggestion for how a sacrament that often feels detached from Pentecostal liturgy as a whole might be integrated better into the tradition’s worship experience.
liturgically minded tradition than is typically assumed, and traditions with a more liturgical emphasis typically utilize the term Eucharist. In this sense, my use of the term has a slight ecumenical rationale. While this work does not explicitly seek to promote Pentecostal contribution to ecumenical conversations, my hope is that developing a more robust theology of the Eucharist could aid Pentecostals in such an endeavor.\(^{25}\)

Second, I recognize that there are variations within Pentecostalism concerning worship experiences. This paper does not seek to speak on behalf of every Pentecostal church, and this chapter merely seeks to offer a way of thinking about the Eucharist that coincides with generally established Pentecostal beliefs and to propose the implications such a way of thinking may have for the tradition’s liturgical practice in general.\(^{26}\) Recognizing the diversity of the Pentecostal experience and beliefs is in part why I have chosen to implement my theological consideration of the Eucharist through the lens of traditionally Pentecostal themes. Such an endeavor seemed particular enough so as to remain distinctly Pentecostal yet broad enough so as not to exclude certain denominations or branches within the Pentecostal tradition. Before delving into discussion of these themes in relation to the Eucharist, I will provide a framework in which to understand such discussion through explanation of the underlying liturgical and sacramental dimensions of Pentecostal spirituality.

\(^{25}\) For explicit discussion of how Pentecostal sacramentality could contribute to ecumenical conversation, see Wolfgang Vondey and Chris W. Green, “Between This and That: Reality and Sacramentality in the Pentecostal Worldview,” *JPT* 19, no. 2 (October 2010): 243-64.

\(^{26}\) I have already noted Steven Land’s argument that Pentecostalism is fundamentally a spirituality. I also find James Smith’s delineation between Pentecostal as a proper noun referring to the tradition and pentecostalism as a more inclusive adjective to be helpful. I have the latter connotation in mind throughout this work. See James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), xix-xxii.
Pentecostal Liturgy?

Pentecostals may be more liturgical than they think. The word liturgy can invoke images of strict structures with little room for variation, deviation, self-expression, or most importantly, free movement of the Spirit. Liturgy, however, can possess more broad connotations, such as “the people’s common response to [the] word, their acceptance of the Word, which constitutes them as the covenant people.”27 From this perspective, liturgy has both a divine and a human element and is thoroughly ecclesiological. Liturgy is not simply the actions of a group of people; rather, liturgy is the people of God—the Church—acting in response to God. Within Pentecostal worship, such a responsive element is clearly evident. People raise their hands during songs in response to feeling God’s presence or as an act of proclamation of divine goodness. People shout, “Hallelujah,” in response to a portion of the preached word that resonates with them. God moves; people respond. While the extemporaneous element of such responsive practices is distinct from the worship style in more formally liturgical traditions, this is due in part to the Pentecostal emphasis on oral forms of expression over written ones.28 The difference, then, between Pentecostalism and traditions with more formal liturgy is less an issue of structure versus no structure and more an issue of how the church structures its responses to God. Traditions with written liturgy, on the one hand, typically respond in a uniform manner: standing together, responding to Scripture readings together. Pentecostalism, on the other hand, with its emphasis on oral expression, creates space for spontaneous practices such as testimonies, declarations of prophecy, and messages in tongues. In both traditions, however, the worship practices—the liturgies—are a response to God, who ultimately constitutes the identity of the

27 Chan, Liturgical Theology, 41.

ecclesial people. Although it may not be written down or formally enacted, Pentecostals have particular ways that they respond to God within the context of worship: song, dance, glossolalic utterances, testimony. All make up the Pentecostal liturgy. Within this framework of response, then, Pentecostals need not view the Eucharist as a practice detached from or foreign to the other elements of their worship service but rather as related and integrally connected to these other forms of response.29

Pentecostal Sacraments?

Demonstrating the responsive structure of Pentecostal practices is perhaps easier than demonstrating their sacramental nature, but there is an underlying irony in Pentecostals preferring the term ordinance over sacrament.30 Pentecostals claim that their ordinances (baptism, the Lord’s supper, foot washing) are simply responses to divine commands with no implications of efficacy, yet Pentecostals believe the Spirit can move through these acts.31 Beyond this, Pentecostals fully expect an experience with the Spirit when engaging in other worship practices, such as laying on of hands or especially speaking in tongues.32 Encountering God through acts of worship, therefore, is not foreign to Pentecostal practice. In fact, there is a Pentecostal tendency to evaluate the elements of their worship services based on the extent to

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29 Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 63. As I already thoroughly have indicated, this project will examine the Eucharist’s relationship to one particular Pentecostal form of response: testimony.


which they encounter God through them. Based on this importance of encounter through acts of worship, a definition of liturgy as a response to God does not seem sufficient for a holistic understanding of Pentecostal worship. Pentecostals not only respond to God through their liturgical practices; they also expect to encounter God through them. Furthermore, encounter seems to be the end toward which all Pentecostal worship experiences move. For Pentecostals, worship practices are more than simply what one does in response to God; they are also the means through which one can encounter God. The former is the sense in which Pentecostal worship is liturgical; the latter is the sense in which Pentecostal worship is sacramental.

A Pentecostal Theology of the Eucharist

Having argued that Pentecostal worship is both liturgical in its practices of response to God and sacramental in its expectation of encountering God, I will now discuss Pentecostal themes in relation to the Eucharist in order to demonstrate how a view of this sacrament beyond simple commemoration of Christ’s death is not at odds with Pentecostal theology, beginning with the idea of the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

The Eucharist and Pneumatological Transformation

The Spirit’s presence among people in worship for the purpose of transformation is an important Pentecostal distinctive. Pentecostals believe that one should leave an encounter with

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33 Albrecht, “Pentecostal Spirituality,” 111. For Pentecostals, such expectation has less to do with the particular acts of worship themselves and more to do with one’s attitude toward the acts (Albrecht, “Pentecostal Spirituality,” 120), but nonetheless, it still stands that expecting God to be present through the Eucharist would not be at odds with Pentecostal spirituality.

34 See Frank Macchia’s work on Pentecostalism and sacramentality in Baptized in the Spirit.

35 While Pentecostals may be skeptical of the category of sacramentality in general, more liturgical traditions may fear that construing the category in such broad terms may lessen the significance of the sacraments. James Smith anticipates such a critique in his own work on sacramentality, maintaining that, within such a broad framework, the sacraments can remain practices in which encounter with God is heightened in special way. See Smith, Desiring the Kingdom, 133-54.
God transformed, whether that encounter occurs during musical worship, the preaching of the Word, the altar call, or any other part of the service. Through the lens of sacramental encounter, various worship practices can be a means through which Spirit-inspired sanctification can occur. In particular, liturgical actions possess the potential to sanctify participants through the shaping and molding of their affections, passions, and desires, categories traditionally of importance for Pentecostals. Participation in the various components of the worship service ultimately orients those who participate toward God and consequently, the things of God, including proper treatment of others and response to the world. For example, the lyrical content of songs can remind congregants of God’s character or incite those gathered to recall God’s faithfulness; the sermon typically explicates Scripture for the purpose of teaching what God is like or spurring those who hear to a form of godly action; altar calls create space for repentance from one’s sins; and the sharing of testimonies stirs the community’s heart with thankfulness for continued divine presence and action among God’s people. In these ways and more, the Spirit works through liturgy to direct the participants’ affections toward that which is holy.

While Pentecostals typically claim they simply participate in the Eucharist as a form of obedience to a divine command, this obedience is not a stagnant act any more than the forms of worship described above. Worship effects change in believers as they encounter God through

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36 Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology*, 119.

37 Steven Land argues that Pentecostals are marked by affections that are shaped by an eschatological fervor for the Kingdom of God. He discusses in particular gratitude, compassion, and courage in *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 122-81. Additionally, Pentecostal scholar Rickie Moore develops what he refers to as an “altar hermeneutic,” which focuses on how interpretation of the biblical text shapes the reader’s affective dispositions. See Rickie Moore, “Altar Hermeneutics: Reflections of Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation,” *PNEUMA* 38 no. 2 (2016): 148–159.

38 James Smith details how liturgy shapes human dispositions in the second and third chapters of *Desiring the Kingdom*. In the latter chapter, he describes how this occurs even through various secular liturgies. Additionally, Don Saliers describes liturgical engagement as providing what he refers to as passionate knowledge of God. See Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 86.
their obedience.\textsuperscript{39} In the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit incites the believer to act out Christ’s command, and through this action, the Spirit forms the participant into Christ’s likeness. Through participation in the rite, Christ—his life, work, and character—is brought to one’s recollection. Such remembrance, however, is not passive, as the same Spirit that anointed Christ for his own mission\textsuperscript{40} stirs the Church—Christ’s body on earth—to act in accordance with that which they recall about Christ’s ministry.\textsuperscript{41} From this perspective, obeying Christ’s command to partake of his body and blood is transformative, as, through such obedience, one is conformed more into Christ’s image.\textsuperscript{42} In other words, one may, in fact, partake of the Eucharist as an act of obedience, but the Spirit works through this act to effect change in the participant, similar to how the Spirit may effect change in someone who obeys a divine leading to express a message in tongues or to pray at the altar. There is a sense within Pentecostal spirituality that the Spirit works through acts of worship to change, transform, and sanctify those who obey God through humble submission to the leadings of the Spirit. The Eucharist can fit within this understanding

\textsuperscript{39} James Smith argues that liturgical practices are deeply formative in that they shape our dispositions and desires over time. In this way, our obedience to participate in Christian liturgy (and Eucharist as a part of this) may be shaping us in ways of which we are not immediately or even consciously aware. See Smith, \textit{Desiring the Kingdom}, 25-27. I would add that one need not think of this formation as magical or that a desire for conscious participation in the liturgy is not necessary. Rather, understanding liturgical formation in this way can provide Pentecostals with solace in that gathering for worship, even on the days one does not feel an explicit sense of transformation, is never a waste.

\textsuperscript{40} Luke 4 narrates Christ’s first words of his public ministry: “When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor’” (Lk 4:16-19, NRSV).


\textsuperscript{42} Green, \textit{Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper}, 247. For a discussion of how the elements of the Eucharist relate to the Incarnation, see Tomberlin, \textit{Pentecostal Sacraments}, 162-68.
insofar as participants are willing to discern how the Spirit might call to attention the ways in which they might be more conformed to the Christ they remember in the meal. In the Eucharist, the liturgy’s ability to transform one’s affections takes on a distinctly christological character.

The Eucharist and the Body

In addition to coinciding with the Pentecostal expectation of being transformed by the Spirit through acts of worship, the Eucharist also corresponds well with a Pentecostal emphasis on the body. Thus far, I have utilized the category of sacramentality with respect to Pentecostal worship in that Pentecostals expect to encounter God through their various worship practices. At this point, I wish to draw attention to a specific dimension of such an understanding of sacramentality: _worship as an embodied experience_. It utilizes physical things and actions as means through which the worshipper encounters God.\(^{43}\) For Pentecostals, this is especially apparent. Singing, shouting, dancing, speaking in tongues—all deeply embodied acts—mark the Pentecostal worship experience. Furthermore, the altar, a physical space in the sanctuary, is highly regarded as a place where one might encounter God in a special way. Latent within Pentecostal spirituality is the idea that these ordinary embodied actions and physical spaces become special means for an experience with God within the context of worship. This is also true for the Eucharist; through the ritual’s context in worship, eating joins singing, dancing, and speaking as a special embodied means for an experience with God. My hope is that in demonstrating how Pentecostals already possess a notion of encountering God through physical means within their common worship practices, the tradition might be more open to the

\(^{43}\) Gordon Lathrop develops a thorough theology of “things” in chapter 4 of his book, _Holy Things_. Essentially, Lathrop argues that things are those which are needed for the liturgy to take place (most notably, the people). These ordinary, physical things are made holy when placed in their liturgical juxtapositions. See Lathrop, _Holy Things_, 87-115.
possibility of encountering God through the physical act of the Eucharist as well and consequently integrate the sacrament more frequently into their worship services.\textsuperscript{44}

While this argumentation from Pentecostal experience may suffice in demonstrating a Pentecostal propensity toward sacramentality, I wish also to offer a more broadly Christian argument for sacramentality that may also demonstrate why this category is important to the faith that is ultimately the foundation of the Pentecostal tradition. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the ultimate indicator of God’s desire to interact with humanity within and through the physical world.\textsuperscript{45} As the heart of the Christian message, Pentecostals wholeheartedly affirm that through the event of the Incarnation, humans experienced God through physical methods. As the embodied Christ, God spoke to and touched humans. Furthermore, this God \textit{fed} humans. In addition to the narratives of Christ’s words, which brought spiritual healing, and his touch, which brought physical healing, the gospel authors also record feeding miracles, which brought physical nourishment. Moreover, upon the imminence of his death, Christ chose to leave his disciples (and consequently, the Church) with a meal by which to recall his embodied time on earth. Pentecostals have done well in expecting to encounter God through the words of a sermon or the laying on of hands, two important physical components of the liturgy, but the Eucharist, with its emphasis on the physical act of eating, which was also important to Christ, would complement these other liturgical means of divine encounter well.

\textsuperscript{44} Chris Green has demonstrated that theological argumentation from experience was a common methodological approach for early Pentecostals. See chapter 3 of Green, \textit{A Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper}, especially pages 180-81.

In addition to expecting to encounter God through physical acts of worship, Pentecostals also acknowledge the importance of the body through their emphasis on physical healing. Within Pentecostal thought, Christ’s death not only procured freedom from the spiritual sickness of sin but also from physical sickness and disease. In Pentecostal circles, Scriptures such as Isaiah 53, which is taken as a prophetic claim that Christ’s torture would make physical healing possible,\(^4^6\) connect the occasion of physical healing specifically to the event of the cross. Furthermore, this power for healing has been entrusted to humans through the Spirit, as is evident in the narratives of members of the early church healing people in the book of Acts.\(^4^7\) In response to this belief in God’s healing power, Pentecostals have developed worship practices oriented toward seeking the reality of physical healing in the lives of individuals who might need it. The act of laying hands on one another is believed to be a manifestation of one’s faith for God to make them whole. One often views going to the altar to beseech God to intervene with a divine act of healing as a physical demonstration of one’s belief that God possesses such power to heal. The Eucharist could be another such practice that encapsulates one’s faith for healing,\(^4^8\) as both the christological and pneumatological dimensions of physical healing could be evident within a holistic practice and understanding of the sacrament. The symbols of Christ’s broken body and poured-out blood harken back to the events leading up to Christ’s death, and as one participates in the ritual, the Spirit incites them to faith in the healing power proclaimed in the event of the cross. In this way, just as laying on of hands and praying at the altar are considered to be acts of

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\(^4^6\) Verse 5 of this chapter reads: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed” (Is. 53:5, NRSV).

\(^4^7\) See Acts 3:1-5; 5:12-16; and 20:7-12.

\(^4^8\) In his overview of the state of Pentecostal scholarship on liturgy and sacramental practice, Chris Green notes that early Pentecostals connected physical healing to the practice of the Eucharist specifically. See *Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper*, 60-61.
faith stirred by the movement of the Spirit, Pentecostals could describe participation in the Eucharist in a similar manner. Additionally, thinking of this sacrament and the other components of the liturgy in the context of healing ultimately speaks to the Pentecostal hope in the renewed world yet to come.

The Eucharist and Eschatology

I have demonstrated that Pentecostals have an underlying sacramental theology in their expectation of encountering the Spirit through various embodied liturgical practices. Additionally, one could argue that Pentecostals also have an underlying sacramentality in their emphasis on eschatology.49 Along with the importance of the possibility of the Spirit’s transforming power through physical acts of worship, the eschatological role of the Holy Spirit is another important aspect of Pentecostal thought.50 Liturgical acts, especially the sacraments, correspond well with an eschatological framework, as they could be understood as means by which God allows the not-yet to invade the now, as acts through which “heaven and earth touch,” as pointing beyond themselves to the Kingdom yet to come.51 For Pentecostals, there is a sense that the Spirit plays a distinct role in establishing the Kingdom of God in the here and now, and one often experiences glimpses of this Spirit-shaped Kingdom through acts of worship. As mentioned in the previous section, physical healing can occur through the touch of another, prayer at the altar, or participation in the Eucharist. Additionally, the content of a sermon can spur listeners to seek forgiveness and reconciliation, congregants may experience a sense of closeness to God during a song, or God may call those gathered to dismantle unjust social

49 Vondey, “Between This and That,” 258.

50 Stephenson, Types of Pentecostal Theology, 119. Cf. Macchia, Baptized in the Spirit, 47-60.

51 Vondey, “Between This and That,” 259; Chan, Liturgical Theology, 69.
systems through the content of a message in tongues or a prophecy. Experiences such as these all testify to the inbreaking of a Kingdom, in which the Spirit of God will restore all people and all things. From this perspective, the Eucharist could be an additional way through which the Spirit might move to provide a glimpse of the fullness of redemption yet to come. Through participation in the Eucharist, one not only remembers the story of Christ’s death and the past acts of God within redemption history but also recognizes that the fulfillment of this redemption story has not yet fully occurred.52

Pentecostal scholar, Christopher A. Stephenson, has made a compelling argument concerning this eschatological dimension of the Eucharist by shifting focus away from Christ’s presence in the sacrament toward Christ’s absence.53 Within this framework, when one partakes of the bread and wine, they not only remember the things Christ did while he walked the earth but likewise recognize that he has not yet returned for his Church. In light of Christ’s current absence from the world in this way, the Spirit is one who is present in the Eucharist in his place.54 Speaking in terms of a Pentecostal emphasis on narrative,55 the Eucharist both places the participant within past stories of God’s redemption (the eating of the manna in the wilderness, the Passover feast, the cross) and proclaims a future story yet to come (the marriage supper of the Lamb). In this way, the sacrament is more than a simple reminder of Christ’s death. It is an eschatological proclamation of God’s redemption of all things. Rather than focusing on how

52 Saliers, Worship as Theology, 60-61.

53 Stephenson, Types of Pentecostal Theology, 121-23. While I support a shift toward considerations of Christ’s absence in the eucharistic elements, I will explicate in the third chapter of this work the importance of the ecclesial presence of Christ in the practice of the Eucharist as constituted by the Spirit.

54 Stephenson, Types of Pentecostal Theology, 122.

55 I will explore such an emphasis in more depth in chapter 2.
Christ is present in the elements,\textsuperscript{56} a shift toward a theology of divine absence would both help abate the Pentecostal tendency toward fear of magical mediation of divine presence through the sacraments and consequently better foster a sense of eschatological urgency and longing, which is distinctive of Pentecostal theology.

Thus far, this chapter has focused on Pentecostal themes present within the Eucharist: the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the importance of body, and the eschatological element of the sacrament. The discussion of these themes has been for the purpose of demonstrating how viewing the Eucharist as something more than a stagnant act of obedience, in which one simply remembers Christ’s death, does not contradict but coincides with established Pentecostal thought and theological beliefs. Such discussion has mostly offered theological reflection upon the implications of participation in the Eucharist in conversation with other aspects of Pentecostal spirituality. The first half of this chapter was essentially a theological rationale for a greater emphasis on and incorporation of the Eucharist within Pentecostal church assemblies: a secondary theology reflecting on the importance of the Eucharist in order to argue for greater participation in the primary theology of experiencing the Eucharist itself. The second half of this chapter will move toward constructing a specific vision of what Pentecostal practice of the Eucharist might look like. Ultimately, the third chapter of this work will place such practice of the Eucharist in juxtaposition with a specific vision of the practice of testimony, which I will explicate in chapter two.

\textsuperscript{56} Chris Green develops a metaphysical explanation for how Christ might be present in the Eucharist. See Green, \textit{Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper}, 282-93. While Green takes care to emphasize that metaphysical claims concerning Christ’s presence in the Eucharist must be careful not to eliminate a sense of mystery, a shift toward emphasizing the Spirit’s presence in light of Christ’s absence in the meal negates any need for such arguments at all, and I argue that considering eucharistic divine presence in this latter manner might be more appealing to Pentecostals, especially those with a (well-founded) fear of sacraments magically mediating God’s presence.
A Pentecostal Practice of the Eucharist

In this section of the chapter, I will explore some ways in which the Pentecostal themes described above might be embodied within Pentecostal enactment of the Eucharist. I intend for my descriptions in this section to serve as suggestions for how practice of the Eucharist in Pentecostal circles might become more symbolically rich rather than as demands for how every Pentecostal congregation ought to practice the sacrament. In fact, an important aspect of Pentecostal spirituality is the ability to discern how the Spirit might be moving or working in a distinct way within particular congregations; therefore, it would be fitting that Pentecostal churches leave open the possibility of adjusting the way the rite is practiced in light of the Spirit’s leading. Such differentiations in practice may differ from congregation to congregation or be temporary within a particular congregation, reflecting a season within the life of the community. As I have tried to emphasize thus far, Pentecostals need not view the Eucharist as a restrictive practice but rather as something that can further enrich their already lively worship experiences. I will begin by exploring how eucharistic practice might engender an openness to the transforming power of the Spirit.

Pneumatological Transformation in Practice

Recalling that liturgical actions shape people on a fundamental, pre-cognitive level, in order for the Eucharist to promote better long-term change in the participant, one should engage


58 Here, I have chapter 2 of James Smith’s work *Desiring the Kingdom* in mind. See footnote 12 above for a detailed explanation.
in the practice consistently over time. Simply put, regular participation in the formative, embodied practice of partaking of Christ’s body and blood has the potential to shape one’s affections more deeply than inconsistent, sporadic participation. While participation in the sacrament on special occasions such as Easter or Christmas can certainly shape those who engage in the act, weekly observance possesses even more potential for cultivating one’s imagination toward distinctly Christian thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Engaging week after week in an act with a rich connection to Scripture, Church history, and Christians across the globe can serve as a reminder that Pentecostals are not isolated individuals or part of an isolated tradition. Pentecostals are fundamentally Christians, a group possessing a rich story that transcends time and geography. At very least, simply incorporating the Eucharist into Pentecostal practice more frequently would create space for the ritual to shape participants’ theological and ecclesial mental framework. Increased frequency of participation on its own, however, while a good start, is not sufficient for fully embracing the transformative element of the practice.

In addition to allowing the Eucharist to shape one’s affections and mental dispositions through increased participation in the sacrament, the incorporation of an epiclesis would be helpful in highlighting how the Spirit works through the liturgical act to effect change in those who participate. Pentecostal scholar, Jonathan Alvarado, describes epiclesis as a call for the Spirit to descend not just upon the eucharistic elements but upon the people gathered in the community as well. 59 Such a prayer corresponds well with the Pentecostal tendency to avoid speaking of God as present in any special way within the elements themselves but rather to emphasize the Spirit’s constant presence among and within the gathered people. 60 In this way,

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Pentecostals could consider the epiclesis to be a recognition of the Spirit’s presence within the community and a prayer for the Spirit to shape that community more into the image of God.⁶¹ In practice, the presider and congregants implore the Spirit to be present to the participants through the act. This can serve as a recognition that, just as the Spirit consecrates the ordinary elements of bread and wine for a holy purpose, so also does the Spirit consecrate the ordinary people who partake of these elements.⁶² Implementing such a prayer into a Pentecostal practice of the Eucharist would highlight the role of the Spirit within the act to transform those gathered at the table.

**Affirmation of the Body in Practice**

As for encapsulating an affirmation of the physical body in eucharistic practice, Pentecostal communities could consider incorporating an invitation to walk to the front of the sanctuary to partake of the elements. With respect to the other body-affirming Pentecostal practices, such as speaking in tongues or praying at the altar, the church leaders often offer both an explanation that these acts are special ways in which one might encounter the Spirit and an invitation to engage in them. Ministers could extend a similar practice to the Eucharist. Prior to the actual partaking of the elements, the presider could offer a brief explanation that the Eucharist is an opportunity for one to encounter the Spirit in a special way and invite all to participate in such an opportunity. Additionally, the act of physically walking to the front of the sanctuary to break from a single loaf and partake of a single cup could further highlight the

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⁶⁰ Vondey, “Pentecostal Ecclesiology,” 52.

⁶¹ Alvarado, “Pentecostal Epiclesis,” 184.

⁶² For further explanation of the consecration of the ordinary in the liturgy, see Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 87-115.
The time of walking could also give participants time to reflect on the embodied act in which they are about to participate. Also, this action of walking could make participants more aware of the other people—the other physical bodies—that are participating in this act as well.

As noted in the previous section, connecting the Eucharist to physical healing has not been uncommon in the development of Pentecostal spirituality. If Pentecostals truly believe participation in the sacrament could be a way through which the Spirit effects physical healing in someone, the implementation of the ritual could benefit from practices that highlight this healing dynamic. I have two suggestions for how this might be the case. First, in addition to the epiclesis, with emphasis on both the elements and the people, perhaps the opening prayer could also include a petition for physical healing on behalf of those who might need it. Praying in this way could make the congregants aware that the rite is a means through which the Spirit might work to foster physical healing, thereby cultivating a sense of expectation for divine encounter, which is the ethos of Pentecostal worship. Second, church communities could additionally incorporate space for extemporaneous prayer for healing to occur during and after participation in the Eucharist. As the congregants come forward to partake of the elements, elders in the community or other assigned persons could be available to pray with anyone who may have a specific need. Before inviting the community to come forward, the presider of the sacrament could explain that such an opportunity for prayer is available. Incorporating prayers such as these could more explicitly highlight the connection between the Eucharist and physical healing.

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63 I recognize that having all members of the congregation walk toward the front of the sanctuary to partake of the eucharistic elements may not be logistically feasible for larger congregations. This is merely a suggestion for how a particular liturgical practice might speak to a theology of the affirmation of the body. This project ultimately leaves space for variations in the instantiation of worship practices among different congregations.

64 For a detailed discussion see, Tomberlin, *Pentecostal Sacraments*, 175-78.
Eschatology in Practice

The third Pentecostal distinctive I have discussed in relation to the Eucharist is an emphasis on eschatological longing and mission. With respect to the future coming of the Kingdom of God, in which every nation, tribe, and tongue will cry out to God together (Rev. 7:9), practice of the Eucharist could reflect such a reality by allowing a variety of people to serve the bread and the wine. Such a practice ultimately testifies to the reconciliation of all people to one another, symbolizing eschatological unity. Allowing a variety of people to serve the elements conditions congregants to see Christ in all people, even and especially people different than they are. With this practice in place, each week, participants have an opportunity meet Christ in the racial, gendered, and socio-economic other as the community rotates through its various members who will get to look each person in the eye and say, “This is the body of Christ, broken for you” or “This is the blood of Christ, poured out for you.” Even allowing children the opportunity to serve the Eucharist could foster a renewed sense of what it means to come to Christ as a child, reminding communicants that even age does not restrict one from being Christ in the world. Ultimately, permitting a variety of people to offer the elements to the gathered community speaks to the coming reconciliation among all people. In this way, the Eucharist could serve as a glimpse and proclamation of the eschatological unity to come.65

There is an eschatological element in the Eucharist not only through its ability to point toward a reconciled future but also, as previously discussed, through Christ’s palpable absence.

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65 Merely integrating diversity into the practice of the Eucharist, however, is not enough in working toward establishing eschatological unity in the here and now. This glimpse of the eschaton that people encounter in the Eucharist should propel them toward establishing such a reality beyond the walls of the church. In this way, I would add that a healthy practice of the Eucharist would make this missiological element apparent. My treatment of testimony and its connection to the Eucharist in subsequent chapters could be helpful toward this end.
Toward envisioning a eucharistic practice that reflects such a situation, adding certain Scripture passages and emphases therein to the presentation of the sacrament could be beneficial. Both Matthew 26 and especially Luke 22 contain verses that connect Christ’s Last Supper with his disciples to his departure from earth. The latter reads,

> When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk 22:14-20, NRSV).

I have emphasized three statements from Christ in this pericope. First, he prefaces engagement in the meal by highlighting that he will not eat it (again) until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom.\(^{66}\) Second, with his presentation of the cup, he notes that he will not drink from the fruit of the vine once again until the Kingdom comes. Both statements possess a tenor of finality, especially given their placement just prior to Christ’s death. At the same time, both statements possess a tenor of eschatological expectation in that there will come a time in which Christ will participate in this meal again, namely, at the coming of the Kingdom. Christ will leave, but he will come again. Lastly, with his presentation of the bread, Christ connects this meal to the community’s remembrance of him. One can only remember that which is not currently present. Thus, incorporating a Scripture passage like this one, perhaps with some additional teaching or explanation, into the liturgy surrounding the presentation of the Eucharist could stir eschatological fervor as congregants become aware that their very participation in this act means

\(^{66}\) Not all Greek manuscripts contain the word meaning “again” in Luke 22:17.
Christ has not yet returned for his Church. The Kingdom may be present within Christ’s people, but it has not yet come in full.

While passages such as the one explicated above may highlight Christ’s absence in the Eucharist, incorporation of a passage like John 16 into the eucharistic liturgy additionally could emphasize the presence of the Spirit in light of Christ’s absence. Verses 4b-15 read,

I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Introducing a passage such as this one into the eucharistic liturgy could demonstrate that to speak of Christ’s absence is not to speak of divine absence altogether. The person of Christ may not be present physically in the world, but God still interacts with the world through the Spirit. Utilizing a passage such as the one above could also aid in more seamlessly connecting the Eucharist to Pentecost.67 Christ has ascended, but the Spirit has descended upon all flesh, testifying that these are the last days (cf. Acts 2).

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67 See Daniela C. Augustine’s work on the relationship between Pentecost and liturgy: *Pentecost, Hospitality, and Transfiguration.*
Excursus: The Eucharist in Action

Having suggested some concrete ways practice of the Eucharist might encompass the Pentecostal distinctives of pneumatological transformation, narratival significance, and eschatological fervor, I wish to conclude this chapter with a hypothetical description of what a Pentecostal engaging in the Eucharist might experience in the sacrament.68

The pastor has just concluded the sermon in prayer. He stands reverently yet expectantly with eyes closed and one arm raised, occasionally offering accolades of “Hallelujah” or “Thank you Lord” as he patiently waits on the congregation, still muttering their own praises in a cacophony of English and unknown tongues. There is no need to rush what comes next. Once the praises come to a lull, a woman, a well-worn Bible in hand, approaches a quaint altar positioned at the front of the sanctuary. On it are a single loaf of plain bread, a pitcher of a deep purple juice, and a single empty cup. The woman carefully opens her Bible and begins reading the words of Christ from the gospel of Luke’s telling of the Last Supper. At the words, “This is my body,” she holds the bread high for all to see and breaks it in half. Inflecting the written speech to capture Christ’s sorrow that he will soon die and leave his disciples, she lingers over the words, “Do this in remembrance of me.” At the words, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood,” she slowly pours the juice into the cup. She closes the Bible and begins to speak, “Brothers and sisters, what a solemn story this is. The Savior of the world prepares for his betrayal, torture, and death with as his disciples remain unaware. He offers them a memorial they do not yet know they will need. Perhaps you find yourself in a similar position of taking Christ’s presence for granted. You are currently living in a perpetual sense of his

68 James K. A. Smith does such experiential descriptions well, particularly in his exploration of the liturgy of the mall in the introduction of Desiring the Kingdom. I find this kind of writing helpful, as it provides an aesthetic component and engages the readers emotions, two qualities pertinent to a discussion of liturgy.
nearness to you. Or perhaps you resonate more with the disciples in the wake of Christ’s death. You feel confused, shaken, and abandoned by the one who previously calmed the storms and fed the multitudes. Beloved, whether you relate to the disciples before or after Christ’s death, there is a blessed hope for you, for all of us. The hope for the future is the promise that Christ will return for his Church and dine with us in the Kingdom. The hope for today is that he has not left us desolate but has given us his Spirit.” At this, shouts of praise burst forth. She continues more fervently, gesturing to the elements on the altar, “In this meal, we remember that Christ has not yet returned to walk in our midst, but we also rejoice in God’s continued presence to us through the Holy Spirit.” The shouting continues, interspersed with clapping. The woman continues, “Let us pray. Gracious God, thank you for your revelation through Jesus Christ. As we partake of this meal, may our remembrance of his life and death glorify you and shape us into better representatives of his image here on earth. And we ask, O, Holy Spirit, that you would be present in this act to effect transformation in your people. We humbly request, O, God, that you might bring physical healing, a sense of peace, and repentance from sin as you see fit through our participation in this meal that your Son has left for us. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.” At the conclusion of the prayer, the woman invites the servers to come forward, a young boy and an elderly woman in a wheelchair. The presider offers them the elements and then invites everyone present to come forward and partake of the loaf and the cup, noting that there are people available at the front to pray with them if they might need it. The congregants form a line as they walk toward the front of the sanctuary, where each person breaks a piece of the bread as the young boy says, “This is the body of Christ” and dips it in the cup as the elderly woman says, “This is the cup of the new covenant.” Some people opt to pray with another at the altar before partaking of the elements. Some choose to pray after. Some lay hands
on those praying. Some return to their seats, joining the musicians in song or offering their own extemporaneous prayers or reflecting on that which takes place before them. Even long after all have received the elements, prayer, song, and reflection continue at the Spirit’s leading.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has not sought to criticize Pentecostalism but rather to highlight important theological and experiential distinctives of the tradition that could be enhanced through the Eucharist. If anything, my hope is that this chapter has demonstrated that Pentecostals have more to offer and contribute to the conversation on liturgical theology than typically considered. The pneumatological, embodied, and eschatological dimensions prevalent in Pentecostal thought tend to be lacking in other more formally liturgical traditions, and I have sought to demonstrate how the Eucharist encapsulates these important Pentecostal themes. In this way, the Eucharist need not be considered something foreign to Pentecostal practice or at odds with Pentecostal beliefs. Pentecostals have something to offer in a theology of the Eucharist, and the Eucharist, in turn, has something to offer Pentecostals. Within this discussion, I do not claim to have explored all possible Pentecostal themes related to the Eucharist or to have exhausted all that the Eucharist has to offer Pentecostalism. Furthermore, in granting a reciprocal relationship between *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*, I seek to demonstrate how there is a need for both increased participation in the Eucharist among Pentecostals as well as increased formal teaching and reflection on the practice. Both are needed for a robust liturgical experience and understanding of such an experience. While I hope my exploration of Pentecostalism and the Eucharist has been beneficial, such exploration on its own is merely a starting point in discussions of Pentecostalism.

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and liturgy. I have demonstrated how a practice that may be foreign to Pentecostal worship can coincide with and shape the tradition’s thoughts and beliefs; my next step will be demonstrating what a thoroughly Pentecostal practice might have to offer discussions pertaining to liturgy, ultimately with an eye toward placing it in dialogue with eucharistic practice as I have described in this chapter. Now, I turn to testimony.
CHAPTER 2: TESTIMONY AS A LITURGICAL PRACTICE

Introduction

While a more formal liturgical action like the Eucharist may not be a consistent element of Pentecostal worship, the tradition does possess its own distinct and rich worship practices, the sharing of testimonies being a primary example. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Pentecostal spirituality has and continues to rely heavily on oral forms of tradition and communication. This characteristic shapes the tradition’s worship experience to possess a unique sense of spontaneity and narrativity from which one might glean important theological implications. The last chapter developed a practice of the Eucharist that coincides with Pentecostal spirituality; this chapter seeks to demonstrate the ecclesial and theological benefits of allowing space for testimonies to be shared within the church community and to develop a practice of testimonial exchange within a liturgical framework of encounter and response as detailed in the previous chapter.  

Within the context of this project as a whole, the previous chapter offered an exploration of a traditionally liturgical practice. Now, I am moving toward exploration of a distinctly Pentecostal one. In the next, and final, chapter, I will bring the two into dialogue with one another.

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While, in the previous chapter, I noted that weekly observance of the Eucharist would ultimately be ideal for Pentecostal churches (or rather, all Christian churches, including Pentecostal ones), I will not argue for such strict or frequent integration of testimony into non-Pentecostal churches. First, the Eucharist is a distinctive of all Christian traditions; whereas, testimony as a consistent liturgical practice is more distinctly Pentecostal. I do not think churches that do not practice testimony are missing as much as churches that do not practice the Eucharist. Second, that being said, I do think there are underlying principles to the practice of testimony from which all Christian traditions could benefit, most significantly, its recognition of humans as storied and embodied creatures. There are a variety of ways this could be emphasized in a worship service, testimonial exchange being a prime example. While I strongly encourage liturgical traditions to consider incorporating some sort of testimonial practice into their community (whether in the Sunday liturgy or in an additional small group space), I do not think such a practice is a liturgical requirement in the same way as the Eucharist. The latter has been handed down through Christian tradition as a divine institution.
Methodology

I begin with some introductory remarks regarding the importance of narrative as a theological category and a brief treatment of the history of testimony as a worship practice within the Pentecostal tradition. Following this, I will highlight some important theological themes pertaining to the practice of testimony: its ability to cultivate orthopathy, its dialogical nature, and its connection to everyday life. At this juncture, it is important to remember the relationship between the liturgical principles of *lex orandi* and *lex credendi* and between primary and secondary theology. After a secondary reflection upon the theological implications of testimonial sharing, I will develop what testimony might look like in practice (its primary theology). Ultimately, it is my hope that one might keep the ethos of Pentecostal spirituality and the tenets of the Eucharist discussed in the previous chapter in mind throughout the present discussion of testimony, since the goal of this work as a whole is to bring the two together in the following, concluding chapter.

Theology and Narrative

Before a proper discussion of the liturgical practice of testimony can take place, a foundational appeal for narrative as a proper theological category must occur, for testimonies are inherently narratival. They depict a story with characters (such as God and the person sharing) and a plot.71 As constructed and presented in this storied fashion, testimonies differ from other language-oriented liturgical practices such as an expository sermon or the recitation of a creed.72

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Heavily influenced by modernity, mainstream North American churches tend to commend these latter practices for their objective, rational way of communicating theological truth while relegating the sharing of personal testimonies to a less prominent position in the liturgy due to its subjective, emotive nature. While stories are inherently contextual and, consequently, subjective, there are still three main domains in which the category of narrative is important for the theological endeavor: its relationship to Scripture, human ontology, and communication. In this way, narrative has biblical, anthropological, and liturgical significance.

First, at a foundational level, narrative is important for a proper understanding of the Bible. The collection of Christian scriptures is comprised of smaller books, some of which are themselves narratives (Genesis, Esther, the gospels, Acts) and that altogether constitute the grand story of God’s redemptive purposes for the world. That the stories in scripture are part of this larger narrative is intrinsically evident in Scripture itself, particularly in the Old Testament. For example, in Deuteronomy, God consistently instructs Israel to repeat their history—the story of their wandering in exile—to their children. Additionally, in the narrative of the giving of the ten commandments in Deuteronomy, this covenant that God makes with Israel is linked to the covenant of their ancestors, painting the picture that what is taking place is continuous with

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72 Plüss notes that, historically, there often has been a disconnect between theology, which is seen as cold in its doctrinal statements, and narrative, which is seen as full of vitality and flexibility. See *Narratives in Worship*, 12-14.


74 I would note additionally that to claim the theological endeavor must always be objective in nature is a misstep. While Christianity is rooted in the absolute truth claims of the gospel of Jesus Christ, an important aspect of the gospel message is that the God of Christianity desires a personal relationship with all of creation. In this way, engaging with testimonies of the ways multiple members of Christ’s body relate to God makes the theological endeavor a holistic pursuit of truth through communal discernment.

Israel’s past and not something utterly disconnected from it.\textsuperscript{76} As such, what God is doing with Israel now finds its context in what God has done with Israel in the past.

Similarly, the New Testament provides connotations of narratival continuation. Jesus speaks of the establishment of a new covenant, implying a connection with the old one. Additionally, the stories of the early church recorded in the book of Acts are a continuation of the implications of the life and ministry that Christ led. In fact, Christ himself even recognized the power of stories through his frequent use of the parable as a method of theological and ethical instruction.\textsuperscript{77} Similar to how one might resonate with the different characters of a parable, one might also resonate with the various characters of the stories in scripture. One might imagine oneself as the woman at the well, meeting Christ in a state of loneliness and rejection from society, or as the paraplegic, unable to meet Christ without the assistance of his friends, or perhaps even as Judas, racked with guilt over his betrayal of Christ. However one might relate to the stories of scripture, those who make up the Church do not merely place themselves within these stories but are, in fact, a part of the same ongoing story of Christ’s redemption. Testimonies are a reminder that this is the case.\textsuperscript{78}

Second, the ongoing significance of the Church’s role in the grand story of redemption is not only important because the Bible utilizes narrative but also because stories possess the ability

\textsuperscript{76} The opening text of Deuteronomy 5 reads, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently. The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. Not with our ancestors did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today” (Dt. 5:1-3, NRSV).

\textsuperscript{77} McCall, “Storytelling and Testimony,” 79.

to shape one’s identity through knowledge of and connection to the past. Given this constiuative element of human identity, there is an anthropological dimension of narrative. Jean-Daniel Plüss describes narratives (and more specifically, testimonies) as the “universal paradigms of human experience.” Every person can relate to a story because every person imagines him/herself as part of one. We make sense of time and our place in the world through our narratival relationship to events and other people. In this way, the inherent social dimension of the shared human experience finds expression in the category of narrative. Such narratival understanding is often pre-reflexive; one does not often consciously consider their interactions with others as if they are the protagonist of a grand plot. Upon secondary contemplation, however, a sense of belonging to a storyline can be apparent. After sticking up for a wrongfully chastised co-worker, one might reflect on such an action with a sense of narratival heroism. Following a series of disputes with a colleague, one might begin to ponder what sort of disagreements might come next in the plot. At very least, one is able to reflect on their life as a series of intertwined events with him/herself as the main character. Whether conscious or not, engagement with stories is part of what it means to be human. We are storied beings, and as such, the sharing of testimonies is a fitting way to communicate with the other storied beings around us.


80 Plüss, Narratives in Worship, xxiv.

81 Ibid., xxiii.

82 Francesca Aran Murphy makes a helpful critique of narrative theology, which can come to view God and humans as stories. Narrative theology, in this strong sense, does not merely see stories as a helpful hermeneutic tool but as the foundation of personhood. Murphy’s issue is that viewing personhood from this perspective does not leave room for dialogue. See Francesca Aran Murphy, God is Not a Story: Realism Revisited (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). I think such a strict bifurcation between story and dialogue, however, is not tenable, for
Third, narrative (and by extension, testimony) is important to the theological endeavor for communicative reasons. Since human persons naturally think of their relationship to the God, others, and the world in storied terms, narrative can be a helpful tool in communicating theological ideas that might otherwise be dense and overbearing or unavailable to the general population. For example, encountering a presentation for what it means to say God is love based on the possible nuances of the Hebrew and Greek words for love might provide someone with a theoretical knowledge of such a theological claim, but placing such theoretical knowledge in the context of a story provides a more relatable means for understanding. Following such a technical explication, then, one might provide narratival examples of God’s love: God’s faithfulness to Israel despite their own unfaithfulness; stories from Christian tradition of the Spirit-empowered acts of compassion by the saints; or perhaps even the story of Christ’s laying down of his own life at the hands of his enemies over enactment of violence toward them. Through such examples, one is able to comprehend theological ideas in a readily available and easily identifiable manner. While dissemination of theological ideas through formally structured mediums, such as creeds or technical phrasing, can be helpful in communicating theological precision, coupling such formal methods with narratival ones could provide a more holistic engagement with and understanding of theological ideas and ultimately God.

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83 Plüss argues that allowing for the sharing of testimonies makes revelation available to the masses, not just the educated elite. See Plüss, Narratives in Worship, 51.

84 Once again, I here have James Smith’s arguments from Desiring the Kingdom in mind. I find his suggestion that humans are fundamentally affective creatures intuitively sound, and as such, humans track primarily in the stuff of stories, that which stirs our emotions and our heart. That is not to reject the cognitive aspect of human nature but rather to highlight an important component of what it means to be human that often gets neglected in
importance of narrative in communicating and demonstrating theological truths, the sharing of testimonies can be a helpful liturgical practice that serves as more than a merely emotional or cathartic practice.

The History of Testimony in Pentecostalism

A final introductory note regarding the history of testimony within the Pentecostal tradition is in order before moving toward a development of testimony as a liturgical practice. Considering the context out of which much of the initial Pentecostal experience began is helpful in understanding the importance of testimony to the tradition. Many of the earliest participants in the Pentecostal movement, with its corresponding emphasis on the democratization of the Spirit’s presence, were North American slaves. Such a context partially explains the importance of oral tradition for Pentecostals, for the communication of the gospel message through mediums such as songs, recitation of the biblical stories, and the sharing of testimonies was paramount for those who were illiterate and with little access to formal means of religious education. Furthermore, this connection between orality and marginalization could grant credence to Robert McCall’s suggestion that upward social mobility is responsible for a relatively recent decline in the frequency of testimonial exchange within Pentecostal worship services. As North American Pentecostals have integrated into the greater Evangelical milieu, this distinctive practice has been lost, perhaps to a greater emphasis on the sermon or a need for theological discourse. Pentecostals may not have much formal, primarily cognitive theological reflection to offer, but that does not mean Pentecostals have no theology to offer at all. Pentecostal theology merely often gets communicated in the stories of songs, sermons, and testimonies. On this note, another work by Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, in which he argues for and develops a distinctly Pentecostal philosophy, is helpful. See James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010).

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85 Plüss, *Narratives in Worship*, xxv.

services to be efficient. Regardless, it is important to note that what was once a pivotal practice for those who found themselves as societal misfits and outcasts is on the decline, a regrettable loss. I hope this chapter will illuminate the theological, anthropological, and ethical significance of regular practice of testimonial exchange, calling Pentecostals to remain steadfast in such a distinctive practice and other traditions to consider how the implications of the practice might shape their own notions of worship, divine encounter, and relationship to the world.

A Theology of Testimony

Having established narrative as a theologically significant category and provided a brief overview of the history and current state of the Pentecostal practice of testimony, I will now explicate some important theological themes to be gleaned from the practice before moving toward describing how engagement with testimony might look within a worship service. While the previous chapter focused on explicating themes from the Eucharist that might coincide with Pentecostal theology, this chapter aims to explicate what theological themes a thoroughly Pentecostal practice might have to offer Christian worship and living in general. Such themes include the cultivation of orthopathy, a dialogical call to action, and a link between worship and the community’s everyday life. The final chapter of this work will juxtapose these themes with those presented in my treatment of the Eucharist in the first chapter.

Testimony and Orthopathy

In academic discussions of religion, one may frequently encounter the terms orthodoxy and orthopraxy, the former denoting beliefs that are faithful to the religion at hand and the latter denoting practices that are similarly faithful. Despite the importance of both belief and practice for religions, there is often a tension or disconnect between these two aspects of religious
Beliefs do not necessarily entail the proper corresponding embodied action; likewise, one may act in a way that corresponds with a given religion yet not hold to its tenets. One might believe God to be concerned for the well-being of the poor and yet refrain from giving to those in need, or one might give to those in need without such giving being a result of theological convictions concerning the character of God. In an effort to bridge this gap between right belief and right action, Pentecostal scholars often speak of a third “ortho:” orthopathy, i.e. right feeling. From this perspective, religion is not concerned only with fostering an assent to a particular set of beliefs or inspiring a certain way of acting in the world but also cultivating a certain kind of feeling toward God, others, and the rest of creation. While Pentecostal scholars typically have discussed the development of orthopathic tendencies through a particular way of reading scripture, engagement with testimonial exchange in a liturgical context could be an additional way through which the Spirit works to shape one’s emotions, affections, and dispositions to align with God’s character.

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87 See, for example, Plüss, *Narratives in Worship*, 14.


89 See especially Casey Cole’s paper on the rape of Tamar as an example of an orthopathic reading of the biblical texts of terror. Casey Cole, “Taking Hermeneutics to Heart: Proposing an Orthopathic Reading of Texts of Terror via the Rape of Tamar Narrative,” *Pneuma* 39 (2017): 264-74. Essentially, Cole argues that when one cannot read a particular selection of scripture for either orthodoxy or orthopraxy (as she demonstrates is the case for the pericope of Tamar’s rape in 2 Samuel 13), perhaps one can instead read it for orthopathy. In this way, engaging with the story of Tamar’s rape and the subsequent insufficient responses by those involved should evoke within the reader a sense of outrage over such an injustice. Although God is nowhere to be found in this particular text, Cole notes, “Maybe in trying to locate God in the text, we have missed God’s Spirit within us, brooding over the text” (270). Such a hermeneutic allows God to be present in the reader as their emotions are shaped by imagining how God might respond to such a tragedy.
As demonstrated in this chapter’s introduction, humans are inherently storied beings, and as such, stories engage our emotions. We easily resonate with plots that demonstrate a struggle to overcome setbacks and to persist in the face of adversity because we often sense this correlates with our lived experiences. We readily identify with characters in stories that we feel capture the emotions, attitudes, and corresponding actions of our own lives. The sharing of a testimony can grant story-telling an additional dimension, as the person sharing is not a fictional character but a real, embodied person with real, embodied experiences, and this person exists in a communal relationship to those with whom they share their story. Interconnected and embodied in this way, testimony can shape both the one who shares and those who listen as it molds their emotional dispositions and consequently the way in which they make sense of the world. Functioning in this manner, testimony can be a powerful tool for the cultivation of right feeling that reflects the heart of God.

First, this fostering of orthopathy takes place in listeners as receiving another’s testimony allows them to see the story from the perspective of the one sharing, thereby cultivating a sense of empathy. Seeing or hearing about another’s actions in an isolated context makes it easy for one to postulate assumptions about that person’s behavior, but upon reception of his/her testimony, the listener is placed in the sharer’s shoes, acquiring understanding of the context in which such actions took place. For example, one might hear that a person in the congregation is an alcoholic. In isolation, hearing about such behavior may paint that person as irresponsible and dangerous. When this person shares his testimony, however, it may become clear that his addiction began following the unanticipated death of a child and that, by the grace of God, he has

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90 James Smith argues that all liturgical actions, whether secular or sacred, are constantly shaping one toward a particular way of relating to the world. See Smith, Desiring the Kingdom, 25.
managed to remain sober for two weeks now, a state he has not been in for years.\textsuperscript{91} Hearing this testimony, the people who initially gawked at the struggling congregant are now transported into this person’s story and may recognize the error of their initial attitude. Rather than feeling scorn for this person, the recipients of his testimony may now share in the sorrow of this person’s grief. As a divinely-guided story, a testimony has the power to humanize others, and recognizing the shared humanity and consequent dignity of others allows the one who receives a testimony properly to feel properly toward the one who shares the story of God’s work in his/her life.\textsuperscript{92}

This is at the heart of Peter’s testimony at the Jerusalem Council concerning the work of the Spirit among the Gentiles as evidence of their inclusion in the faith (Acts 15). Receiving this testimony and recognizing that the Spirit worked the same way among the Gentiles as the Jews helped to cultivate an openness to the outsider within the early development of the Christian faith.

Second, testimonial exchange not only shapes the emotional dispositions of those who listen to a testimony but also of the one who shares it. While hearing another’s story may help the one listening to see the one who shares rightly, the act of offering one’s own testimony to the ecclesial community, in turn, can help the one who shares to see him/herself rightly. Sharing one’s story of God’s work in his/her life is a vulnerable action, for one cannot be certain how the community will respond to such a deeply personal narrative. When an authentic attestation to

\textsuperscript{91} A testimony such as this one is an example of what Robert McCall highlights as the traditional Pentecostal testimonies of “individual salvation, sanctification, and baptism with the Holy Ghost.” See McCall, “Storytelling and Testimony,” 43. As will become clear throughout the rest of this chapter, there can be several kinds of testimonies, each of which may possess the ability to shape one’s orthopathic tendencies in different ways.

\textsuperscript{92} Rabbi Jonathan Sacks argues that an integral part of human responsibility is recognizing the inherent dignity of every human being. See To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2005). In the second half of this chapter, which details the particulars of testimonial practice, I will discuss proper sharing and proper receiving of a testimony in more detail.
one’s experience of the divine, however, is met by the Spirit-inspired community with the appropriate corresponding celebration or solidarity rooted in empathy, such a response can communicate a sense of belonging to the one sharing. The response on the part of the congregation, then, can be a liturgical space through which the Spirit might work to shape the emotions of the testimony bearer. Perhaps a positive response from the congregation can confirm to a skeptical sharer that what she merely had suspected to be a move of God in her life was in fact so. A communal response of hopeful expectation to an unresolved testimony can revive a weary sharer, as he now recognizes that he does not have to carry his burden alone. Testimonial exchange, in this way, provides the sharer with a communal context in which to process, discern, and make sense of his/her own experiences.  

Ultimately, whether hearer or sharer, testimonial exchange possesses the ability to shape one’s emotions and, consequently, a disposition toward the world. Within a Christian context, this means learning to see and respond to others and ourselves in a way that is consistent with God’s character. Hearing the whole story of a person’s struggle with addiction can serve as a reminder that he/she is human, a character in a sequence of events, and that actions do not occur spontaneously in isolation. Perhaps repetitive encounter with such stories over time will shape the ones who hear to be less quick to judge and make assumptions about people they do not know, to see them rightly through the eyes of God. Conversely, through the sharing of their own story, people may cultivate a sense of belonging, realizing that their life matters and that they are

93 I contend that the ecclesial community’s ability to respond to a testimonial sharer is a matter of discernment. I will explore what this might look like in practice more in the second half of this chapter. Additionally, I think there should be space for testimonies that are not necessarily positive in their outlook toward God and life circumstances. Such stories, however, are not typically shared in Pentecostal circles. I will reserve my treatment of how such sharing might fit in the testimonial liturgy in the treatment of the juxtaposition of the Eucharist and testimony to come in the following chapter.
indeed an integral part of Christ’s body on earth. The one who shares may begin to see
him/herself rightly through the eyes of God.

Testimony and a Dialogical Call to Action

Testimony’s liturgical importance is not merely orthopathic but also ethical. Orthopathy
can be the bridge between orthodoxy and orthopraxy, as right feeling can translate right belief
into right action.\textsuperscript{94} Bridging this gap can occur in this way because narratives (and by extension,
testimonies) pose an inherent dialogue.\textsuperscript{95} Stories serve a purpose. They are not merely a one-way
sharing of an event for its own sake. The goal of a story is not simply to be heard but to be heard
\textit{and received} in a certain way. A good story-teller recognizes that their words will be met by a
particular audience and, therefore, sets the scene, develops the characters, and guides the plot in
a manner that will capture the reader or listener for the particular purpose at hand. The previous
section highlighted how testimony can shape the emotional dispositions of the hearer and sharer
alike; part of the way the hearer’s dispositions might be shaped is by attunement to the way in
which the one sharing chooses to present the narrative of God’s work in their life.\textsuperscript{96}

For example, there are multiple ways that one might share a testimony concerning the
generosity of a stranger toward them in a time of financial need. On the one hand, emphasizing
how the stranger’s gift helped her to pay rent and thereby avoid eviction might stir within the

\textsuperscript{94} Jean-Daniel Plüss argues that the act of testimony can bridge this gap. See Plüss, \textit{Narratives in Worship},
14. I concur but would add that it is specifically testimony’s ability to shape an individual/community’s orthopathic
tendencies that makes overcoming such a divide possible.

\textsuperscript{95} Recall Plüss’ notion that testimonies are inherently social. Plüss, \textit{Narratives in Worship}, xxiii.

\textsuperscript{96} I must make a note of caution here that there is a difference between shaping a testimony in a particular
way in coordination with the Holy Spirit to communicate a specific point and sharing a false testimony to
manipulate others or receive personal accolades. The former might emphasize an aspect of the story for a specific
purpose, whereas the latter is intentionally deceptive. Plüss has an entire section of his dissertation dedicated to
discerning false testimonies. See \textit{Narratives in Worship}, 57-58. This issue will arise again in my discussion of
discernment as part of the liturgical aspect of testimonial exchange in the next section of this chapter.
listening congregants a renewed desire for obedience to the Spirit, to be led to help those in need just as was the stranger in the testimony. On the other hand, emphasizing how the stranger’s gift offered a sense of joy in the midst of a season of depression might cultivate deeper empathy within the congregation, as they recognize that physical needs also can affect one’s emotional, mental, and spiritual state. In this way, the hearers do not passively take in the story offered to them but actively engage with it.

Therefore, the way in which the one sharing presents his/her testimony—the initial portion of the liturgical dialogue—invites the ecclesial community—the dialogue partner—to respond in a certain way. Since stories possess the ability to shape the way one understands and makes sense of the world, there are no such things as “ethically neutral narratives.” Part of testimonial dialogue, then, is an implicit call to see the world a certain way and to act accordingly. The shaping of affections is for the purpose of corresponding action. As “construals and concerns for the world,” affections are the “reasons for action.” This ability for testimony to shape one’s affections, beliefs, and way of living makes it a fitting practice for shaping Pentecostal spirituality, per Land’s definition of spirituality as “the integration of beliefs and practices in the affections.” While an outside observer might accuse Pentecostals of promoting worship practices that encourage mere emotionalism, a truly Pentecostal practice of testimony does not seek shallow sentimentality but rather, responsible action rooted in a right disposition toward God and the world. Pentecostals recognize that human persons are integrated wholes with

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99 Ibid., 13.
the mind, heart, and body working together and that human persons are inherently relational, cultivating a way of relating to the world through dialogue and interaction with others.

Thus, testimony has implications for how people live. The stories we tell suggest how life ought to be lived, and when shared within a particular community, they communicate how the people within ought to act toward one another and the world. This means that for the Christian community, the ethic implicit in their testimonial dialogue is shaped by the story of Christ. Utilizing the above example of a stranger offering help to someone in a time of financial trouble, the person sharing this testimony is implicitly saying that the person who helped them was a demonstration of Christ in the world and thereby calling those who are listening to similar corresponding action in the world. Even testimonies that involve miraculous divine intervention without mediation through the action of another person still contain an implicit call to action, namely, to intercessory prayer.100 While members of the congregation may not be able to help a fellow congregant diagnosed with cancer, they are able to pray with and on behalf of the sick person for divine healing. Such faith to pray may be rooted in and sustained by the community’s reception of previous testimonies to God’s healing power in someone else’s life. Ultimately, in testimonial exchange, the one sharing offers a story of thanks to God with the power to shape how those who hear act in the world.

Testimony and Ordinary Life

Testimonial exchange is not only a dialogue between the one sharing and those listening; it is also a dialogue between the secular and religious spheres of life.101 Testimonies are not

100 Steven Land suggests that prayer is at the heart of all spirituality, but especially that of Pentecostalism with its emphasis on experience of the Spirit. See Land, Pentecostal Spirituality, 35.

101 Plüss, Narratives in Worship, 82.
stories about God constructed in an isolated religious context dealing strictly with divine work within sacred settings. Rather, testimonies are stories about how God works in everyday life, in the messiness of the material world, and in the lives of ordinary people. At the same time, however, there is a sense in which the divine working in the mundane is specially graced, in which the lines between secular and sacred become blurred as the two converse through God’s acting in and through the ordinary. I will look first at the ways in which testimony belongs to the domain of religion before addressing the ways in which it also belongs to the domain of the secular.

First, it is self-evident that testimonies to God’s miraculous intervention in one’s life are religious in nature. They attest to something supernatural that one can properly attribute only to the work of God. These testimonies can include stories such as divine healing, immediate deliverance from sin or addiction, or a need being met inexplicably. Such happenings correspond with obvious divine character traits or beliefs about the nature of God. A miraculous healing speaks to the power of God to restore created beings. Sudden deliverance testifies to God’s ability to redeem and sanctify. Needs being met proclaims that God cares for the well-being of those created in the divine image.

Stories of unexplainable divine intervention, however, are not the only kinds of positive testimonies. Sometimes, one might wish to share with the congregation a story of special thankfulness for less dramatic situations that they nonetheless interpret to be the work of God.

102 Don Saliers emphasizes that liturgy consists of “the concrete circumstances of the worshipers, not simply the texts.” See Saliers, Worship as Theology, 140.

103 For examples of what testimonies to deliverance from sin or of sudden salvation might look like, see McCall, Storytelling and Testimony, 43 and 46, respectively.

104 These are testimonies concerning everyday life. For an example, see McCall, Storytelling and Testimony, 84.
Such testimonies may be a feeling of gratefulness that a presentation at their job went well or an offering of praise for a sense of peace that sustained them during a difficult week. While less explicitly religious than the testimonies presented above, these still communicate an implied spiritual significance. Underlying testimonies such as these is a theological conviction that God is the author of all that is good in the world and one’s life.

Second, testimonies not only possess an inherent religious quality in their attestation to the work of God; they also possess an inherent mundane quality in their ability to speak to one’s lived experiences outside of the ecclesial context in which they are shared. This is evident in both testimonies of supernatural intervention and of gratitude toward everyday life. The former speaks to God’s affirmation of the inherent worth of creation, and the latter speaks to divine sustenance of that which we consider ordinary. In both circumstances, God is revealed to work not only in strictly religious contexts but even outside of the Church through that which is familiar, mundane, and secular. For example, utilizing the examples from above, divine healing testifies to God’s affirmation of the human body, and deliverance from addiction testifies to God’s care for human mental states. The meeting of needs testifies to God’s care for the everyday circumstances in which people find themselves. Additionally, as previously mentioned, such ordinary spaces are graced with God’s ongoing presence in the world, a presence which Pentecostals attribute to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.¹⁰⁵ In this way, through the sharing of testimonies, the secular is integrated into the religious, and the religious is brought to bear on the secular. While the two realms are often separated in religious thinking, from the

perspective of the Christian God—a God who cares deeply about the well-being of the created order—it is fitting that the religious symbolism present in testimony would also point toward one’s lived experiences beyond the borders of the physical church.\footnote{Plüss argues that the purpose of (religious) symbols is to integrate better those who encounter them into society. See Plüss, *Narratives in Worship*, 126.}

In addition to testimony attesting to God’s work in ordinary life, it likewise attests to God’s work in ordinary people. In testimonial exchange, the religious and the secular meet as ordinary people mediate knowledge of God to the congregation through their stories of God’s work in their lives.\footnote{Ibid., 53.} Such a practice encapsulates the participatory aspect of Pentecostal worship rooted in an emphasis on the Spirit having been poured out on all flesh. All people have been given authority to speak God’s truth freely, for “those in the pulpit and those at the pew play an equal role.”\footnote{Estrada-Carrasquillo, “Taking the Risk,” 241.} Ultimately, the practice of testimony affirms that God is not limited in the spaces where divine encounter might occur or in the people through whom divine truth might be communicated.

**A Liturgical Practice of Testimony**

Thus far in this chapter, I have discussed important theological themes implicit within the Pentecostal practice of testimony: the cultivation of orthopathy, a dialogical call to action, and connection to everyday life.\footnote{As was the case with my treatment of the Eucharist in the previous chapter, these themes are not exhaustive of all that the Pentecostal practice of testimony offers theologically. In my treatment of the Eucharist and testimony alike, I purposefully focused on ideas that will work well together in my analysis of the juxtaposition of these two practices in the next chapter.} Admittedly, extrapolation of such themes has been rooted in assumptions about how testimonial exchange typically is practiced in Pentecostal circles. In other words, my treatment of testimony up to this point has been an implicit move from
primary theology of testimony in practice toward a secondary theological reflection upon such practice. Now, I will explicate what testimonial exchange might look like as a liturgical practice. By this I mean that, as was the case with my treatment of the Eucharist in the previous chapter, there are and should be liturgical guidelines for the practice of testimony within a worship service. I use the word “guidelines” in the loosest sense possible, acknowledging that part of what makes the Pentecostal practice of testimony distinct is its extemporaneous nature. Even when practiced in the most spontaneous manner, however, testimonial exchange still does and should possess an implicit liturgical contour. Thus, my development of testimony as a liturgical practice to follow is both descriptive and prescriptive. My goal is not to change significantly how Pentecostals already practice testimony so much as to highlight the inherent liturgical nature of the practice and to offer suggestions for how the implicit theological themes discussed above might be expressed even better. Therefore, in my treatment of testimonial practice and each of the above theological themes, I will begin with a descriptive assessment of how Pentecostals already practice testimony already embodies each theme before addressing additional liturgical elements that might be incorporated pertaining to the particular theme at hand.

Orthopathy in Practice

As noted in the previous section, testimony can shape the emotional states of both the sharer and the receivers in powerful ways. Such a propensity for the cultivation of orthopathic dispositions is manifested in people sharing the stories of God’s work in their lives, shaping the narrative in conjunction with how they discern the Holy Spirit to be leading them. This aspect of testimonial exchange is manifested in the Pentecostal emphasis on the freedom for anyone to share stories and in the space Pentecostals create for such open sharing to take place. In
Pentecostal practice, there are little parameters for how one ought to share a testimony with the congregation; the way in which one presents his/her story is up to the one testifying and the Holy Spirit. Such freedom ultimately leaves room for a variety of testimonies to be shared in a variety of ways by a variety of people, creating many opportunities for the practice to shape the community’s orthopathic tendencies through engagement with people and circumstances that those present may not encounter naturally in everyday life. As mentioned in the previous section, testimony provides context for understanding people and their actions. Encountering the testimony of a person who is homeless due to a financial setback from their pervasive illness can shape those who hear to be slow to assume that a person’s financial trouble is always a matter of lack of personal responsibility. Such a testimony can be even more poignant if it comes from someone who does not regularly attend the church but is nonetheless allowed to share. Additionally, permitting the same people to share testimonies as often as they feel led to do so also can shape the community’s affections in meaningful ways. If someone shares a testimony of praise for a good health report one week and another testimony of trust in God in the face of an unexpected negative health report the next, this juxtaposition can revive those struggling in their own faith to a renewed sense of trust in God. These are just a couple examples of how an

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110 This corresponds well with Lathrop’s notion that liturgy should invite strangers into the ecclesial community. See Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 125.

111 While people are free to share their testimony in whatever way they please, testimonies do tend to follow a typical pattern or, at very least, a contour. In his discussion of the differences between testimony and biography, Plüss notes that while the latter’s primary focus is constructing a particular presentation of the past, the former shares the past with an eye toward the implications for the present. See Plüss, *Narratives in Worship*, 143. Additionally, my note concerning one’s presentation of their testimony in conjunction with the Holy Spirit is intentional. While testimony as a liturgical practice presents the congregation with freedom, this does not mean that one is free to share falsehoods or in a way that seeks to manipulate or deceive others without being held accountable.

112 Not all testimonies need be positive such as these to shape the congregants toward orthopathy. My treatment of testimony and lament in the next chapter will explain this more.
emphasis on the freedom for all people to share a testimony can shape the ecclesial community’s emotional dispositions toward others and the way in which they understand the world.113

Such openness for anyone to share a testimony as they see fit, however, poses an inherent risk for the worship service.114 While Pentecostals believe the Spirit can work through anyone and use any event in one’s life to speak of God’s glory, the tradition is not naïve. Some people may share blatant falsehoods with the congregation as a means of self-promotion or may share a true story in a way that does not seek to glorify God or encourage the community.115 Given these risks, ecclesial communities that practice testimonial exchange could consider integrating a form of communal discernment as part of the liturgical practice.

Since discernment is not a precise science, it may look different in various congregations and in various instances.116 Therefore, discussions of how such a practice may look are merely

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114 Plüss, Narratives in Worship, 177ff; 282.

115 Regarding the latter, Plüss notes, “false testimony does not refer to an error in the account of things seen, it is a lie in the heart of the witness.” See Plüss, Narratives in Worship, 57. Additionally, when it comes to the practice of sharing testimonies, Pentecostal communities would do well to remember Alexander Schmemann’s note that the worship gathering is not an end itself but rather always should point the Christ. See Schmemann, Introduction to Liturgical Theology, 61.

116 A detailed presentation of a conclusive list of criteria for proper discernment would be quite tangential for the task of this project. Plüss suggests that the presence of a notable amount of personal interpretive commentary may indicate ulterior motives on the part of the one sharing, as authentic (i.e., non-rehearsed) testimonies are typically pre-reflexive in nature. He additionally notes that testimonies in which the sharer refers more to God or others may not be the best-intentioned. See Plüss, Narratives in Worship, 178-79. On a more theological level, a paradigm my colleagues and I constructed during a class on the theology of prayer may be helpful for the present discussion. Over the course of several class periods of conversation about how to discern when a response to prayer is from the Holy Spirit, we proposed the following four criteria: 1) Communal reflection; 2) Retroactive analysis; 3) Scripture; 4) Character growth (Theology of Prayer, taught by Dr. Skip Jenkins, Lee University, Summer 2017). Concerning testimony, questions about legitimacy may be worked out best in conversation with others from the community. Additionally, future analysis outside of the immediate ecclesial context may also provide clarity. Of course, legitimate testimonies will not contradict the character of God as revealed in Scripture, and they will promote growth of character in both the one sharing and those who hear.
general suggestions, not rigid prescriptions. A congregation may opt to incorporate a time of silent reflection once a testimony or series of testimonies have been shared. The minister may explain that this time is for the expressed purpose of attunement to the movement of the Spirit and discerning the way in which God may be speaking through the words shared. The presider may continue by offering that anyone who might have questions about the stories presented may come and speak with the leaders of the church at any time. Following such an invitation, the person leading may open the time of silent reflection with a prayer for the Spirit to open the hearts and minds of those present to discern rightly. Creating space for such a time of reflection could mold the community to think critically and prayerfully about the stories shared rather than simply taking them at face value.

Although this process of discernment is far from being simple or straightforward, the risk of allowing any who might wish to share a testimony is worth it, for the more one encounters that which is from the Spirit, the more they will be able to discern that which is not.\textsuperscript{117} In other words, the best way to hone the ability to discern is through habitual practice and perpetual encounter with that which is from God. While the possibility remains that some testimonies may not be guided by God, many of them will be. Congregations and individuals may not discern rightly every time, but rather than disallowing the free sharing of testimony altogether, permitting more engagement with testimonies paradoxically aids the discernment process as the community is granted more opportunities to discern. Ultimately, integrating a time for discernment emphasizes that not only the reception of a testimony but also the process of receiving and reflecting through discernment can shape one over time to have the correct emotional disposition toward the words received. Such disposition may be either rightly

\textsuperscript{117} Land, \textit{Pentecostal Spirituality}, 171.
affirmative of God’s work in the sharer’s life or skeptical of the testimony’s content and/or intent.\textsuperscript{118}

**Dialogical Call to Action in Practice**

In addition to testimony’s ability to cultivate orthopathic tendencies, the practice also poses a call to action through its inherent dialogical nature. Pentecostal practice of testimony encapsulates well an understanding of testimony as a conversation through its open invitation as discussed above in conjunction with its openness to spontaneous responses from those listening in the congregation. In typical practice, this latter aspect can look a variety of ways, just as the way in which people share can look a variety of ways. For example, congregants might offer a congratulatory round of applause at the news of a young couple that is finally having a child after years of trying to conceive. Those listening may lift up a shout of praise at the news of a divine healing, or conversely, they may stand in solidarity through an expression of tears at the news of the unexpected death in a congregant’s family. Regardless of the community’s response, Pentecostals recognize that different reactions may be appropriate depending upon the context of the given testimony. Leaving such leeway for spontaneous responses that fit the given circumstances ultimately underscores that testimony is a dialogue between the one sharing and the community, necessarily calling for the ones listening not to sit idly by and passively receive the story being shared but to answer actively in an appropriate manner.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{118} Perhaps part of the discernment process can entail seeing how the testimony shapes the community’s emotions over time. Saliers notes, “[I]mmediacy of feeling must be distinguished from depth of emotion. It is the ‘depth of emotion’ that only shows up over time.” See Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 147. In this way, discernment may take place over time and not merely in the moment that a testimony is given.

\textsuperscript{119} Lathrop argues that resurrection is the ultimate goal of the liturgy. See Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 54. Positive testimonies speak to this reality. Perhaps, then, the reality to which they speak should compel the Church to live in a way that makes the implications of resurrection manifest in the world in the here and now.
While Pentecostals do well in highlighting the conversational nature of testimony through the freedom to respond to the words shared, the implicit call to action present in testimonies could be made more apparent with an incorporation of a concluding prayer following a testimony or series thereof. The pastor or person presiding over the time of testimony might pay special attention to the implicit ethical implications of the stories that are shared, making note to incorporate such notions into a prayer following this portion of the liturgy. In practice, the testimony to a financial need being met through the generosity of a stranger might be followed by a prayer from the minister for God to stir the congregation to discern ways in which they might be able to offer their own generosity and for the diligence to follow through with it. A testimony concerning how the words of a friend brought peace during a difficult week might be followed by a prayer for the Spirit to guide the words of those present to be the words of God to others.

As noted in the previous section, sometimes prayer itself might be the action for which the testimony calls. Testimonies to miraculous divine healing are a prime example. When a person shares such a story with the church community, it may also be appropriate for the minister to incorporate not just a concluding prayer but also a call for others in need of divine healing to come to the altar and receive special prayer. Additionally, regarding testimonies to financial needs being met, to emphasize further how such stories might motivate the Church to continue to embody this generosity of Christ, the minister may also feel led to take up a special offering following the testimony so that the church may put together a fund for anyone who might come to the church in need. Actions such as these ultimately speak to the ethical implications of the narratives in which people find themselves. While a concluding prayer might
be standard practice following the time of testimony, allowing room for spontaneous responses stirred by the Spirit would keep with Pentecostal spirituality’s ethos of docility to the Spirit.

Ordinary Life in Practice

Finally, the last theological theme discussed in relation to the practice of testimony is its connection to everyday life, particularly its affirmation of ordinary events and ordinary people. Pentecostal practice of testimony embodies this aspect of the practice well in the tradition’s emphasis on how the stories that are presented in the ecclesial realm come from the everyday lives of the ordinary people who make up the Church body. In this way, Pentecostals do well in highlighting on the front end of the practice how that which is being shared comes from elsewhere. That which was at one time ordinary is made sacred in the context of the ecclesial space. Everyday events that once had no bearing on the theological imagination of the community are now integrated into the community’s grand theological narrative. People who were simply living life become bearers of the revelation of God as they testify to divine truth.

While Pentecostalism does well in highlighting this initial, retroactive way in which testimony speaks to the ordinary, everyday experiences of people’s lives, testimonial practice could speak to this reality additionally through incorporation of what Jean-Daniel Plüss refers to as “a return to the ordinary.” Essentially, testimonies (and all narratives in general) pose a

\[\text{120} \text{ Integrating testimonies of one’s everyday life into the sacred space of the ecclesial community poses a powerful juxtaposition between our own lived experiences and the ancient symbols of the faith. See Lathrop, }\text{Holy Things}, 5.\]

\[\text{121} \text{ Cf. Lathrop, }\text{Holy Things}, 91-96.\]

\[\text{122} \text{ Schmemann suggests that the liturgy speaks to salvation history; incorporating testimonies to God’s saving power into the liturgy can highlight this. See Schmemann, }\text{Introduction to Liturgical Theology}, 108.\]

\[\text{123} \text{ Plüss, }\text{Narratives in Worship}, 53.\]

\[\text{124} \text{ Ibid., 173.}\]
break from the typical structure of the context in which they are presented. In testimony, the
church community cannot anticipate what will be the contour of the shared story. Ordinary flow
is broken. Once the story ends, however, there naturally should be a return to that which once
was, only now with the knowledge and dispositional transformation that came from the
testimony. There is a return to the ordinary, yet things are not quite as they once were. The
sacred content of the testimony is brought with the sharer and receivers alike back into the realm
of mundane life.

Incorporating a transition from the time of testimony to what comes next in the liturgy
could make this movement more seamless.\(^\text{125}\) If the time of testimony comes at the end of the
service, concluding with a blessing of peace as the congregation leaves could communicate a
return to ordinary while bearing the content of the testimonies. If the testimonies come before
musical worship, a note could be made to offer praise with the stories that have been shared in
mind. If testimony comes before participation in the Eucharist, the minister could discern with
the Spirit how to incorporate the stories shared into the eucharistic liturgy, perhaps highlighting
the freedom, healing, or peace that the sacrament can represent.\(^\text{126}\) Ultimately, learning how to
incorporate a return to the ordinary in an explicit yet meaningful fashion will take time and
practice and ultimately, openness to the Spirit. The goal is to demonstrate how the implications
of the stories persist even after the community has moved on to other things.

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\(^{125}\) As already noted, I do not think a church’s liturgy needs to be structured in a strict or rigid manner. For
this reason, the time of testimonial exchange may come before a time of musical worship, before the Eucharist, or
even at the end of the service. How the minister decides to transition back to the ordinary, then, is flexible.

\(^{126}\) This is not to say that the Eucharist or any other aspect of the worship service is ordinary. Rather,
testimonies should not merely interrupt the service but leave behind something that is carried into that which comes
next. In this way, one could think of the entire liturgy as a macrocosm of testimony’s break from the ordinary,
meaning that the implications of the service as a whole extend beyond the weekly gathering.
Excursus: Testimony in Action

As with my treatment of the Eucharist in the previous chapter, I will also offer a description of what one might experience when engaging in the practice of testimony, utilizing the explorations above.

Standing at the front of the sanctuary, the pastor begins to pray, signaling a movement to the final portion of the liturgy. “Gracious God, thank you for the people gathered here today, for their life experiences, and all they have to offer this community. Holy Spirit, guide our time of testimonial reflection together. Amen.” After a short pause, he speaks again, “Brothers and sisters, as is our custom, we will now open the floor to anyone who wishes to share a testimony concerning God’s work in their life. If you have something you feel the Spirit leading you to share with the congregation, please form a line at the front of the sanctuary.” Those present sit for a moment, the stillness finally broken by an elderly woman who slowly makes her way to the front followed hesitantly by a young man and eventually by a little girl given an approving nod from her mother. The pastor hands the microphone to the woman. She opens with a hearty, “Praise God,” to which members of the congregation respond with, “Amen” and “Hallelujah.” She continues, carefully crafting a story concerning a fall that injured her hip followed by a dismal report from the doctors concerning the likelihood surgery would alleviate any of her pain. She proceeds, however, to emphasize that, now two weeks post-surgery, she is able to walk pain-free. At this, shouts of praise and clapping commence. She offers her own praise through the clamor, “Hallelujah! Praise God, our healer! Amen.” Continuing to praise God, she hands the microphone to the young man in line behind her. He nervously takes it in hand and clears his throat, noting that he has never attended this church before but sensed the Lord telling him to go when he woke up. He thanks the community as he explains that the kindness and generosity he
received from members of the congregation brought a sense of relief from his struggle with depression. He hands the microphone to the little girl before heading back to his seat, tears in his eyes. The congregation responds with their own tears, claps, and shouts of praise. Once a calm comes back over the congregation, the little girl now begins to speak quietly, thanking Jesus for receiving into heaven her grandmother who had passed away a week earlier. The congregation responds softly with scattered acclamations of, “Praise God” and “Thank you, Jesus.” The little girl returns to her mom, and the pastor comes back to the front. “We have heard from three of God’s children today. Let us take a moment to reflect on what the Spirit might have to tell us through their words.” He slowly bows his head, and the congregants follow suit. After a few minutes of stillness, the pastor calmly speaks, “In light of the words shared regarding physical healing and relief from depression, I feel the Spirit leading us to pray with anyone else who might desire such things. If you would like us to lay hands on you and pray for your own healing or relief or for that of someone close to you, I invite you to please come to the altar at this time.” Slowly, a small group of people begins to move and kneel at the altar. As the pastor steps down to lay hands on them, others from the congregation join him, praying in tongues and English alike. Once everyone is prayed for, the pastor slowly makes his way back to the microphone. “Let us pray. Merciful God, thank you for speaking through those who have shared their stories with us today. Let us not grow weary in praying for those who are sick. Guide us in our interactions with those who are sad and hurting and help us to mourn with those who mourn and to rejoice with those who rejoice. Holy Spirit, stir us to action as the body of Christ in the world. Amen.” Looking at the congregation, he now offers a benediction, “May the God of healing, peace, and comfort be with you in all you do this week. You are dismissed in the power of Christ.”
Conclusion

The Pentecostal practice of testimony speaks to the aforementioned way in which the tradition’s liturgy places more emphasis on oral means of communication than written forms. Within this framework, the sharing of testimonies is an important way of communicating and proclaiming who God is to the ecclesial community. The sharing of one’s story of an experience or encounter with God is both an important response to God’s work in one’s own life as well as an opportunity for others to encounter God by placing themselves within someone else’s narrative and thereby believing that God can do the same in their stories. In this way, as was the case with the Eucharist, the sharing of testimonies is another important liturgical practice that can shape the worship experience in important ways. Pentecostal liturgy possesses inherent worth. The previous chapter sought to demonstrate how a more formally liturgical practice might coincide with Pentecostal spirituality; this chapter has sought to demonstrate the theological and practical richness of a practice in which Pentecostals already engage. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Pentecostal practice of testimonial exchange is on a recent decline. Hopefully, this chapter has demonstrated what the tradition might lose through less frequent participation in such a distinctive practice. Having established the legitimacy of both the Eucharist and testimony on their own, the next chapter seeks to explore how these two valuable practices might work together to cultivate an even more nuanced and rich worship experience for any who might participate.
CHAPTER 3: THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THE EUCHARIST AND TESTIMONY

Introduction

Methodology

Having extrapolated Pentecostal themes from the practice of the Eucharist in the first chapter and significant theological themes from the Pentecostal practice of testimonial exchange in the second, I now move toward exploration of what meaning might lie in the juxtaposition of these two practices in a liturgical structure. Ultimately, the goal of this chapter (and this project as a whole) is to demonstrate that a robust, consistent practice of the Eucharist coincides with Pentecostal spirituality, especially when considered from a holistic liturgical framework rather than as an isolated practice on its own. In this way, the Eucharist need not be something foreign to Pentecostal practice or something thoughtlessly attached to the end of a worship service on occasion. There is space for the sacrament to be incorporated into Pentecostal liturgy in a meaningful way without compromising a distinct Pentecostal identity. Additionally, the Pentecostal practice of testimony has something to offer conversations of liturgy and in particular, the Eucharist.

Two methodological notes for this chapter are in order. First, as I have noted in the first two chapters, I do not claim that the themes discussed in relation to the Eucharist and testimony are exhaustive of what each of these practices has to offer conversations of liturgical theology. Additionally, I do not claim that these themes are exclusive to those practices alone. Ecclesial communities can find undercurrents of pneumatological transformation, eschatology, affirmation of the body, orthopathy, ethics, and connection to everyday life in a variety of liturgical practices. Furthermore, there is overlap in the prevalence of these themes in the Eucharist and testimony alike. In fact, an underlying assumption of this chapter is that placing these two
practices in liturgical connection can highlight how all of these themes (and more) are present in both.\textsuperscript{127} Thus, thinking about these liturgical practices from this broad perspective can enrich the experience of the individual elements.

Second, with a Pentecostal audience in mind, I have tried to leave significant space for ecclesial communities to structure liturgical practices in whatever ways they see fit, recognizing that the Spirit might lead different communities to engage with worship in a way that suits their particular needs or desires for growth. Therefore, my discussion of the Eucharist and testimony together in liturgical connection will explore the implications of both the Eucharist informed by testimony, and vice versa. Practically speaking, this means that testimony preceded by the Eucharist might take on a different meaning than testimony followed by the Eucharist, but neither way of structuring is right or objectively better. Different communities might prefer one way of organizing this portion of their worship service over another. Furthermore, while this paper relies specifically on the Eucharist’s connection testimony, I do not intend for such treatment to suggest that juxtaposing these specific practices is prescriptive of what should always be the case in every church community. Rather, such a connection is one example of how Pentecostals might find rationale for greater integration of the Eucharist into their worship services and one demonstration of how liturgical meaning lies in juxtaposition. Ultimately, church communities could incorporate the Eucharist (or testimony) into their worship gatherings in a variety of ways, each of which might grant the practice additional nuanced meanings.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{127} Don Saliers notes that liturgical rituals and symbols can have layers of meanings. See Saliers, \textit{Worship as Theology}, 143.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
notion with which I am comfortable. Such a multiplicity of explorations, however, simply is not feasible for a project such as this.

Recap of Lathrop’s Juxtapositional Model

I offer a final introductory note before moving into the main content of this chapter. In the introduction to this work as a whole, I mentioned that I rely heavily upon the work of Gordon Lathrop. Essentially, Lathrop’s argument is that liturgical meaning lies in a series of juxtapositions. In his own words, “pattern yields meaning.”129 Such a proposition is intuitively sound, not just for how one finds meaning in liturgy but also in many spheres of life. We do not study historical events in isolation but as a series of happenings that provide context. The push for civil rights did not happen in a vacuum. The development of computer technology did not take place overnight. A multiplicity of factors informs how we make sense of these things. Similarly, one does not read literature in an isolated context; rather, we bring presuppositions and prior knowledge of the author and their previous work to bear on how we read a given book. This even means that the same book might accrue different meanings when read by the same person on subsequent accounts. So also with the elements of worship. The Eucharist takes on meaning in light of the testimonies shared by the congregation, and vice versa. For this reason, the variations of people who share and the words they offer can shape each worship service in a unique way. The variations in the people who serve the bread and the wine, in what texts are read, and in what prayers are offered as part of the eucharistic liturgy can do the same. In my treatment of the juxtaposition of the Eucharist and testimony, therefore, I begin each section with exploring how the Eucharist might be informed by testimony followed by how testimony might

129 Lathrop, Holy Things, 35.
be informed by the Eucharist while weaving together the themes discussed in the previous two chapters.

**Thematic Juxtaposition of the Eucharist and Testimony**

Pneumatological Transformation and Orthopathy

My analysis of the dialogue between the Eucharist and testimony begins by bringing together the themes of pneumatological transformation, as discussed in relation to the Eucharist, and the cultivation of orthopathy, as discussed in relation to testimony. First, when church communities consider the space the Eucharist creates for pneumatological transformation in light of testimony’s propensity to shape orthopathic dispositions, a holistic vision of sanctification can emerge. As noted in chapter one, obedience to Christ’s command to participate in the Eucharist can shape the one who participates to reflect better Christ’s image. Engaging in testimonial exchange can promote such transformation further by providing concrete examples of what Christ’s work looks like in action: aiding someone in need, praying for someone in a desperate situation, sitting in solidarity with someone in his or her suffering. More than this, the Spirit can work through such testimonies that are shared to shape the dispositions of those who receive them. In this way, if participation in the Eucharist follows a time of testimonial exchange, those who come to the table may do so aware that to embody Christ as remembered in the meal is to respond rightly to others in their circumstances\(^{130}\)—to perpetuate the way in which Christ worked through the people mentioned in the testimonies. As eucharistic participants ponder Christ as revealed in the sacrament, they may now recall the ethic of Christ from a new perspective. Considering the testimony of a woman who encountered lovingkindness from a

\(^{130}\) Such a way of thinking about the Eucharist corresponds with Paul’s admonition to the Corinthian community in 1 Corinthians 11 concerning their gathering to partake of the feast without discerning the needs of those present.
counselor while she worked through unhealthy habits may inspire someone partaking of the Eucharist to reconsider Christ’s interactions with people like the woman at the well or with Peter following his denial of the Lord. This person now may consider the grace Christ extends people—both in the stories of scripture and today—from a more empathetic position and consequently seek to embody better that disposition of grace toward others in his/her own life.\footnote{Such a concept of seeing others rightly and extending grace rooted in a proper affectional disposition toward them has obvious connotations for a theology of open table, i.e., allowing anyone who wishes (people from different faith traditions and believers and non-believers alike) to partake of the Eucharist. If church communities permit anyone to share testimonies of God’s work in their lives, they should consider extending a similar sentiment to participation in the Eucharist. Christ is for everyone, and reconciliation is available for all (cf. Lathrop, \textit{Holy Things}, 128). Furthermore, participation in the sacrament could be the very means through which the Spirit encounters someone who is estranged from God. If testimonies speak to God’s ability to meet people in unexpected ways, the Eucharist could be an additional space where this happens.}

Not only is testimony able to shape one’s participation in the Eucharist, but the Eucharist likewise can shape the kinds of the testimonies ecclesial communities engage with and how they might be received. In the second chapter detailing themes related to testimony and its practice, I focused primarily on positive stories: healings, deliverances from sin, and the meeting of needs. If Pentecostal communities (and Christian communities in general) wish to take the category of orthopathy seriously, however, they should consider allowing space for the full range of the human emotional experience toward God and the circumstances of life.\footnote{This is the impetus for much of Saliers’ work, \textit{Worship as Theology}.} This would include the category of lament and what Jean-Daniel Plüss refers to as “testimonies of defeat.”\footnote{Plüss, \textit{Narratives in Worship}, 186.} Connecting the Eucharist to the practice of testimony could create space for lament and testimonies of defeat and thereby mold the Pentecostal practice to embody further its inherent openness to all people, as discussed in the previous chapter.
Scott Ellington argues that since Pentecostal spirituality is inherently experiential, it should leave room for experiences of not only divine presence but also of divine silence and absence.\textsuperscript{134} I would add that if one understands orthopathy as right feeling toward a given situation, then this should include anger, confusion, and frustration at God’s perceived absence in or indifference toward one’s own life or that of others. While the Pentecostal practice of testimonial exchange on its own may not readily encourage this, understanding the practice in light of the notions of suffering and death implicit within the Eucharist could allow for the seamless integration of stories that are less positive in outlook but nonetheless speak to the lived human experience. For example, if the Eucharist comes before the time of testimony in the liturgical structure, contemplating how Christ cries out in confusion at God’s forsaking of him on the cross as one partakes of the elements might provoke this person to share a testimony concerning how they, too, feel forsaken by God as she faces depression each day. Framing such a testimony of defeat in the story of Christ’s own suffering ultimately can help the congregation to cultivate orthopathic tendencies of solidarity and frustration that all is not as it should be in the world. Such expressions of confusion are part of what it means to be human—part of the story of shared human experience, embodied even within the life of Christ.\textsuperscript{135}

Eschatology and A Dialogical Call to Action

Additionally, the Eucharist’s inherent eschatological implications and testimony’s dialogical call to action can mutually inform each other when placed in juxtaposition in the liturgy. When a time of testimony comes before the Eucharist, the former can shape those who


\textsuperscript{135} Saliers argues that allowing space for the expression of such negative emotions makes liturgy honest and truthful. Saliers, \textit{Worship as Theology}, 118-25.
participate in the sacrament to recognize better that this act is not merely for individuals but for
the body of people that constitute the Church. As mentioned in chapter two, testimony is
inherently social, posing an implicit dialogue between the one sharing and the community, and
the content of that which is shared contains a call to ethical action in the world. Those gathered
in worship can bring this call to action into the eucharistic liturgy that follows. Someone might
share a testimony of a peace of mind she felt after a friend prayed with her in the midst of
crippling anxiety. Having heard this testimony and acknowledged its call to action to meet others
in their needs, the congregation, then, might approach the eucharistic table with a sense that
meeting others in their needs is part of what it means to be the body of Christ in the world. Those
gathered may become distinctly aware as they partake of the body and blood that, while the
fullness of the Church is an eschatological reality, that community nonetheless exists in the here
and now and possesses a responsibility to act as Christ’s body in the world.

In addition, this recognition of how testimony calls the Church to embody the ethic of
Christ in the world can shape how the worshippers perceive Christ to be present in the Eucharist.
Debates concerning Christ’s presence in the sacrament typically center around his presence in
the eucharistic elements—how the bread is his body and the wine his blood. I have already

136 Furthermore, Schmemann notes that the idea of the Eucharist as being primarily for the individual was a later innovation. See Schmemann, Introduction to Liturgical Theology, 129. Again, this corresponds with Paul’s comments to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 11.

137 Plüss, Narratives in Worship, xxiii.

noted that considering Christ’s absence might be a better way of thinking about how one partakes of the elements; this, however, does not mean Christ is absent from the ritual altogether.\textsuperscript{139} Juxtaposing the Eucharist with testimonies to God’s work through others could highlight how, despite his physical absence, Christ is present to the world through the people that constitute his Church. Keeping in mind the testimonies to God’s work through others while partaking of the Eucharist can remind those gathered at the table that, just as Christ offered himself to others, they likewise are called to do the same.\textsuperscript{140} The same Spirit that anointed Christ for his public ministry anoints his Church for their own.\textsuperscript{141}

Conversely, the eschatology present in the Eucharist may also shape an understanding and practice of testimony. If participation in the Eucharist \textit{precedes} a practice of testimonial exchange, this juxtaposition potentially can communicate that the events to which testimonies speak have eschatological implications. In the discussion of the Eucharist in chapter one, I mentioned that the ritual highlights both the realized and forthcoming aspects of the eschaton in its embodiment of the kingdom and its connection to divine absence, respectively. Regarding the view of consubstantiation, in which Christ is mysteriously present in and around the elements [“Confession Concerning the Lord’s Supper,” in \textit{Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings}, eds., Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 259-76]. John Calvin proposed an understanding of Christ as being spiritually present [\textit{Calvin and Bullinger on the Lord’s Supper}, Gorgias Liturgical Studies (Gorgias Press Llc., 2010)]. The debate continues. Even modern Pentecostal scholars offer metaphysical arguments for how Christ can be present in the elements. See Green, \textit{Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper}, 282-93.

\textsuperscript{139} See Stephenson, “Proclaiming the Mystery of Faith,” 85-96.


\textsuperscript{141} As mentioned in the introduction to this project, there is a close connection between liturgy and ecclesiology. Liturgical scholars especially highlight the Eucharist as constitutive of the Church. While the Eucharist certainly can remind the Church of its identity as the body of Christ, I suggest that the Church is not eucharistically constituted so much as pneumatologically constituted. The sacrament is an important practice that can work to unite the Church toward its christological vision, but the Spirit is ultimately the active agent working through the act to make movement toward such a vision possible. Contra Schmemann, \textit{Introduction to Liturgical Theology}, 24. On a similar note, it is not the content and structure of liturgy that the Church holds in common so much as the pervasive presence of the Spirit of Christ. Contra Lathrop, \textit{Holy Things}, 114.
former, positive testimonies can serve as further examples of the inbreaking of the kingdom in the here and now. In practice, one might participate in the Eucharist, beholding the embodied picture of the reconciled kingdom to come in the different faces presenting the body and blood of Christ to the congregation. With this in mind, subsequently hearing a testimony from a member of the congregation who reconciled with a long-estranged family member may communicate to the congregation that the Eucharist’s eschatological picture of reconciliation can exist even outside the walls of the church in the present world.

However, as mentioned above, the Eucharist does not point merely to the reconciliation of all things to come but also to the current state of affairs, which is at times bleak. Christ is absent. He has not yet returned for his Church. All things have yet to be made new. This aspect of the Eucharist can inform a Pentecostal understanding of and response to testimonies of lament. While the Eucharist might lead some to share stories of hope, relief from pain, and the active work of God in their lives, the practice might also lead others to share stories concerning experiences of suffering or feelings of God’s absence in their life. The Eucharist possesses the ability to spur people to either of these forms of testimonies, and the juxtaposition of these two kinds of stories itself possesses important meaning and implications for the Church.

I have discussed Ellington’s emphasis on the importance of the integration of lament into testimonial liturgy as a way of encapsulating the entire human experience of life and God. Additionally, Ellington emphasizes that testimonies are important precisely because they can remind the ecclesial community of God’s character in the midst of feelings of divine absence or confusion at how God is working in one’s life in the presence of immense suffering or pain. In his own words,

143 Ellington, “Costly Loss,” 57.
Testimony after deliverance is expected of the one delivered, not just as an expression of gratitude, but because the experience of God’s silence, hiddenness and abandonment will come again and that testimony will be needed at some future time as a resource for addressing God again in the silence. Testimony to present deliverance becomes a resource for the future … Without testimony it becomes difficult if not impossible to explore openly and candidly the circumstance of lament, because testimony to God’s saving acts in the past provides the necessary hope that permits both an honest appraisal of the present and hope for the future.\textsuperscript{144}

In this way, the sharing of testimonies of lament and testimonies of deliverance together encapsulate a holistic picture of the human experience. The one currently experiencing God’s absence can remember another’s testimony of God’s deliverance and hope that this God will remain faithful to the divine character revealed in such a story. The one currently rejoicing in an overwhelming sense of God’s presence likewise, through encountering another’s testimony of lament, can remember that following God is a process that encompasses times of both exuberance and great sorrow. This person may even remember his own joyful testimony during some future experience of pain.\textsuperscript{145}

Ultimately, this Eucharist engenders both the realized element of eschatology in its presentation of reconciliation and the forthcoming element of eschatology in its picture of Christ’s suffering and physical absence from the world. This tension present within the sacrament can fuel a tension in the kinds of testimonies that congregants feel led to share,

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{145} Perhaps, in light of this connection between testimony and remembrance, one could extend the eucharistic concept of anamnesis to a liturgical practice of testimonial exchange. In which case, similar to how the community actively participates in the remembered events surrounding the Eucharist, the community also actively participates in the remembered events of the shared testimonies. Cf. Augustine, “Liturgy, Theosis, and the Renewal of the World,” 166; Schmemann, \textit{Introduction to Liturgical Theology}, 123. Such active remembrance through testimony also would highlight further the way in which the stories of the individual congregants become the stories of the community as a whole.
but both types of stories should stir within the congregation a call to action. Positive testimonies inspired by the reconciliation present in the Eucharist can propel the community to continue realizing this vision in the here and now. Testimonies of lament inspired by the suffering present in the Eucharist can stir the community to work toward bringing the Christian vision of how things ought to be into the here and now. Ultimately, connecting testimonies and the Eucharist in this way can combat a propensity to view the Christian life as “a departure out of the world.” The worship gathering is not an end in itself; rather, worship is for the sake of the world.

The Body and Everyday Life

Lastly, the Eucharist and the Pentecostal practice of testimony can convey meaning through the juxtaposition of the former’s emphasis on the body and the latter’s emphasis on the significance of everyday life. If a time of testimony precedes the practice of the Eucharist, one can enter eucharistic engagement with a notion that the physical bodies present at the table bring a variety of life experiences and dispositions toward God with them. In this way, eucharistic practice becomes an affirmation of the totality of human life and experience. One’s body as well as their experiences matter; the two together make worship possible. One does not shed their experiences when they partake of the eucharistic elements but rather brings them to the table to be shaped by the God revealed in the practice. A time of testimony, then, might highlight further that the Eucharist is an

146 Integrating testimony and the Eucharist could help ecclesial communities recognize any “ethical gaps” in the content of their liturgy. See chapter eleven of Saliers, Worship as Theology, 171-90.

147 Schmemann, Introduction to Liturgical Theology, 31.

148 Ibid., 61; Cf. Lathrop, Holy Things, 211-12.

149 Cf. Smith, Desiring the Kingdom, 144.
additional space in which one might encounter God. The same God that intervened in a
congregant’s life to bring a sense of comfort in the midst of anxiety is the God recognized
in the elements and story of the Eucharist. Just as God can work in and through the
circumstances of one’s life, such work can also come through participation in the ritual that
has been handed down to this God’s people. Ultimately, the sharing and reception of
testimonies juxtaposed with the Eucharist communicates that life’s formative habits
happen both in physical participation in the weekly components of the liturgy as well as in
ordinary life. Furthermore, this juxtaposition of the Eucharist’s emphasis on materiality
and testimony’s encompassing of everyday life likewise communicates that sacramentality
extends beyond merely the components of the weekly liturgy. Recalling from chapter one
that sacramentality refers to one encountering God through physical means, placing the
Eucharist in juxtaposition with testimonies conversely highlights that one encounters God
in the daily, physical experiences of life. In this way, the aspects of these two practices that
point to embodiment are mutually informative.

A particular part of such embodiment that both practices encompass is physical
healing. As noted in chapter one, Pentecostals traditionally have understood the Eucharist
as bringing, or at very least, pointing to, physical healing. Understanding the sacrament in
light of testimonies of divine healing in particular could help Pentecostals recover this
aspect of the ritual. Hearing a testimony to divine healing prior to engaging with the
sacrament could shape those who participate to expect that God might choose to do the
same for them as they partake of Christ’s body and blood that is believed to bring physical

\(^{150}\) Ibid., 212.
restoration. Testimonies to healing ultimately indicate that divine healing does occur and can revive those in the congregation who might grow weary praying for healing as they partake of the Eucharist each week to no avail.

Additionally, engagement in testimonial exchange following the Eucharist could emphasize that human flourishing is both material and spiritual. Testimonies of salvation are understood in light of the sacrament’s physical act of eating—a ritual encompassing both material and spiritual implications. In the Eucharist, one might recall that Christ is both the one who fed the multitudes and the one who grants salvation. Christ brings both physical and spiritual nourishment. Similarly, keeping this in mind, one might notice that the subsequent testimonies that are shared speak to both physical and spiritual healing. While one person speaks of a divine healing, another speaks of deliverance from sin, but neither story is more important than the other. Both are needed. The Eucharist’s upholding of physical symbols and a physical action as a means through which God chooses to work and speak can shape the ecclesial community to understand testimony as pointing to God’s ability to likewise promote spiritual growth through one’s embodied life experiences, creating a holistic vision of human personhood. Thus, the juxtaposition of the Eucharist and testimony can highlight the intricate connection between the spiritual and the physical, rather than viewing the two as standing in disconnection or opposition.

**Conclusion**

The explorations above are merely a few examples of how the Eucharist and the Pentecostal practice of testimony might mutually inform each other. There are multiple facets to each of these practices that may interact in a variety of ways. Additionally, the meanings described in this chapter may not strike every congregant to the same extent, and such meanings
may also accrue over time through consistent engagement in the worship gathering. Furthermore, the meaning that one gleans from these practices may depend upon the extent to which the people presiding over them draw out such interpretations in an explicit way. The excurses at the end of the first two chapters attempted to demonstrate how this might be the case in practice. Overall, I hope that an exploration in the theological, ethical, and anthropological connections between the Eucharist and testimony can offer both a renewed sense of connection to Christian history for Pentecostals and an appreciation for an openness to the Spirit within more formal ecclesial structures. In this way, an underlying claim of this project has been that the Spirit can work both within and beyond structured means of worship.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


