

# PREFACE

I am unapologetically Pentecostal. By that I mean that I believe Christian faith is properly understood in terms of an *encounter* with God. My testimony is the story of one who encountered God in the person of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. This encounter took place in the church—its members, teachers, and preachers. Yes, I accepted Jesus as Lord, but my encounter did not end there. I also encountered Spirit—I was baptized in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking with other tongues. My study of the Scriptures, and the theological tradition of the church, has reaffirmed that encounter again and again. As a Pentecostal Christian, I am firmly committed to the premise that the mission and worship of the church must be empowered by an encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Also, I am unapologetically a man of the church. I love the church. By this, I do not mean the petty politics often associated with the church; nor do I mean that I naively embrace sinfulness and corruption within the church. I love the church—the body of Jesus Christ, the communion of the saints in the fellowship of the Spirit. I pray that I am properly submitted to Jesus Christ as the Head and Chief Bishop of the church. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the church. I am convinced that one can come to church without knowing Jesus, but no one can come to Jesus without knowing the church.

I write as a pastor who is celebrating thirty years of ministry. As you read this material, I hope you will notice that my devotion to the church, and my Pentecostal convictions, have not dulled the critical edge of the message, but sharpened the edge. With a pastor's heart, I offer insights that may be painful, or misunderstood; but in my best judgment they are necessary.

I have told this story before, but it bears repeating. One of the more significant seasons of my spiritual journey was with a small group of pastors who met weekly to study the gospel text of the common lectionary. As president of the local ministerial association, I was invited to be a participant. At first, I attended to be polite, but soon found the experience very enriching. The group consisted of an ecumenical mix that included ministers from Episcopal, Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, and Pentecostal traditions. One might wonder how such a group could meet without theological debate, but as we met each week and focused on our gospel study, we discovered we had more about which we agreed than disagreed. In this diversity, each person contributed from his ecclesiastical tradition and was eager to learn about the traditions of others. While I represented the Pentecostal tradition, I received valuable insight into other traditions, especially regarding worship. In discussions with ministerial colleagues, especially the Catholic and Anglican liturgical traditions, I discovered Pentecostal worship could be enriched by developing a deeper understanding and broader appreciation of the sacraments and applying insights from these diverse traditions.

The Pentecostal Movement was not birthed in a vacuum. Pentecostalism is one of the latest in a series of movements by which the Holy Spirit works to renew the church. The Pentecostal church is the beneficiary of the “cloud of witnesses” throughout the history of the Christian church. Pentecostal spirituality is informed by Martin Luther, John Calvin, James Arminius, John Wesley, Phoebe Palmer, A.B. Simpson, and many other Protestant Christians. To the surprise of some Pentecostals, our spirituality has also benefited from the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions. This book seeks to give voice to this “cloud of witnesses.” Throughout the book, I have sought to allow the voices to speak for themselves. You will find quotations from the early fathers, Protestant reformers, pioneer Pentecostals, and Catholic and Orthodox theologians. Each voice speaks from the conviction that Jesus is Lord.

This book seeks to demonstrate that sacramental worship is essential to Pentecostal spirituality. I should make a few comments about the title—*Pentecostal Sacraments*. First, I have chosen the word *sacraments* over ordinances. As you will discover in the text of the book, many Pentecostals have used the term as well. The thesis of this book is that sacramental worship is more than symbolic. *Sacrament* suggests the mystery and reality of a divine encounter. Second, sacraments are *Pentecostal*. Of course, I am aware that the sacraments belong to all Christians. So, by speaking of *Pentecostal* sacraments, I do not mean to imply an elitist or sectarian meaning. Describing sacraments as *Pentecostal* seeks to express the divine encounter in a fully Trinitarian spirituality. That is, God the Father salvifically embracing humanity with God’s two hands—the Son and the Spirit. In this book, Pentecostal spirituality is presented as a Christo-Pneumatic encounter. So, when I employ the term *Pentecostal* sacraments, I am suggesting that sacraments are *Pentecostal* for all Christians.

The first chapter is written devotionally as an introduction to the material. For Pentecostals, the altar is most often the place of encounter. It is also the place of spiritual formation. I provide biblical examples of encountering God at the altar. Chapter 2 is a review of Pentecostal spirituality and provides a theological background and method for the following chapters. If sacraments are to be properly understood, they must be understood within the mosaic of the Christian (and Pentecostal) theological tradition. Chapter 3 is the pivotal chapter as it presents the basis for a Pentecostal sacramental theology. I am hopeful that this material will offer Pentecostals a way to understand sacraments that is biblical, in continuity with the historic church, and faithful to Pentecostal spirituality. The remaining chapters discuss four Pentecostal sacraments: water baptism, the Lord’s Supper, footwashing, and “the anointed touch.” Although the grace of God may be encountered through other sacramental acts (marriage, child dedication, and ordination), the four sacraments that are discussed in this book are universally

salvific. In other words, all believers—single or married, child or adult, lay or clergy—encounter God’s salvific grace in water baptism, the Lord’s Supper, footwashing, and the anointed touch. I discuss the sacraments as they are presented in the New Testament, their development in the early church, and their significance in the Pentecostal movement. Also, I offer helpful suggestions as to how pastors can make sacraments a meaningful part of Pentecostal worship. My intent is to present a spirituality that strengthens and enriches the Pentecostal encounter.

The last two years have been a season of great joy for me. I have read hundreds of articles and sermons written by Pentecostal pioneers. Often, I felt as if I had discovered a treasure. The early Pentecostals preached and wrote with a palpable passion. Their devotion to Holy Scripture was without measure. Also, and this was surprising to me, they had wide knowledge of the early fathers. As I read the writings of the Pentecostal pioneers, I was enriched and refreshed.

As this volume goes to print, I must express my appreciation to Dr. James Bowers. He gave me the opportunity to publish the earlier work in the *Pentecostal Leadership Series*. Dr. Bowers was eager to assist with this volume as well. Also, Dr. Steve Land has offered many encouraging words. Dr. Randy Turpin has been a friend and an excellent editor for this project. Nellie Keasling should be recognized for her very fine work as copy editor. My wife, Sharon, has read every word, multiple times, and has been a constant source of encouragement. R. Ariel Vázquez is to be credited for the captivating cover design.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this book to all the faithful teachers of the church whom the Spirit has anointed to feed milk and meat to believers so that we may grow in the faith, from spiritual babes to “the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

—**Daniel Tomberlin**  
Bainbridge, Georgia  
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