

# Believers' Baptism in the Pentecostal Tradition

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By

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It is impossible to speak of *the* Pentecostal perspective on water baptism. The singular distinctive of Pentecostalism is that the Holy Spirit *moves*. Likewise, Pentecostal theology is dynamic rather than static. Pentecostal theology is developing; it is being formed, and will continue to be formed. Like all theologians, Pentecostal theologians read and reflect upon the spoken and written word. But there is an additional element in Pentecostal theology, that is, the Spirit continues to speak, to inspire, and to teach. The Pentecostal theologian seeks to listen to the prophetic voice of the Word and Spirit, to discern the truth the Spirit is speaking (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22). With this in mind, all Christian theologians are pentecostal in that the Holy Spirit inspires the common Christian confession that Jesus is Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Tongues speech is another distinctive that informs the Pentecostal way of doing theology. The Holy Spirit inspires a diversity of tongues which must be properly interpreted and discerned. The Holy Spirit inspires words of wisdom and knowledge speaking “with the tongues of men and of angels” (1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 13:1).<sup>1</sup> The task of theology is to understand the mysteries of God. The theologian should be careful to remember that the best discernment, the best interpretation is likened to seeing “in a mirror dimly” (1 Corinthians 13:12). Therefore, the unity of the faith depends upon the primacy of love and embracing the diversity of theological tongues. In other words, a diversity of theological expressions within the Christian church need not signify schism. Pentecostalism resists homogeneous expressions of Christianity. Pentecostals are at home among the great multitude of “tribes and peoples and tongues” (Revelation 7:9).

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations are from the *NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE*, © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995. Used by permission.

## **Preliminary Pentecostal Responses to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry***

The scope of this paper is recent (since 1982) Pentecostal reflections on the doctrine of water baptism in dialogue with *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*.<sup>2</sup> At the 1988 meeting of the international Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue, Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. and Jerry L. Sandidge encouraged Pentecostals to “look again at baptism.” Robeck and Sandidge pointed out that many Pentecostals understand water baptism from the perspective of their inherited theological traditions. The majority view of Pentecostals accepts water baptism as a rite of Christian initiation, but denies sacramental causality. Believers’ baptism is embraced and infant baptism is resisted. Water baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit are viewed as unrelated. Although Pentecostals affirm that water baptism is a sign of being “in Christ,” they have given little consideration to the implications of *koinōnia*, preferring to emphasize the individual’s obedient response. Although most Pentecostals view water baptism as a non-repeatable event, many practice rebaptism and some refuse to acknowledge the validity of baptisms performed in other churches. Robeck and Sandidge lament that Pentecostals have “done little serious theological reflection on baptism, or for that matter, on sacramental theology” and exhort Pentecostals “to investigate fully for themselves the true meaning” of water baptism as a sacrament.<sup>3</sup>

Harold D. Hunter has suggested that Pentecostals should be encouraged by *BEM* because of its convergences. However, he laments that *BEM* lacks the doctrinal and pastoral

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<sup>2</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva, CH: World Council of Churches, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. and Jerry L. Sandidge, “The Ecclesiology of *Koinōnia* and Baptism: A Pentecostal Perspective.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 27.3 (Summer 1990): 504-34. This article offers review of pre BEM Pentecostal contributions on the subject.

priorities, and especially the *ethos* of the Pentecostal movement. He affirms the Pentecostal resolve to “adhere to perceived fundamentals of the faith” and asserts that “Pentecostals do not seek a radical departure from their inherited theology but, rather, its vivification.” Hunter points out that Trinitarian Pentecostals have been indifferent to water baptism “because Spirit baptism has taken center stage.” Therefore, “Pentecostals at large will not own a view of sacramental efficacy that is determined to promote self-contained efficacy independent of the participant’s faith.” It is conversion and Spirit baptism, rather than water baptism, that effects union with Christ. Even so, Pentecostals should reconsider their resistance to *ex opere operato* in light of the consensus achieved between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics that “the whole process of salvation is the work of God by the Holy Spirit” and *ex opere operato* does not mean “automatic efficacy.” As to the issue of infant baptism, Hunter sees “hopeful signs... that Pentecostals can esteem the *BEM* concept of ‘baptism as a part of a process of Christian nurture’” and he encourages Pentecostals to review the practice of infant dedication. Water baptism as a sign of the unity of the faith must take into account “the Holy Spirit as the source not only of unity but also diversity” within the church.<sup>4</sup>

### **Contributions from Pentecostal/Charismatic Systematics**

The diversity of Pentecostal theology is rooted in the diversity of the Christian theological tradition. Pentecostal theology may be best understood as the Spirit baptism of diverse Christian traditions. Therefore, we can speak of Reformed leaning Pentecostals, Wesleyan leaning Pentecostals, and Catholic Charismatics.

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<sup>4</sup> Harold D. Hunter, “Reflections by a Pentecostalist on Aspects of *BEM*,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 29:3-4, (Summer-Fall 1992), 317-345.

J. Rodman Williams (Charismatic Presbyterian) presents water baptism as an ordinance. As a cleansing rite, water baptism is a “vivid symbol” of forgiveness of sins in which there is a “close connection between baptism and regeneration.” Water baptism is a public declaration that “expresses an irrevocable commitment to Jesus Christ” and “relates to both a union with Christ and in Him to all other Christians.” Water baptism is not regenerative, but “may be the channel, or means, by which the grace of regeneration is applied and received.” However, water baptism is not “essential to salvation.” Water baptism is a symbol that “suggests an immersion in the Spirit is comparable to immersion in water.” Baptism is unrepeatable and its validity lies in the work of the Holy Spirit and the faith of the believer, not in the “human administrator” or practiced mode. Williams affirms the practice of infant baptism as an act of God’s prevenient grace but warns that churches that practice infant baptism should “make every effort to reinstate the baptism of believers.”<sup>5</sup>

Cheryl Bridges Johns (Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee) has described sacramental rites as “liturgical functions” that “serve to initiate and instruct believers” and motivate “believers to live out God’s intentions of alternative community of love and justice.” Water baptism is “a public witness to conversion,” a “symbolic act of death and new life,” which signifies “identity with the oppressed and with the God of the oppressed.”<sup>6</sup>

French L. Arrington (Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee) states that an ordinance is “a means of real communion with God and of strengthening grace.” Arrington presents three distinct baptisms: conversion-initiation by the Spirit, water baptism, and baptism in

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<sup>5</sup> J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective, Volume 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 221-241. This work was published as three volumes in one in 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy Among the Oppressed* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 125.

the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion. Water baptism is a required public response and visible sign of the saving work of Jesus Christ, preceded by repentance and faith. It signifies a pledge to the “lifelong practice of holy living.” Because an infant cannot make such public responses, infant baptism is not accepted.<sup>7</sup>

Larry D. Hart is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and teaches at Oral Roberts University. He presents water baptism as “a means of faith and the Spirit himself is the means of grace.” As a washing rite baptism is a “symbol of our salvation.” He writes, “Only as an act of Spirit-enabled repentance and faith is baptism efficacious.” Baptism expresses “our unity in the Church” and “keeps the corporate dimension of becoming a Christian constantly before us,” and is “an impetus toward sanctification.”<sup>8</sup>

Stanley M. Horton (Assemblies of God) edited a collection of essays that introduce the themes of Pentecostalism. In this work, water baptism is an ordinance signifying “newness of life,” “identification with Christ” and that the believer is “entering the realm of Christ’s sovereign lordship and authority.” Water baptism does not effect identification with Christ, but presupposes and symbolizes it.<sup>9</sup> In a more recent work, Horton and William W. Menzies present water baptism as a symbol, with no causality, which testifies to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and as pledge that the believer “will continue to live a new life in the power of the risen Christ.” Since water baptism is “for believers only,”

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<sup>7</sup> French L. Arrington, *Christian Doctrine: A Pentecostal Perspective, volume 3* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1994), 208-212.

<sup>8</sup> Larry D. Hart, *Truth Aflame: A Balanced Theology for Evangelicals and Charismatics* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 525-527. This work was revised and published as *Truth Aflame: Theology for the Church in Renewal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). There is no revision on water baptism.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley M. Horton, editor, *Systematic Theology, Revised Edition* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1994, 2012), Kindle location 12223-12278.

there is “no grounds for infant baptism” because “infants are incapable of repentance, faith, and public testimony to salvation.”<sup>10</sup>

This review demonstrates that Pentecostals have remained committed to their inherited evangelical traditions and resist sacramental language. It appears that the Pentecostal/Charismatic encounter of baptism in the Holy Spirit has not provoked significant reflection or reappraisal about water baptism. The Evangelical response to *BEM* insists that all sacramentalism “must be rejected as unbiblical” and understands the primary problem to be “a grace-conveying role distinct from that of signification.”<sup>11</sup> These Pentecostals might agree. However, there is a significant exception.

David K. Bernard is the general superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI). The UPCI represents an early schism within the Pentecostal movement. The UPCI rejects the doctrine of Trinity in favor of a Christocentric unitarian modalism, and are therefore called “Oneness Pentecostals.” Bernard declares that water baptism is not regenerative, but “at baptism, God releases, wipes out, cancels, and dismisses our sins.” Baptism is salvific in that repentance and water baptism are necessary for salvation. Water baptism must be by immersion and “in the name of Jesus Christ.” Also, water baptism and Spirit baptism are two distinct elements of a single salvific event. Bernard writes, “Ideally, one will receive the Holy Spirit as he comes out of the water of baptism, but this does not always happen.” The gift of the Spirit will always be signified by tongues-speech.<sup>12</sup> Even as Bernard resist sacramental language, his insistence that water

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<sup>10</sup> Stanley M. Horton and William W. Menzies, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1993, 2012). Kindle Location 1650-1692.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Schrottenboer, editor, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry with an Evangelical Response* (London, UK: World Evangelical Fellowship, Paternoster Press, 1992), 5-7.

<sup>12</sup> David K. Bernard, *The New Birth, Pentecostal Theology, Volume 2* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1984) 96-97, 122-154, 235-236.

baptism is salvific and related to the gift of the Spirit suggest an incipit Pentecostal sacramentalism.

The problem with popular Pentecostal systematic theologies, as with all systematics, is that the dissection of doctrines tends to remove specific doctrines from the redemptive meta-narrative of Scripture, therefore theological reflection becomes disjointed. The challenge for Pentecostal theological reflection is the integration of the redemptive meta-narrative with inherited theological traditions informed by the Pentecostal distinctive of baptism in the Holy Spirit. There are signs that the Spirit is leading Pentecostal theology toward that end.

### **Recent Pentecostal Contributions, Since 2000**

Pentecostal theological reflection about water baptism must be understood in the context of the redemptive meta-narrative which includes pneumatological, soteriological, and ecclesiological concerns. Many Pentecostal theologians have engaged the dialogue.

Amos Yong has called for “a pneumatological ecclesiology that recognizes the church as constituted by the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit.” The church is “sacramental insofar as it consists of structures, institutions, practices, congregations, and individuals, all inspired by the Spirit of God for the purposes of establishing the kingdom of God.” He therefore encourages Pentecostals to “cease to be suspicious of sacramental language regarding water baptism” and challenges Pentecostals to embrace water baptism “as a living and transformative act of the Spirit of God.”<sup>13</sup> In his most recent work, Yong moves beyond the language of ordinance or sacrament, in favor of the *practices* of the Church. The

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<sup>13</sup> Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on all Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 156-160.



*practices* offer a tangible and kinesthetic way of “receiving from God and simultaneously bearing witness to the world.” The primary significance of the *practices* is “in how they locate the people of God through Christ in relationship to the world.” The *practices* are “performative icons” through which participants eschatologically encounter God in Christ through the Spirit and are then empowered to bear witness to the world.”<sup>14</sup>

Simon Chan has declared that Evangelicals and Pentecostals need an “ecclesial pneumatology” that rediscovers the essentials of the Great Tradition of the church. He admits that it may be difficult for evangelicals to “appreciate sacramental realities because of an implicit nominalist philosophy which sees signs as mere names or arbitrary pointers rather than as having a necessary connection to the things they signify.” However, that should not be a problem for Pentecostals who insist that tongues-speech is the normative sign of Spirit baptism. Therefore, sacraments are to be understood “as signs mediating the ‘mysteries’ of the Faith.” Sacraments are archetypes that connect the worshiper with transcendent reality.<sup>15</sup>

Kenneth Archer has presented a Pentecostal sacramentalism in the context of a pneumatic ecclesiology and a dynamic pneumatic soteriology in which the “sacraments are significant symbolic signs that bring transformative grace.” He laments that “some Pentecostals deny any ‘real grace’ being mediated,” reducing the sacraments “to mere memorial rites... devoid of the Spirit’s presence and power.” Archer insists that the sacraments are “redemptive experiences, for they provide worshipers with opportunities

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<sup>14</sup> Amos Yong, *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 136, 155, 159.

<sup>15</sup> Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 11, 121, 125; also, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 99.

for the ongoing spiritual formation of being conformed to the image of Christ through encountering the Spirit of Christ through the participatory reenactment of the story of Jesus.” The sacraments “evoke remembrance of the past and provoke playful anticipation of a future (promise) that collapses into the present mysterious salvific experiences.<sup>16</sup>

Jackie Johns looks to the Orthodox tradition for a Pentecostal revisioning of sacraments. He has written that water baptism should be understood as a mystery, rather than sacrament or ordinance. As a mystery, baptism does not initiate justification, regeneration, or sanctification. Baptism seals and authenticates the believer’s relationship with Christ and the church, and “gives expression to God’s abundant grace in the life of the believer and the church.” Water baptism is to be clearly distinguished from Spirit baptism.<sup>17</sup>

Recent Pentecostal reflection is revisioning Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions through the lens of a dynamic encounter with God – baptism in the Holy Spirit. Also, it is fair to suggest that Pentecostalism itself is being revisioned by interaction with these great traditions.

### **Moving Forward – Pentecostal Spirituality and Water Baptism**

The paradigm for a Pentecostal sacramental theology is the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. Spirit baptism implies that Pentecostalism is essentially sacramental. Pentecostalism is a *physical* spirituality – encountering the Holy Spirit with human senses as the Spirit moves in the physical world. The paraphysical aspect of Pentecostal spirituality is evident throughout the Jerusalem Pentecost event (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit

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<sup>16</sup> Kenneth J. Archer, “Nourishment for our Journey: The Pentecostal *Via Salutis* and Sacramental Ordinances,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 13:1 (October 2004), 79-97.

<sup>17</sup> Jackie David Johns, “Water Baptism,” *Church of God Evangel* (July 2007), 7-8.

descended “from heaven” into this present age, into this physical world. Believers *heard* “a noise like a violent rushing wind;” they *saw* “tongues as of fire.” The Divine *Pneuma* (wind/Spirit) “*filled* the whole house;” tongues of fire *rested* upon the believers and they were “*filled* with the Holy Spirit.” Believers “began to *speak* with other tongues” and the crowd *heard* “them *speak*... in our own language.” Peter explained the advent of the Holy Spirit as the gift of Father and Son “which you both *see* and *hear*.” Luke tells us that “those who had received his word were *baptized*” and that believers devoted themselves to “the apostles’ teaching and to *fellowship*, to the breaking of bread (*taste, nourishment*) and to prayer.” The pathos of the Pentecost event was “*feeling* a sense of awe.” The presence of the Spirit is manifested *materially*. God, who is spirit, created all matter (Genesis 1:1). All matter is held together by the power of God (Colossians 1:16-17). In creation, there is a causal relationship between Spirit and matter. Sacraments are sacred acts of worship blessed by Christ the High Priest through which the worshiper encounters the Spirit of grace. Pentecostal sacramentalism is expressed as a Christo-Pneumatic ecclesiology—encountering God through Christ *and* Spirit *in* the church.<sup>18</sup> The Holy Spirit rests paraphysically upon the sacramental elements – water, oil, bread, wine. In the observance of sacraments, believers touch the elements and are touched by Christ and Spirit.<sup>19</sup> The observance of the sacraments is the Spirit empowered proclamation of the gospel.

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel Tomberlin, *Pentecostal Sacraments: Encountering God at the Altar* (Cleveland, TN: Center for Pentecostal Leadership and Care, Pentecostal Theological Seminary, 2010), 34, 103, 175, 236, 256, 260-261.

<sup>19</sup> Tomberlin, 82, 85-87, 93.

## A Pentecostal Response to *BEM*

*First, how does water baptism signify initiation into the “reality of the new life?”*

*(B7). Reflections must include consideration of causality (B4); and consider the distinctions between “infant baptism” and “believers’ baptism” (B12).* Peter proclaimed, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Repentance and water baptism are acts of faith which effect the remission of sins. The possibility of repentance without baptism is not considered in the apostolic church; therefore baptism is the normative rite of initiation into the Faith. Water baptism is the “washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). The efficacy of the baptismal washing is the blood of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:6-8).<sup>20</sup> There are many references in the New Testament to washing (John 3:5; Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 10:22). Some New Testament scholars suggest that these texts refer not to water baptism, but to a spiritual cleansing effected by the Holy Spirit. This ignores the association of Spirit with water throughout the Scriptures.<sup>21</sup> Water is not merely a metaphor for the Spirit, but a material agent upon which the Spirit moves, touches, and anoints. To distinguish between the salvific activity of the Spirit and water baptism is alien to pre-modern apostolic thought. Water baptism conveys salvific grace because of a real Christo-Pneumatic presence. The spiritual bath cleanses and sanctifies. When Jesus was baptized the Spirit descended upon him and God the Father declared, “You are my beloved son” (Mark 1:11). Likewise, water baptism signifies that believers have “received a spirit of

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<sup>20</sup> John Christopher Thomas, *The Pentecostal Commentary on 1 John, 2 John, 3 John* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, T & T Clark, 2004), 249-253.

<sup>21</sup> Tomberlin, 110-111.

adoption” and the Spirit testifies that “we are the children of God” (Romans 8:15-16). Water baptism signifies that the believer is “in Christ,” and walks in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 22-25). In Christ, “the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore, the corruption and injustice of human history has been cleansed and renewed so that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). Being in Christ means that believers are “united with him... in the likeness of his resurrection” (Romans 6:3-5). Therefore, water baptism anticipates glorification and new creation. The Spirit moved over the waters of creation (Genesis 1:1). The great flood cleansed creation, but did not effect new creation. New creation is effected by baptism in water, Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21; 2 Peter 3:5-7).

Since water baptism is an act of faith, we must consider the validity of infant baptism. As *BEM* points out, infant baptism is indeed a believers’ baptism in that it reflects the faith of the believing community. But of course, the question before us is salvific efficacy. A pastoral anecdote may be appropriate here. I once engaged a conversation with a Catholic colleague about the distinction between our views of sacraments. I insisted that a sacrament was valid only when received in faith – *ex opere operantis*. That led to a discussion about baptism. Again, I insisted on believers’ baptism and suggested that infant baptism was not salvific because an infant could not consent in faith.

My colleague asked, “Have you ever prayed for someone who was very sick and unconscious?”

I replied, “Of course.”

He then said, “In your view of sacraments, your prayer for an unconscious person is invalid because they are incapable of consenting faith.”

This conversation demonstrates an ironic tension between *ex opere operate* and *ex opere operantis*. *Ex opere operate* insists that the conveyance of grace via sacraments is an act of unmerited grace – faith is passive, grace is active. The sacrament is salvific because of the faithfulness of Christ. The Protestant view of *ex opere operantis* suggest that the conveyed grace is merited by the act of faith – grace is activated by faith. The Catholic view of grace and the Protestant view of merit often escape serious consideration.

Understanding infant baptism as prevenient grace may be a way forward. While it may be true that an infant cannot fully *know* God, it is equally true that God *knows* all infants while *in utero* (Psalm 139:16-13; Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 1:5). God’s act of *knowing* is efficacious and the Scripture suggests that even an unborn child can respond to God’s presence (Luke 1:41, 44). The capacity for faith is intuitive and essential to human ontology (Romans 1:19; 2:14-15).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it follows that infants may respond intuitively to God’s gracious act of *knowing*. All sacraments are in some sense proleptic, even prophetic. All acts of faith anticipate ultimate salvation (1 Peter 1:7-9).

***What is the relationship between water baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit?***  
***(B5). How is the gift of the Spirit signified? (B19).*** Water baptism signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit as a redemptive seal “given as a pledge of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:13-14)

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<sup>22</sup> Susan J. Hespos and Kristy vanMarle, “Physics for Infants: characterizing the origins of knowledge about objects, substances and number,” *WIREs Cogn Sci* 2012, 3:19-27. doi: 10.1002/wcs.157. Hespos and vanMarle have written, “We believe that infants are born with expectations about the objects around them, even though that knowledge is a skill that’s never been taught.” Their research involves infants as young as two months. Since the Spirit is manifested materially, the possibility of intuitive response should not be discounted.

and anticipates baptism in the Holy Spirit – the “fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:16-19).<sup>23</sup> Mark offers a paradigm for understanding the relationship of water baptism with the gift of the Spirit. He begins and ends his gospel with water baptism and the descent of the Spirit. When Jesus was baptized he came up out of the water and the Spirit descended upon him. The Spirit was signified by a dove and the utterance of the Father (Mark 1:9-11). After the resurrection, Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into the world, preach the gospel, and baptize believers. The accompanying signs of baptism include exorcism, tongues-speech, and healing – all charismatic gifts associated with the Holy Spirit (Mark 16:15-18).<sup>24</sup> The association of the Spirit with water baptism, and accompanying signs, is not unique to Mark.

We return to Peter’s proclamation, “be baptized... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). This is a recurring theme throughout Acts (10:44-48; 19:2-6). The manifested signs of the Spirit include wind, fire, tongues-speech, healing, and prophetic speech (Acts 2:1-4; 4:31; 9:17-19; 19:6). The Spirit baptism of Cornelius, which proceeded water baptism, demonstrates that the gift of the Spirit is not necessarily simultaneous with water baptism. In such cases, water baptism affirms the salvific acts of God.

Paul wrote that believers have been “baptized into Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:3) and have received “the Spirit of life” who dwells in us and bears witness that we are the children of God. The corresponding sign of baptism is the utterance “Abba! Father!” (Romans 8:2, 14-16). He declared, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13). Paul associates water

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<sup>23</sup> Tomberlin, 124-131.

<sup>24</sup> I am aware that the “long ending” of Mark is contested. However, at the very least, its presence in the received text demonstrates that charismatic signs were associated with water baptism by an early Christian community.

baptism with the gift of the Spirit and the manifested signs of the Spirit include diverse *charismata* (1 Corinthians 12:8-10) and the excellence of love (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13). Again, Paul declares that believers have been “baptized into Christ” they have received the Spirit by faith and the signs of the Spirit include miracles and sanctifying virtues (Galatians 3:2-7, 27; 5:22-23). There is a rich tradition throughout the early church, and Pentecostalism, that associates manifestation of diverse *charismata* with water baptism and the gift of the Spirit.<sup>25</sup> Water baptism is more than ritual cleansing; it is a charismatic encounter in the Spirit. Pentecostals throughout the world associate water baptism with exorcism and healing.<sup>26</sup> I recall the testimony of a young man I baptized several years ago. He had been delivered from a lifetime of chemical abuse. As he exited the baptismal pool he exclaimed, “I feel so clean!” No one could have convinced him that water baptism is mere symbol. Many Pentecostals have testified to tangible effects of baptismal grace.

***How does water baptism demonstrate the unity of the Faith? Is uniformity of celebration intrinsic to valid Christian water baptism? (B6).*** Pentecostals have tended to understand water baptism and Spirit baptism in terms of an individual encounter, with little attention being given to the corporate dimension. Again, the baptism of Jesus is the paradigm. Jesus, as the incarnate Word, represents the whole of humanity. The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus signifies the Spirit being poured out upon all flesh as seal and pledge which anticipates the fullness of God. To be baptized in water and sealed by the Spirit is to be incorporated into the body of Christ (Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27;

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<sup>25</sup> Tomberlin, 128-130. Also see: Killian McDonnell and George Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991); and Daniel Albrecht, “Witness in the Waters: Baptism and Pentecostal Spirituality” in *Baptism Today: Understanding, Practice, Ecumenical Implications* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008) 155.

<sup>26</sup> Idler, Ellen I., editor, *Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 97-102.



Ephesians 4:4-5). Baptism signifies incorporation into the mystical body of Christ and the institutional body of Christ – the church. The unity of the Faith is the Spirit inspired baptismal confession that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3). Because all Christians are ontologically united in Christ and Spirit, ecumenism is the prayer of Christ and work of the Spirit.

Pentecostal spirituality favors spontaneity over formal liturgy. The Holy Spirit is free to act within liturgy, and free to transcend liturgy. Pentecostal sacramentalism insists upon a liturgy that accommodates the dynamic movements of the Spirit. Therefore uniformity of baptismal celebration is not a significant issue in Pentecostal practice. The diversity of rites, modes and formulas should be tolerated as long as the sanctity of the sacrament is not diminished.

***How is water baptism “constantly reaffirmed?” (B14).*** The Pentecostal doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit implies subsequent salvific encounters with the Spirit of Grace. Walking in the Spirit suggests a life of pilgrimage through this present age. As believers make this pilgrimage of faith they require community, nourishment, and cleansing. Pentecostals can joyfully embrace opportunities for subsequent salvific movements of the Spirit of Grace.

*BEM* states that the most obvious form of baptismal reaffirmation is the celebration of the Eucharist. As the people of God gather to partake of this holy meal communal bonds are strengthened, believers are nourished, and the faith is proclaimed and reaffirmed. Some Pentecostals are revisioning the Eucharist as a metaphysical salvific meal.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Tomberlin, 153-192; Chris E. W. Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper: Foretasting the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012).

*BEM* declares that “baptism is an unrepeatable act” and that “rebaptism must be avoided” (B.13.). The primary concern of *BEM* is to respect “the sacramental integrity of other churches.” Many Pentecostal churches practice rebaptism. The UPCI does not recognize the validity of Trinitarian baptism, requires immersion, and insists that new members be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ.” Some Pentecostal churches suggest the need for rebaptism of those who have apostatized and have been subsequently restored. Many Pentecostal churches do not recognize infant baptism as valid and therefore require the rebaptism of those who were baptized as infants. Pentecostals need further reflection on this issue. However, it should be noted that water baptism as a rite of *initiation* can only be performed once. Subsequent rebaptisms may be considered reaffirmation of initial baptism. As a pastor, I have had many believers request rebaptism for a variety of reasons.

There is another cleansing rite that deserves consideration as baptismal reaffirmation – footwashing. Pope Francis publicly acclaimed the rite when he washed the feet of twelve prisoners, among them two Muslims and two women.<sup>28</sup> Footwashing is an established sacramental tradition in the Christian church and has been a significant rite among many Pentecostals. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples so that they might be cleansed and in fellowship with him and he commanded his disciples to wash one another’s feet (John 13:8-14).<sup>29</sup> Augustine wrote that footwashing is a “wonderful sacramental

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<sup>28</sup> “Pope washes feet of 12 young detainees to serve them 'from the heart,’” *National Catholic Reporter*. Internet: <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/pope-washes-feet-12-young-detainees-serve-them-heart> (accessed on November 17, 2014). Later that week I was invited to participate in the foot washing during Holy Thursday Mass at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Vidalia, Georgia. I could not help but enjoy the difficulty of Father Ben Dallas as he struggled to explain that the Pope’s act of washing a woman’s feet did not break with Catholic tradition. Finally, in exasperation he exclaimed, “Let the mystery of the liturgy explain this to you.” Then Father Ben proceeded to wash the feet of six women and six men (one of whom was a Pentecostal).

<sup>29</sup> Tomberlin, 193-224.

symbol.”<sup>30</sup> Ambrose affirmed footwashing as a refreshing and cleansing grace in which “while washing the pollutions of others I wash away my own.”<sup>31</sup> John of Damascus referred to footwashing as a “token of the Holy Baptism.”<sup>32</sup> John Christopher Thomas has written that “footwashing functions as an extension of... baptism in that it signifies continual cleansing from the sin acquired (after baptism) through life in a sinful world.”<sup>33</sup> The affirmation of footwashing as a sacramental cleansing rite may provide a way forward in the discussion of rebaptism.

In closing, Pope Francis recently called for a renewal of joy in the Catholic liturgy. He declared that liturgy void of joy is sterile. He encouraged Catholics to rejoice, to offer prayers of praise, and to dance (“to move beyond all composure”), because God is great and holy.<sup>34</sup> It is ironic that the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, birthed in the midst of the controversy between Modernism and Fundamentalism, may be the protest of the Spirit against a “form of godliness” that has lost its power (2 Timothy 3:5), and may ultimately prove to be the vivification of the Great Tradition of the Church.

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<sup>30</sup> *Homilies on the Gospel of John* in Philip Schaff, editor, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 1.7* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Press, 1995), 303.

<sup>31</sup> *On the Holy Spirit* in Philip Schaff, editor, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2.10* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Press, 1995), 95.

<sup>32</sup> *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* in Philip Schaff, editor, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2.9* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Press, 1995), 82.

<sup>33</sup> John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 150.

<sup>34</sup> Pope Francis, “The Fruitfulness of Praise.” Fides News Agency General Audience, Internet: <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-at-daily-mass-the-fruitfulness-of-pra> (accessed: November 15, 2014).

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