



DYNAMICS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP



## RENEWAL WORSHIP

A THEOLOGY OF  
PENTECOSTAL DOXOLOGY

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# WHAT RENEWAL WORSHIP IS

## A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL METHOD

*In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.  
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.*

ACTS 2:17-18

THE PASSAGE ABOVE takes place on the day of Pentecost after the Spirit came upon those who gathered in the upper room (Acts 2:1-4).<sup>1</sup> As crowds gathered, Peter stood and declared the partial fulfillment of Joel 2's prophecy concerning the Day of the Lord,<sup>2</sup> and more than three thousand people

<sup>1</sup>It is important to note that Pentecost was already a holy day in Judaism, which is why many Jews were gathered in Jerusalem in the first place. Also known as Shavuot or the Feast of Weeks, Pentecost is a harvest feast that celebrates the wheat harvest and takes place fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits.

<sup>2</sup>In Matthew, Jesus makes the kingdom of God concern the renewal of Israel, but pictures it as being related to people being baptized in the Spirit (Mt 3:7-12; 19:28-29). In this way he sees the kingdom of God as entering history through the Spirit before a cataclysmic Day of the Lord event. He seems to indicate an "already and not yet" understanding of the kingdom of God when he refers to the blessings of this life and in the age to come (Mk 10:30; Mt 12:28-32; Lk 17:20-37). This means that Joel's prophecy of the Day of the Lord was partially fulfilled at the cross and through Pentecost, and will be totally fulfilled in the age to come at Christ's second coming.

welcomed the message and were baptized (Acts 2:41). This is Pentecost—the culmination of Christ’s earthly ministry and the birth of the church.<sup>3</sup> Peter’s discourse ties together at least three pertinent themes that we see expressed again and again in renewal theology and spirituality. First, we see priority given to the outpoured Spirit. This is God impelled upon creation to mobilize and motivate the increase of God’s ministry on earth. Second, we see an emphasis on the egalitarian distribution of charismatic gifts. Everyone—man and woman, young and old, slave and free—will be enlisted and equipped to become God’s active agents to carry out this ministry. And third, this whole event bears an eschatological imprint. The outpour occurs in the “last days,” presumably to usher in the kingdom of God. Every part of this—the outpour of the Spirit, the commissioning of God’s people, and the expansion of the kingdom—was inaugurated by Christ during his time on earth and points forward to his return. The goal of this book is to mine this account and see how renewal worship is both informed by and reinforces this narrative and its many implications.

The whole biblical narrative rises to a crescendo with Christ, and while some may see Christ’s ascension as the crux of this apex, Pentecostal theologian Frank Macchia reasons convincingly that the biblical narrative actually climaxes at Pentecost because it is here where Christ pours the Spirit out on all flesh.<sup>4</sup> Through Pentecost, redeemed people become agents of the kingdom of God. Macchia writes that Pentecost “is the event where the Spirit Baptizer pours forth the Spirit on all flesh and incorporates us into himself—into the life and mission of the triune God.”<sup>5</sup> If theology is the study of God in relation

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<sup>3</sup>Frank Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer: Christology in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 40.

<sup>4</sup>Frank Macchia crafts a Christology that’s biblical, Pentecostal, conversant with the church fathers, and expands logically from Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Christology from below. Macchia states that Pannenberg stops short by concluding the revelation of Christ’s deity with the resurrection. Pannenberg believes that the claims of Jesus’ deity were vindicated at the resurrection, which then can be traced back to prove every aspect of Jesus’ life, including his incarnation (Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978], 24-25). Macchia believes that while the resurrection implies a vindication of Jesus’ assumption, Pentecost rendered Jesus’ lordship explicit (*Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 40). This is because Jesus reveals his unity with the self-impacting Lord when he pours out the Spirit at Pentecost. Only God can give God. Macchia’s Christology is a sophisticated corrective from the misgivings of creedal Christology, and a powerful answer to the challenges brought by those who sought to reconstruct the historical Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 64. James Dunn makes a similar point: “The climax and purposed end of Jesus’ ministry is not the cross and the resurrection, but the ascension and Pentecost.” James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 44.

to humanity, the Pentecost event should be seen as supremely theological because humanity is brought back into God's life and mission. At Pentecost, Christ pours out the Spirit on the newly commissioned humanity to help bring about God's redemptive plan for creation.

For Macchia, what began as a biblical theology of the account of Pentecost in Acts turned into a theological method for understanding Christian, and particularly Pentecostal, faith and doctrine through the lens of Pentecost. The benefit of such an approach is that we can fix our theological interpretations to a centralized point of narrative contact. It helps us comprehend our Pentecostal spirituality in light of a greater, cohesive, biblical narrative. Such a method would be appropriate for rooting a renewal theology of worship. Even though Christian worship can be understood as a social phenomenon, concepts that pertain to faith traditions cannot merely be understood sociologically. Sociology helps us understand social relations between peoples and cultures but cannot adequately explicate the spiritual and theological significance of religious concepts. As Pentecostal theologian Mark Cartledge points out, "*Theological texts need theological contexts to make sense of them.*"<sup>6</sup> In order to *truly* understand how a community worships, we must get a sense of what worship means theologically for that community and how this meaning fits within the community's contextual framework. To this end, this chapter seeks to determine a theological method that is biblically based and pays close attention to the hermeneutical, text-context negotiation that concerns the meaning and practice of renewal worship. Beginning with the Acts 2 account of Pentecost, our method makes the "universal outpour" motif the keynote biblical image through which everything else is observed.

As the title of this chapter suggests, we will answer the question "What is renewal worship?" by articulating a theological method for renewal worship that is biblically rooted in the Acts 2 account of Pentecost. Following Frank Macchia, this method connects the universal outpour of Acts 2 to the return of Christ and helps us understand future hope as proleptically breaking into

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<sup>6</sup>Mark Cartledge, "Locating the Spirit in Meaningful Experience: Empirical Theology and Pentecostal Hermeneutics," in Kenneth Archer and L. William Oliverio Jr., eds., *Constructive Pneumatological Hermeneutics in Pentecostal Christianity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 255; emphasis original.

and forming our present circumstances. This chapter also differentiates the Pentecostal understanding of worship from evangelical and sacramental views, especially as it concerns the immediate presence of God in worship and the gifts that are bestowed by God through worship. Finally, this chapter demonstrates practical considerations of this method, highlighting the significance of healing in renewal worship, and displaying how this might work out in individual, communal, and societal levels. It is my hope that this theological method will be thoroughly biblical, thoroughly Pentecostal, and useful for understanding Christian worship in a renewal context.

### GROUNDING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL METHOD

The expression *biblical theological method* is not a highbrow term for merely reading Scripture but denotes a method for interpreting Scripture and evaluating the doctrinal implications of the interpretation. Developing a theological method for renewal worship that is biblically based must, therefore, be indicative of the way Pentecostals read Scripture. That's not to say Pentecostals read a different Bible or practice things that are extrabiblical, but it does mean that Pentecostals bring some theological commitments to the text *before* reading a passage. This shouldn't be alarming, though, because every Christian tradition brings some of their own theological commitments to the biblical texts. This is an inescapable fact of our bounded reality. No one comes to a text from a totally neutral or completely objective position. Pre-text commitments are often inherently formed through the religious practices of the Christian tradition.<sup>7</sup> What's unique about Pentecostalism is that worship, and particularly musical worship, is one of the great determining factors of Pentecostal theology. In other words, renewal worship helps shape the Pentecostal pre-text. While many theologians have historically viewed a faith tradition's emotions and attitudes (*pathos*) as flowing from Christian action (*praxis*) that was initially informed by belief (*doxa*), Pentecostal theologian Kenneth Archer flips the script, claiming that worship is the primary way Pentecostals *do* theology. Archer writes,

Our theological explanations can become a critical reflection upon our doxology with our acts of worship always informing and transforming our official

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<sup>7</sup>For further reading, see Daniel Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), chap. 1.

dogma; and, in turn, our dogma informing our doxology. Orthodoxy has more to do with our primary way of doing theology, which is worship, than the secondary critical reflective activity—the production of official dogma or right believing (*orthopistis*).<sup>8</sup>

What this means is that we can't look at the foundations of renewal theology through a strictly linear lens. Doxa does not necessarily come before praxis and pathos in Pentecostal traditions. Rather, these modes of conduct mingle and inform each other through communal expression. When discussing renewal worship, we can appreciate belief and action together in concert, eschewing any chronological priority. Taking this into account, we can take a closer look at how theology informs worship and vice versa.

**Uncovering theological commitments.** The aural makeup of a liturgy is formative for a community's theology.<sup>9</sup> What is expressed, verbally and artistically, accents particular theological commitments of the community's outlook. We often hear of worship scholars, particularly ones writing prescriptively, discussing the "theological soundness" of a worship song. Soundness, in logic, refers to a statement being both valid and true, so if something is theologically sound it makes sense *and* speaks truly of the Christian faith. The problem with finding the theological soundness of a song is that often people disregard a song's implicit theology because it does not agree with their own theological commitments. But theologically *different* does not mean theologically *unsound*. In fact—and this is important—most published worship songs *are* theologically sound; they just portray contrastive theological commitments.

A theologically unsound song must deny or at least confuse primary doctrinal beliefs. Primary Christian beliefs are fundamental and broad—the types of beliefs one *must* confess in order to be considered a Christian. These primary beliefs are creedal, having been mostly scrutinized and formalized by the fourth century. Many of these beliefs were nicely encapsulated in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and affirm basic Christian beliefs: God is the Creator of all things, Christ and the Spirit are coeternal with the Father,

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<sup>8</sup>Kenneth Archer, *The Gospel Revisited: Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 11.

<sup>9</sup>Don Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 162.

Christ died and rose again for the redemption of fallen humanity, the Scriptures are holy, Christ will return to judge and set all things right, Christ inaugurated the kingdom of God, which has no end, and God established the confessional church for witness. If a worship song denies or confuses any of these statements, then indeed, it is theologically unsound. But most songs affirm these statements, either outright or implicitly. The matters of theological difference in these songs are usually secondary or even tertiary issues that illustrate particular theological traditions. To make this point, let's consider three ways contemporary worship music expresses theological commitments lyrically and by its structure.

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend's contemporary hymn "In Christ Alone," for instance, is about finding one's identity in Christ, but like many hymns this song traces the whole gospel message from the incarnation through the death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Christ. But the line "Till on that cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied,"<sup>10</sup> suggests a particular commitment to the penal substitutionary theory of atonement. This is a theological view of atonement that's held by many evangelicals today but rejected by several mainline traditions. In a nutshell, this view states that Jesus' sacrifice satisfied divine justice and that God was unable to forgive sin without someone or something assuming its penalty. My point here does not concern the theory's theological propriety; I simply want to demonstrate the presence of a theological pre-text commitment in a worship song. In this case, the implicit commitments of penal substitution align with Reformed theology. Reformed theologians will likely want to include penal substitution as a primary belief, but that would mean millions of Christians around the world that hold to a different view of the atonement are denying a primary Christian doctrine, which leads, inevitably, to heterodoxy, or at worst heresy. But, as stated above, primary Christian beliefs are broader and more foundational. The creedal, primary belief that's affirmed here is simply that Christ atoned for our sins, not which theory of atonement explains this assertion best. In other words, people who reject the particular theory of penal substitutionary

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<sup>10</sup>"In Christ Alone," words and music by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty, CCLI 3350395 © 2001 Thankyou Music (administrated by Capitol CMG Publishing). It should be noted that some versions of the song update the lyrics to avoid the implicit commitment of penal substitution.



atonement have not committed heresy, but people who reject the broader belief that Christ has atoned for our sins have.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Hillsong Worship's song "So Will I (100 Billion X)," is about creation bowing down and worshipping God. Although the song's main theme isn't controversial, one of the lines is

*And as you speak  
A hundred billion creatures catch your breath  
Evolving in pursuit of what you said  
If it all reveals your nature so will I.*<sup>12</sup>

The lyrics are poetic and do not offer an explicit commitment to the theory of evolution in God's act of creation, but by using the word *evolving* in a context that also describes nature and science in the line prior, Hillsong has left open the possibility for concepts like theistic evolution, which is popular in theologically progressive and post-evangelical traditions. The creedal, primary belief that's affirmed here is simply that God created all things, not the manner in which God created. Those who profess a particular theory of *how* God created everything have not committed heresy, but people who reject the broader belief *that* God created everything have.

One final example can be found with gospel artist Tasha Cobbs Leonard's song "I'm Getting Ready" through lyrics that state,

*Eyes haven't seen  
And ears haven't heard  
The kind of blessings  
The kind of blessings  
That's about to fall on me.*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>I often make the distinction for my students of being "theologically wrong" and "theologically heretical." Everyone holds to particular theological commitments, and when someone commits to a belief, that person has rejected, outright or in part, every other theory on the same subject. This is perfectly normal, and simply what it means to hold beliefs. It is perfectly normal and justifiable to believe that the rejected beliefs are wrong. It is not justifiable, however, to say they are heretical unless they reject or distort a creedal, primary Christian belief.

<sup>12</sup>"So Will I (100 Billion X)," words and music by Joel Houston, Benjamin Hastings, and Michael Fatkin, CCLI 7084123 © 2017 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (administrated by Hillsong Music Publishing, Capitol CMG Publishing).

<sup>13</sup>"I'm Getting Ready (Ready for Overflow)," words and music by Tasha Cobbs Leonard and Todd Galberth, CCLI 7099373 © 2017 Meadowgreen Music Company, Tasha Cobbs Music Group,

One could see a commitment to the prosperity gospel or at least to a theology of abundance.<sup>14</sup> This sort of theology is expressed across many charismatic traditions, but also viewed (and rejected) by many other traditions, including some Pentecostal traditions, as a justification for greedy consumerism.<sup>15</sup> To really understand the positive and negative implications of this theology we must handle these commitments with more nuance—a task that will commence in the next chapter. For now, let's settle on the less contentious notion that worship song lyrics are not theologically neutral, but expressive of a particular faith community's theological tradition.

While worship song lyrics regularly demonstrate and reinforce theological commitments, the structure of worship also helps to shape theology. To shed light on how worship influences spiritual and communal formation, worship scholar Glenn Packiam differentiates between a service's "espoused" and "operant" theology.<sup>16</sup> Espoused theology considers the words that are expressed through songs, preaching, prayers, and so on, whereas operant theology is what is encoded in the worship. Uncovering what's encoded requires analyzing the structure and form of the worship practice, and the way it's performed or enacted.<sup>17</sup> For instance, when worship is sacramental, the presence of God is emphasized through a covenantal understanding of ritual. When the worship service utilizes a lot of intercessory prayer and focuses on healing and abundance, the community's theology is shaped by paradigmatic lived experiences. What a community *does* when they gather to worship demonstrates and shapes the community's theological commitments as well.<sup>18</sup> And not only

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Integrity First Music Publishing (administrated by Capitol CMG Publishing, Kobalt Music Publishing America, Inc.).

<sup>14</sup>As a biblical basis, the prosperity gospel emphasizes that God cares for us (Jer 29:11), provides for us (Rom 8:28), supplies us with more than we need (2 Cor 9:8), and calls us to live life abundantly (Jn 10:10).

<sup>15</sup>See Costi Hinn, *God, Greed, and the (Prosperity) Gospel: How Truth Overwhelms a Life Built on Lies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019); David Jones and Russell Woodridge, *Health, Wealth, and Happiness: How Prosperity Gospel Overshadows the Gospel of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2017); Daniela Augustine, *The Spirit and the Common Good: Shared Flourishing in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019).

<sup>16</sup>Glenn Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come: Exploring Christian Hope in Contemporary Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 105.

<sup>17</sup>Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come*, 108.

<sup>18</sup>Additionally, I have argued elsewhere that the worship space itself displays theological commitments. See chap. 8 of Steven Félix-Jäger, *Spirit of the Arts: Towards a Pneumatological Aesthetics of Renewal* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

are theological commitments implied and shaped by worship, theological principles for understanding worship are also implicit in the worship service.

***Differentiating evangelical, sacramental, and Pentecostal worship.*** Gordon Smith, in his book *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, constructively distinguishes between the evangelical, sacramental, and Pentecostal principles<sup>19</sup> found in worship, arguing that the universal church should synchronously inhabit all three attributes. While each tradition affirms a holistic approach to worship, each of these principles emphasizes a different aspect of God's "ecology of grace."<sup>20</sup> We will look at how these principles are defined and use them typologically to organize pertinent theological outlooks in and around the renewal movements. It should be noted that any form of codification has drawbacks because the categories are inevitably painted with broad strokes. Worshiping communities will undoubtedly reflect multiple facets of each of these principles. Nevertheless, organizing these experiences by abstraction will help us recognize to which proclivities a worshiping community is drawn.

The evangelical principle affirms Scripture as the "animating role in the life of the church."<sup>21</sup> Scripture here becomes a primary means by which God is present in the church. Evangelicals, therefore, seek a dynamic theology of the Bible.<sup>22</sup> This principle highlights the emphasis on the Bible, especially in didactic forms found in evangelical worship, where worship songs are evaluated by their ability to faithfully articulate biblical truths. For instance, consider how evangelical worship leader Matt Boswell describes the role

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<sup>19</sup>In his book Smith refers to this as the "Pentecost principle," but I will retain the adjectival form of "Pentecostal" to tie it to the renewal movements. This should not be confused, however, with Nimi Wariboko's "Pentecostal principle" from his book *The Pentecostal Principle: Ethical Methodology in New Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012). Here Wariboko distinguishes a Pentecostal social ethic viewed through a theology of play. I use the term "Pentecostal principle" merely to refer to the precepts surrounding the way Pentecostals and charismatics worship.

<sup>20</sup>Gordon Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal: Why the Church Should Be All Three* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 44. Similar arguments for unifying liturgical and charismatic worship can be found in Andrew Wilson, *Spirit and Sacrament: An Invitation to Eucharistic Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), and an argument for different theological distinctives flowing together ecumenically can be found in Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christ* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2010).

<sup>21</sup>Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 53.

<sup>22</sup>Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 53.

of the worship leader: “If we are to teach and admonish one another through song, then the people choosing or writing the songs need to be well-versed in the emphasis, movement, and contours of the Bible. We must become singing theologians whose aim is to teach and proclaim the truth of God with accuracy and skillfulness.”<sup>23</sup> This agenda regards Scripture highly but is didactically geared toward the edification of the mind, conceivably at the expense of engaging the holistic, formational powers of worship and the arts. Rather than forming people’s affections through the liturgical arts, the arts are used secondarily as a tool to convey biblical truths. Furthermore, when this principle is followed dogmatically, poetic and contextual expressions of biblical truths in worship can be disregarded or even derided.<sup>24</sup> In a worst-case scenario, the Bible can take precedence over the Spirit, leaving no room for a direct, experiential encounter with God. This is particularly dangerous because anything that takes precedence over God becomes an idol.<sup>25</sup> The idolatrous homage of the Bible is called “bibliolatry.” As Richard Foster notes, “To avoid the heresy of bibliolatry, we would do well to remember the classical formulation of Christian theology: *Christus Rex et Dominus Scripturae*. ‘Christ is King and Lord of Scripture.’”<sup>26</sup> We cannot allow the Bible to be proclaimed more than Christ who is Lord of *all*, even Scripture. We also cannot allow the Bible to precede the actual presence of God. As will be discussed further in chapter three of this book, even something good like the Bible can become an idol.

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<sup>23</sup>Matt Boswell, “Doxology, Theology, and the Mission of God,” in *Doxology & Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, ed. Matt Boswell (Nashville: B&H, 2013), 19.

<sup>24</sup>This unfortunate and divisive tendency will be discussed further in chaps. 5 and 6 of this book.

<sup>25</sup>Many times, it is a lack of linguistic clarity that leads to statements where the Bible implicitly takes precedence over God. For example, evangelical worship leader Matt Papa stated three ways worshipers can see God is through the eyes of the heart, through Scripture, and in the gospel (Matt Papa, “The Worship Leader and Mission,” in *Doxology & Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, ed. Matt Boswell [Nashville: B&H, 2013], 66-67). But when Papa described seeing God in the Bible, he conflated Jesus as the Word of God with the Bible. He writes, “We see God and His glory in the Bible. The Word of God is the revelation of Himself to mankind. Period. It’s how we see God. It is Revelation. The Scriptures are the foundation of all Christian worship” (66). While the Word of God is the revelation of God to humanity, as John 1 clearly states, Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the Revelation of the Revealer God (to use Barthian language). The Bible is a record of the Word of God. As can be seen, the evangelical biblicism here resulted, perhaps unintentionally, in an equivocation of Scripture as God.

<sup>26</sup>Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Essential Practices from the Six Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 231.

Conversely, the sacramental principle emphasizes ritual as a symbolic means for receiving God's grace and animating the Christian faith in the lives of believers.<sup>27</sup> The rich Christian symbols of baptism and Eucharist "integrate heart and mind in our bodies."<sup>28</sup> The sacraments engage us holistically, and are significant because they are symbols directly ordained by Christ. These symbols also carry spiritual power as they "locate Christ's presence here and now."<sup>29</sup> The presence of Christ is, in a mysterious way, enfleshed through the sacraments. The sacramental principle seeks to faithfully practice the rituals of worship described and authorized in Scripture. The sacramental principle becomes dangerous, however, when the rituals fossilize and become mere tradition. When this happens, the relational principium behind the sacrament is lost, and the symbols become the ends rather than the means that point to deeper realities. In a worst-case scenario, the rituals themselves are worshiped rather than God. Once again, the basest pitfall of all is idolatry, but instead of bibliolatry, this principle can perpetuate the idolization of ritual.

Finally, the Pentecostal principle affirms the church in the power of the Spirit. Here the Spirit is viewed as being immediately and graciously present in worship.<sup>30</sup> While the evangelical principle claims to experience the presence of God primarily through Scripture, and the sacramental principle claims to experience the presence of God primarily through the sacraments, the Pentecostal principle claims to experience the presence of God directly through the constant and gift-giving Spirit. The worshiping community experiences what Packiam calls an "I-You encounter" with God, where the person and community (the collective I) meets God in song and prayer.<sup>31</sup> This direct, experiential encounter of the Spirit epitomizes what Pentecostals see as renewal worship. The Bible is not disregarded, nor are the sacraments neglected, but each is understood as a testament to the actual, concomitant relationship a believer has with God. Christ's promise of the Spirit (Jn 15:26; 16:7-15; Lk 24:49) is taken at face value, and believers experience God as Spirit in worship. All Pentecostals believe that God still reveals new things to

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<sup>27</sup>Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 73.

<sup>28</sup>Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 76.

<sup>29</sup>John Rempel, *Recapturing an Enchanted World: Ritual and Sacrament in the Free Church Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 14.

<sup>30</sup>Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 99.

<sup>31</sup>Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come*, 45.

believers today, but typically Pentecostals believe that these revelations should align with Scripture.

The Pentecostal principle becomes dangerous when experience trumps Scripture. In this regard, a Pentecostal or charismatic may believe a personal conviction is *as* significant as Scripture, or worse they may defend a personal conviction that goes against Scripture because they're convinced it came as a special and personal revelation. Since God is not duplicitous, personal revelations should always be in sync with what God has already revealed through Scripture. The worst-case scenario for the Pentecostal principle is similar to the evangelical and the sacramental principles. Instead of idolizing the Bible (evangelical) or idolizing ritual (sacramental), the biggest snare of the Pentecostal principle is the idolization of experience. Pentecostal biblical scholar Melissa Archer warns against this: "For Pentecostals, the temptation towards false worship might seem irrelevant; after all, Pentecostals seek above all an authentic and experiential encounter with God. Pentecostals, however should constantly discern whether or not they are unwittingly engaging in false worship."<sup>32</sup> For Pentecostals, idolatry might come in the guise of propping up charismatic pastors or leaders to a status of devotion, or elevating a technologically equipped physical atmosphere or style of worship to a point of veneration.<sup>33</sup> In these cases something has taken precedence over God, even if the intention was, ironically, to foster the atmosphere for encountering God.

While the Pentecostal principle puts the worshiper's personal and communal relationship with God front and center, Scripture and sacrament are still necessary for rightly knowing God. As Smith writes, "In our worship, it should be clear—evident and obvious—that both Word and sacrament are supremely charismatic events, means and moments wherein the Spirit of the Living God is present to the world."<sup>34</sup> As Scripture and sacrament render the Spirit present in the world, the Spirit is personally and directly present in the lives of the believers before and outside Scripture and sacrament. Since the Pentecostal principle reveals a theological commitment to experiential encounter, renewal worship renders every encounter of the Spirit an act of worship.

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<sup>32</sup>Melissa Archer, *"I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day": A Pentecostal Engagement with Worship in the Apocalypse* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2015), 311.

<sup>33</sup>Archer, "I Was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day," 311.

<sup>34</sup>Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 116.

Deeming worship as every encounter of the Spirit means that both the extravagant and the “mundane” experiences with God constitute worship. While renewal worship is experienced through ecstatic praise, miracles, and tongues, it is also experienced by hearing God’s voice in the quiet of prayer, devotion, and Scripture reading. Worship can happen in solitude, at the table, and in the streets—whenever and wherever God is present. Anywhere God is present becomes “holy ground,” and is thus fit for worship. This sentiment can be found in the lyrics of Christopher Beatty’s praise chorus “Holy Ground,” which affirms that holy ground is wherever the Lord is present, and “where He is, is holy.”<sup>35</sup> There is no sacred space apart from God, and any space becomes sacred when God is present. Of course, God is omnipresent, so part of what makes a space sacred is the worshiper recognizing the presence of God in the space. Sacredness is thus dependent on a reciprocal acknowledgment of God’s presence in a space. In other words, sacred spaces occur at the location where the worshiper turns his or her heart toward the ever-present God.

It should be noted that stating worship happens wherever God is present is not saying “all of life is worship.” Stating all of life is worship becomes a mere platitude when it is not understood theologically.<sup>36</sup> To say that one thing is entirely something else renders the initial term meaningless. Words embody difference in meaning, or else distinctions could never be made. So, while it is tempting to say all of life is worship because it seemingly elevates worship’s significance, its lack of contextual framework makes the phrase ambiguous and unclear. If all of life is worship, then worship is both *everything* (all of life) and *nothing* because there is no distinction between it and anything else. If that same phrase is articulated through a theological lens, however, then the phrase will be limited to a theological context, and its meaning can begin to make sense. Nevertheless, renewal worship does not state “all of life is worship,” but it does proclaim “every encounter of God is worship.” Pentecostals do not believe every place is sacred by its own measure, but any place becomes sacred when God is present and worshiped.

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<sup>35</sup>“Holy Ground,” words and music by Christopher Beatty, CCLI 19526 © 1982 Universal Music—Brentwood Benson Publishing, Birdwing Music (administrated by Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc., Capitol CMG Publishing).

<sup>36</sup>Harold Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 9.

Along these lines, Wolfgang Vondey sees “the altar” as a sacramental symbol, essentially symbolizing the charged, sacred space where encountering God is expectant.<sup>37</sup> The altar is the holy ground where people come and are vulnerably submitted to the will of God and ready to receive spiritual transformation. Vondey writes,

At the heart of the Christian liturgy celebrated in its place, Pentecostals find the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and its physical manifestations that together create a sacramental environment in the church. Characteristic of this environment are the active participation and transformation of all people in a Spirit-filled encounter with God. The most widely used symbol for this environment among Pentecostals is the altar.<sup>38</sup>

As the altar call is an invitation into a sacramental environment, the human response is a physical manifestation of active participation.<sup>39</sup> The worshiper can publicly respond to the Spirit’s prompting through the preached word or musical worship. Vondey sees the altar space as a threshold to the presence of God, so “the altar” functions symbolically as any place involving the invocation of the Spirit.<sup>40</sup> While Communion is the historical communal response to the preached word, Constance Cherry states that there should at least be some intentional response to the word in a worship service when Communion is not offered.<sup>41</sup> If worship truly is relational, then there must be a flow of reception and a response. The emotional, spiritual, and symbolic response to God at the altar keeps the relational flow active in renewal worship. Pentecostal worship largely avoids the language of sacramentality, but if we understand the altar symbolically as that responsive meeting place of the Spirit, then we can begin to understand how Pentecostals too have, at least in some sense, a sacramental theology.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Wolfgang Vondey, “Pentecostal Sacramentality and the Theology of the Altar,” in *Scripting Pentecost: A Study of Pentecostals, Worship and Liturgy*, ed. Mark Cartledge and A. J. Swoboda (London: Routledge, 2017), 104.

<sup>38</sup>Vondey, “Pentecostal Sacramentality,” 98.

<sup>39</sup>Vondey, “Pentecostal Sacramentality,” 100.

<sup>40</sup>Vondey, “Pentecostal Sacramentality,” 100-101.

<sup>41</sup>Constance Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 99.

<sup>42</sup>For further reading see Andrew Wilson, *Spirit and Sacrament: An Invitation to Eucharistic Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019).



The evangelical, sacramental, and Pentecostal principles reveal the importance of Scripture, ritual, and experience, respectively, for determining whether the worship practices of the faith community are theologically sound. As expressed above, each of these principles utilizes Scripture, ritual, and experience as sources for theology, but they all emphasize different sources as starting points for their theology. The most appropriate way to approach any of these principles is to give priority to God so as to avoid idolatry, but to hold Scripture alongside sacrament and experience so that the communal expression of worship is scripturally sound (evangelical), obedient (sacramental), and heartfelt (Pentecostal). Now that we have a sense of what a biblical theological method is and what this means for a Pentecostal interpretation of Scripture, let us outline a theological method for renewal worship by anchoring our system to the Acts 2 account, which typifies the Pentecostal narrative.

### OUTLINING A METHOD FOR RENEWAL WORSHIP

When outlining a theological method, we are essentially clarifying how theological claims are made. We've already discussed the Pentecostal bent toward experience as a pre-text for renewal theology. A Pentecostal's encounter with the Spirit in worship (broadly defined as any experience of God) fundamentally affects the way a Pentecostal reads, interprets, and applies Scripture. As will be discussed further in chapter three, Pentecostals read their own stories into the greater Pentecostal narrative that begins in Acts. Pentecostals are not merely reading biblical history, but the origin story of their own spiritual lineage. The Pentecostal principle in renewal worship sees the direct encounter of the Holy Spirit as informing the Pentecostal's theological outlook, as each encounter with the Spirit adds something personal to the overarching story that began in Acts 2. Considering all this, our theological method for renewal worship takes the guiding narrative of Acts 2, and teases out two key themes that will help us situate any associated theological claims. These themes are that worship can be viewed as a continuous outpour, and that worship can be viewed as a foretaste of what is to come. As we will see, these themes must be taken together in order to gain a proper sense of what renewal worship means theologically.

**Worship as continuous outpour.** For Harold Best, the concept of worship touches on all of life when it is understood theologically as a “continuous outpouring.” This phrase puts forward a biblically complete model of worship because it begins with God’s initial outpour of Godself, and then accounts for the human response to this outpour, which is itself also a continuous outpour.<sup>43</sup> Best writes, “As God eternally outpours within his triune self, and as we are created in his image, it follows that we too are continuous outpourers, incurably so.”<sup>44</sup> So for Best, because humans are made in the image of the revelatory God who eternally outpours, humans are also continuous outpourers.

Humans by nature pour out their devotion to something, and because of the fall, idols are often on the receiving end of endless adoration. Best writes, “At this very moment, and for as long as this world endures, everybody inhabiting it is bowing down and serving something or someone—an artifact, a person, an institution, an idea, a spirit, or God through Christ. Everyone is being shaped thereby and is growing up toward some measure of fullness, whether of righteousness or of evil.”<sup>45</sup> The key is for worship to be directed toward God, the initial continuous outpourer. Even before creation God was relational through a triune ontology, pouring out immeasurable love to each interpenetrating person of the Trinity.<sup>46</sup> God’s outpour to humanity is a gift and an invitation to participate in a continual relationship with the triune God.

While Best has expertly navigated what it means theologically for worship to be a continual experience, his theology approaches the triune God, strangely, exclusively through a christological lens, only brushing past the Spirit. He writes that Christ’s sacrifice is a “once-for-all pouring out of his incarnate self on the cross.”<sup>47</sup> While this is certainly true, the notion is incomplete as it fails to acknowledge the role of the universal outpour of the Spirit found in Pentecost as quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Consider Best’s articulation

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<sup>43</sup>Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 19.

<sup>44</sup>Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 10.

<sup>45</sup>Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 17. James K. A. Smith compellingly makes this same argument and highlights the role of ritual in personal and communal formation in James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).

<sup>46</sup>Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 21.

<sup>47</sup>Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 20.

of God's continual outpouring through Christ: "Thus right now, and for as long as God himself decides it to be so, creation is being held together by the outpouring Word of his Son, in whom and through whom all things come into being and consist (Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:3)."<sup>48</sup> The Word is indeed the organizing principle of creation, but where is the Spirit in God's continuous outpour? Paul recognizes the Spirit's agency as the one through whom God's love is continually poured into our hearts: "And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). Without the Spirit, the continuous outpour of Christ from the cross cannot be grasped by the church. As the Spirit of life, the Spirit universalizes the redemptive consequence of the cross. For all of Best's talk about the continuous outpour as a triune act, he is remarkably silent about the Spirit.

A Pentecostal understanding of the continuous outpour would not only emphasize the role of the Spirit but would also see the event of Pentecost as pivotal for understanding the fullness of the Christian life. For instance, Macchia sees the Pentecost event as uniting christological, pneumatological, ecclesiological, and eschatological components. One can trace a unified notion of Spirit baptism that makes sense of God's continual outpour through Christ's mission. Christ's mission on earth was to bring people, and creation in general, back into life in the Spirit, which is a restored relationship with God. As Macchia writes, "His entire journey, from his incarnation to his crucifixion and resurrection, creates the means by which he incorporates all flesh into his life in the Spirit, his life with the Father. Mediating a river of the Spirit for others on behalf of the Father reveals Christ's very identity and mission."<sup>49</sup> Since the whole mission of Christ was aimed at bringing the created order fully back to life in the Spirit, it is clear that Christ would become the Spirit baptizer. The cross liberated fallen humanity through God's mercy, but God's grace was rendered accessible through Christ's resurrection. Macchia writes, "Christ's entire mission may be viewed as a baptism in fire (culminating in the crucifixion) and a baptism in the Spirit (culminating in the resurrection)—not two separate baptisms, mind you, but one in

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<sup>48</sup>Best, *Unceasing Worship*, 21.

<sup>49</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 27.

Spirit-and-fire for our redemption.”<sup>50</sup> The resurrected Christ, the firstborn among many brothers and sisters (Rom 8:29), is the one who can baptize others in the Spirit, imparting the Spirit in unity with the Father.<sup>51</sup> Because Christ is the only true bearer of the Spirit, only he can mediate the Spirit.<sup>52</sup>

Christ’s mediation of the Spirit extends beyond the individual believer. Pentecost saw the Spirit being poured out on *all flesh* (Acts 2:17).<sup>53</sup> The universal outpour of Acts 2 implies that redemption extends to the whole created order. Everything is in some state of redemption until Christ proclaims, “See, I am making all things new” (Rev 21:5). While Christ established the kingdom of God on earth during his earthly ministry, Pentecost is truly where our communal confession of Jesus as Lord began.<sup>54</sup> At Pentecost the people of God were gathered to form the confessing church, and the church was commissioned to extend the kingdom of God until its consummation at Christ’s return. At Pentecost the ministry of the kingdom of God—the extension of the “Father’s cause in the world”—was transferred to the church.<sup>55</sup>

Macchia’s Christology posits that Pentecost should be our vantage point for our theological deliberations. Every christological event including the incarnation, crucifixion, and ascension should be discussed in light of Pentecost, “with Pentecost at the horizon.”<sup>56</sup> Because Christ is glorified at the ascension, it’s tempting to view this event as the pinnacle of the gospel message. However, we can only know the full meaning of the ascension once it’s complemented by the gift of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Spirit on the church.<sup>57</sup> As Smith states, “The ascension is the triumph of God—Jesus is made Lord and Christ as he returns to the right hand of the Father. But it is not the culmination. Pentecost follows, and it must follow for the purposes of the ascension to be fulfilled.”<sup>58</sup> It is through Pentecost and the subsequent universal

<sup>50</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, ix.

<sup>51</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 5.

<sup>52</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 55.

<sup>53</sup>This will be fleshed out further in chapter 5, but we should note that this is a quote of Joel 2. Pentecostals believe that when Peter was quoting Joel 2 he was proclaiming the partial fulfillment of Joel 2’s prophecy.

<sup>54</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 35.

<sup>55</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 4.

<sup>56</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 64.

<sup>57</sup>Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 27.

<sup>58</sup>Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 25.

outpour of the Spirit that the ascended Christ is present to each believing individual and the community of believers.<sup>59</sup> The universal outpour is, therefore, necessarily pneumatological. This vantage point is also eschatological because Spirit baptism drives the church toward eschatological fulfillment.<sup>60</sup> When reading the whole biblical narrative, we see strong themes that elicit a kingdom theology. Everything culminates in Christ, and Christ proclaims the kingdom of God as already present and not yet consummated.

***Worship as a foretaste of what is to come.*** The eschatological hope of the church is renewal, and the mission of the church is to bring it about. In this way the righteousness of the kingdom of God is both now and not yet. We can view Christ's proclamation of the kingdom as God's inbreaking into human history, but the total consummation of the kingdom is yet to be fulfilled.<sup>61</sup> In Matthew 3:7-12, the kingdom of God is pictured as renewal through Spirit baptism; it is the reality where creation is reconciled back to God. The blind are healed, the oppressed are liberated, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor (Lk 4:18-35). Forgiveness of sins and Spirit empowerment are signs of the age to come already taking effect now, in the present,<sup>62</sup> and all this is made possible by the universal outpour of the Spirit. The ministry Christ inaugurated while on earth was carried out by the church after Pentecost and persists today. The church is commissioned to be God's agent in ushering in the already proclaimed but not yet consummated kingdom of God. As the church heralds the coming kingdom, real future hope proleptically enters into and forms our present circumstances. In Acts, God is characterized as the King who restores and reinterprets the present in light of the future.<sup>63</sup> So the eschatological hope in Peter's proclamation at Pentecost is real, efficacious hope, and not mere wishful thinking. God's promise of tomorrow transforms the realities of today.

For Macchia, this hope stems from Pentecost. Through the resurrection of Christ, the Spirit exceeds the limits of death, and then through Christ's

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<sup>59</sup>Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental & Pentecostal*, 26.

<sup>60</sup>Frank Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 98.

<sup>61</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 214.

<sup>62</sup>Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 58.

<sup>63</sup>Michael Salmeier, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Role of God as the 'Ordainer of Times and Seasons' in the Acts of the Apostles* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 79.

ascension and through Pentecost, the Spirit overflows the limits of death by being poured out on all creation. This overflow reaches eschatologically to the renewal of creation.<sup>64</sup> New life is thus given to all who partake in the Spirit's overflow. As Macchia states it, "This divine reign is actualized now among those who drink of the Spirit from him."<sup>65</sup> As much as this eschatological motif is addressed in various theologies of worship, the renewal perspective offers distinctive insight on how such a theological commitment manifests in practice. Packiam points out that hope is elicited by the charismatic expectation of God's presence made manifest by the Spirit. Experiencing the presence of God in worship is a foretaste of God's presence "filling all in all."<sup>66</sup> This means that renewal worship does not necessarily see hope defined through eschatologically themed lyrics; rather, hope is understood theologically as the Spirit's inbreaking through worship.<sup>67</sup> As Packiam writes, "For this experience of hope to occur, the songs need not be specifically about that hope; they simply need to be songs of worship that make the worshiper aware of God's presence."<sup>68</sup> The eschatological component of renewal worship is not an espoused theology, but an encoded theology that encrypts the eschatological implications of the universal outpour in the encounter of the Spirit during worship. In this way, renewal worship is unique in its approach to eschatological hope.

This eschatological motif can be elucidated further by revisiting the evangelical, sacramental, and Pentecostal principles, paying close attention to how these various approaches define the eschatological outlook of worship.<sup>69</sup> The evangelical principle points to biblical portrayals of worship as models for what we are to do and how we are to worship. As R. C. Sproul states succinctly, "Pleasing God is at the heart of worship. Therefore, our worship must be informed at every point by the Word of God as we seek God's own instructions for worship that is pleasing to Him."<sup>70</sup> Though we

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<sup>64</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 296.

<sup>65</sup>Macchia, *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer*, 313.

<sup>66</sup>Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come*, 181.

<sup>67</sup>Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come*, 181.

<sup>68</sup>Packiam, *Worship and the World to Come*, 182.

<sup>69</sup>While Smith's distinctions raised this topic initially, what follows are observations that combine some implications drawn from Smith's text with other practical considerations.

<sup>70</sup>R. C. Sproul, *How Then Shall We Worship: Biblical Principles to Guide Us Today* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2013), 11.

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