

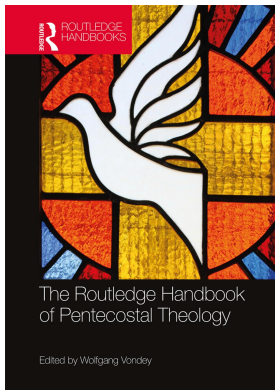
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 30 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology

Wolfgang Vondey

Salvation

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429507076-26>

Grace Milton

Published online on: 20 Apr 2020

How to cite :- Grace Milton. 20 Apr 2020, *Salvation from:* The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology Routledge

Accessed on: 30 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429507076-26>

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SALVATION

Participating in the story where earth and heaven meet

Grace Milton

Salvation is a theme that runs through the whole of Pentecostal theology. Crucially, it is not only the guarantee of “going to heaven when we die” but has significant implications and practical application for this life. The salvation of the individual, while important and celebrated, is but a microcosm of an anticipated full salvation at the eschaton. In fact, it is the constant balance between this-worldly and other-worldly salvation that is a mark of global Pentecostal soteriology. This chapter proposes that the Pentecostal account of salvation is centred on participation in a story which engages in encounter and cooperation with the divine life and is framed within an ongoing biblical story of redemption.

The narrative of Scripture is seen not as a historical text of the past but as a living narrative in which present believers are included through their restored relationship with God and upon which their own testimonies build (see Chapter 6). The chapter therefore looks first at the biblical story of salvation, particularly Luke-Acts, and how it influences Pentecostal theology, as well as how the Pentecostal reading deviates from traditional interpretations of these texts. In turn, I present a narrative structure of the Pentecostal salvation story, its beginning, middle, and end. The beginning discusses Pentecostal anthropology, creation, the Fall, and the sinful state of humanity. The middle looks at God’s work of salvation and the human response to God’s work: to conversion, as well as the Pentecostal beliefs and rituals associated with this human response. The end encompasses the climax of the Pentecostal narrative, including eschatological implications for salvation, again returning to the biblical story. Finally, aspects of this Pentecostal soteriology are critically compared with Evangelical Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox theology.

Salvation in Luke-Acts

Pentecostals take their theology primarily from Luke-Acts rather than Pauline or Johannine writings (Reardon 2012; Gabaitse 2017) due to the centrality of the Pentecost narrative, which is part of the Luke-Acts canon. The soteriology evident in Luke-Acts is simultaneously accused of over-spiritualisation and of being holistic and this-worldly, and Pentecostal soteriology has been accused of the same. I posit that this tight-rope walk between salvation in this life and the next is part of Pentecostalism’s defining approach to soteriology. Salvation history, as with individual salvation accounts, is viewed as a narrative which begins and finds

its culmination in the biblical accounts. The lens through which that narrative has been viewed by Pentecostals is primarily through the accounts in Luke–Acts, because Pentecost is viewed as a formative narrative from which the rest of the Bible can be read. The theological model of the full gospel (see Chapter 16) emerges from this narrative of Pentecost with salvation as its underlying motivation.

Although it is widely considered that “the message of salvation is central to Luke–Acts” (Gabaitse 2017, 63), the author of Luke’s Gospel has been accused of a weak anthropology, a soteriology that is delayed until the parousia and overly spiritualised, and of making no explicit connection between the cross and atonement in substitutionary terms (Reardon 2012). However, others characterise Luke’s approach to salvation as “total transformation of human life, forgiveness of sin, healing infirmities and release from any kind of bondage” (Bosch 1991, 107) and argue for a Lukan soteriology that is “much more holistic, incorporating social, economic, physical and spiritual elements interchangeably” (Reardon 2012, 89). Despite the centrality of salvation and an acknowledgement of Luke’s holistic soteriology, the narrative of Luke–Acts can indeed be over-spiritualised by Pentecostals, overlooking the social and this-worldly dimension of salvation (Gabaitse 2017).

Of course, Pentecostal soteriology is not influenced solely by Luke–Acts. One overt example is North American Pentecostalism’s close relationship with Evangelical Protestantism in its formative years, which has led to a Western adoption at times of an Evangelical historical–grammatical hermeneutic. This hermeneutic is changing, however, and Pentecostal scholars (in particular) are beginning to understand and formulate their own unique approach to hermeneutics which includes a commitment to life application (Davies 2009) and the tripartite involvement of Spirit, Word, and community (Archer 2004). A Pentecostal hermeneutic that starts with experience must then turn to Scripture to affirm and enlighten those experiences (see Chapters 12 and 13). With this approach, the more holistic elements of Lukan soteriology can be seen to emerge at ground level, as they more closely reflect the Pentecostal experiences of God as saviour, liberator, and healer evident throughout the biblical texts.

For Pentecostals, the salvation story emerging with Luke–Acts is therefore a thread that runs throughout the biblical narratives from Genesis to Revelation. Luke–Acts places this salvation (hi)story within a unique framework that presents salvation as (1) Spirit-focussed, revolving around the biblical events of Pentecost, (2) holistic, and (3) liberating (Reardon 2012, 90). The Pentecostal approach towards both experiencing God and turning to the Bible allows for both elements to become formative for Pentecostal soteriology. In turn, there is an expectation that the life of a believer should reflect these elements as a continuation of the biblical story: salvation is viewed through the lens of the biblical narrative but as taking place in the here and now (see Chapter 4). It is therefore necessary to start with the beginning of the theological narrative by establishing the beliefs about God’s motivation and achievement in salvation.

Sin and atonement

We can arrive at a basic framework for the beginning of the Pentecostal story of salvation from the statements of faith of the Assemblies of God (AoG), the Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance (Elim), and the Church of God in Christ (CGC). From these statements an elementary narrative emerges: in the beginning, humanity was created in God’s image and given life through God’s *ruach* (breath). God and the first man and woman had a special and perfect relationship in the garden of Eden. Humans were “created pure and upright” (AoG 2018) and with free will, but through “voluntary transgression” (AoG 2018) succumbed to

the temptation to sin, “rending man subject to God’s wrath and condemnation” (Elim 2018). Pentecostal soteriology is rooted in this basic narrative and interpretation of the Fall, and it is from this story that Pentecostals understand the origins of sin in human beings and in the world more broadly.

Crucially, because of the unique place in creation and the special relationship with God prior to the Fall, human beings were given stewardship over creation and, as part of this, human sin has had far reaching implications beyond humanity for all of creation (Routledge 2011). The first sin is seen predominantly as disobedience to God and as causing a break in the relationship between God and the first humans, leading to their expulsion from paradise. This broken relationship and propensity to sin becomes the state of the whole of humanity and the foundational problem at the root of theological concerns regarding salvation: “Pentecostals believe that all people have sinned, sin being defined as breaking God’s law and also as offending or displeasing God” (Warrington 2008, 35). In turn, “universal sinfulness” (Elim) is something that all humans need to be “cleansed from... through repentance and faith in the precious Blood of Jesus Christ” (CGC) in order to re-establish a right relationship with God and to progress towards holiness and restored purpose. Although not explicit in statements of faith, Pentecostals suggest that not only does sin affect humanity’s relationship with God, but it affects people’s relationships with one another; it affects the state of the whole of creation (Thomson 2010), and for many, it is the reason for suffering and physical sickness in the world today.

However, the overcoming of sin is not something that humans can accomplish on their own, but rather God was required to step into history and into the lives of individual believers, in order to provide atonement and to restore the broken relationships (Rybarczyk 2018, 80–82). Therefore, Pentecostals believe that the Son of God came in the flesh and eventually gave his life as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (see Chapter 20). The predominant atonement model for Pentecostals is that of penal substitutionary atonement, whereby God required a penalty to be paid for sin, and Jesus Christ, God’s pure and sinless Son, acted as a sacrifice to pay that penalty, thus restoring humanity to a right relationship with God through his blood (CGC).

Theological discussion around this basic story tends to centre on debates surrounding the extent or reach of the atonement and the forgiveness of sins, especially as these relates to healing (Hejzlar 2013; Shuttleworth 2015) and prosperity (Mbamalu 2015) of the whole of creation. While some have expanded on understandings of healing to include economic and socio-cultural factors (see Chapters 24, 34 and 38), atonement is often more narrowly defined by many Pentecostals in the traditional forensic terms of justification made possible by Christ’s work on the cross. This perspective tends to neglect to incorporate in the biblical story of atonement also Jesus’ resurrection, ascension, and the narrative of Pentecost to include also Christ’s triumph over death seated at the right hand of God and ruling over all realms (heaven and earth).

Although the general contours of this story are very much an Evangelical Protestant narrative, Pentecostals view their participation in this story in a different way in the light of Pentecost. When Pentecostals extend the story of salvation beyond the cross (Vonhey 2017a, 52), then the soteriological narrative points to the resurrection and ascension of Christ, which made it possible to pour out the Holy Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:38) and, when an individual has responded, for humanity to receive the Spirit. Hence, Frank Macchia (2007, 186) argues that “the vocation of the human race was to bear the Spirit of God, and the entire mission of Jesus was to provide the means by which this can occur.” Justification and sanctification consequently belong to the same work of salvation (Macchia 2010), and the human response to the atoning work of Christ is seen as directly in line with the responses of the early

Christians to the outpouring of the Spirit. Pentecostal soteriology is Christocentric only insofar as the work of Christ is interpreted through and extended by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Despite the central place of the Spirit in Pentecostal belief and practice, classical Pentecostals adopted a soteriology that has been criticised as being overly Christocentric. When the cross is given an exclusive place in the atonement narrative, Christ takes on the role as the sole achiever of salvation through his death and resurrection. The Spirit, in turn, is treated as the applier of salvation through sanctification and, as such, subordinate to Christ in a soteriology that places greater significance on justification (Del Colle 1993; Studebaker 2003). This perspective is not in keeping with Pentecostal pneumatology, and Spirit-Christology is better placed to explain the Pentecostal approach because it attributes the divine nature in Christ to a pneumatological model that combines the work of Christ and the Spirit so closely as to be almost indistinguishable from one another (Studebaker 2003). Spirit-Christology offers a trinitarian view of salvation which actively seeks to avoid hierarchy among the divine persons, and this emphasis is a significant contribution Pentecostal theology can offer towards a truly trinitarian soteriology. As a consequence, the moments of justification and sanctification can be more closely aligned and treated with similar weight and importance in Pentecostal soteriology.

Human response

God's first and primary act of salvation in Christ invites and makes possible human response (Rybarczyk 2018, 91). This response refers to what is required of, and what takes place in, the individual upon conversion or what Pentecostals typically call the new birth (derived from John 3:2–21). Pentecostal soteriology places a high importance on the response of the individual, and the idea of the new birth has resulted, at times, in a rather individualistic soteriology. However, the individual experience must always be understood in light of the atonement and as a foretaste of complete salvation for the whole of creation.

A Pentecostal ordo salutis

Although there is no formal and explicit *ordo salutis* advanced by classical Pentecostal theology, the closest biblical blueprint is probably Peter's command to the crowds in Acts 2: 38 following the outpouring of the Spirit: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." While this command alone does not take the individual through the entire process of salvation, it presents the three initial stages that have become an expected part of the "born again" experience (Gause 1980, 15–24).

- 1 Repentance is considered to be personal and individual rather than public or confessional. It is closely associated with *justification* and, where salvation is concerned, it is often considered to be where the "conversion" experience is thought to end. Recognition of sin and repentance is the human response to the work already done by God.
- 2 Water baptism is a sacramental act (Archer 2004), typically seen as an outward expression of an internal *regeneration* and considered necessary for salvation in Oneness theology (see Chapter 18). Baptism in water is a human response to the work of God by faith and thus commensurate to an age when the individual is able to commit to God.
- 3 Spirit baptism is the act of the Holy Spirit entering into the believer whereby they receive empowerment and gifts to participate in the divine life and become like Christ (*sanctification*).

Pentecostals are divided over whether salvation is a two- or three-stage process, whether justification (resulting from repentance) and sanctification can be combined and are followed by Spirit baptism, or whether justification and sanctification remain two separate crisis stages (see Chapter 22). Pentecostal theology traditionally identifies with a Protestant theology of salvation by “faith alone,” and the human response identifies important markers on the journey of salvation (Archer 2004). The Pentecostal *ordo salutis* displays a delicate balancing act: salvation is completely the work of God, yet the application of God’s saving work and the reception of the Spirit rely on an active response by the human person who must undergo the “born again” conversion experience as an individual. There can be no application of salvation without human consent and no acceptance of salvation by a third party on behalf of another.

My own research of Pentecostal conversion experiences (Milton 2015) concludes that there are three main changes that take place in the individual upon initial conversion: (1) regeneration, (2) restored identity as an adopted child of God, and (3) divinely guided destiny. These changes may not all be recognised or acknowledged at the time, but it can be agreed that they exist in principle within the believer who has accepted Christ, and they are given to the believer by God freely as part of salvation, although they require the human decision and action to be accepted. These “marks” of salvation are catalysts for the internal transformations that take place within the convert and believer.

An important Pentecostal mark of salvation is believed to be the baptism in the Holy Spirit with signs following (see Chapter 23). Frank Macchia (2010, 280) refers to Spirit baptism as a “second conversion,” although there are disagreements as to its salvific nature and to the signs that follow. There is a longstanding debate about the relationship of Spirit baptism and Christian initiation (see McDonnell and Montague 1991). Yet Pentecostals are likely connecting the two on the level of charismatic manifestations: most Pentecostals expect speaking with tongues or different gifts to be the “biblical sign” of Spirit baptism (see Chapter 28). These signs are seen as “evidence” of being baptised in the Spirit and, as it is generally not believed that they are manifested before salvation, they frequently function as “evidence” of conversion. Crucially, this is not to say that a lack of Spirit baptism equates to the absence of salvation, though some Pentecostals would argue that salvation cannot be verified fully without evidence of Spirit baptism (see Atkinson 2011). Pentecostal soteriology places a clear emphasis on the wider practices of salvation.

Salvation as praxis

When considering the human response, Pentecostals think about outward rituals and experiences that accompany conversion or represent the moments of salvation. Although Pentecostals do not consider rituals or sacraments to be salvific (Archer 2004; Stephenson 2012), Pentecostal soteriology is clearly oriented towards ecclesial practices. Dominant among these is the altar call and response (Vondey 2017a, 51–58, 2017b) as a kind of Pentecostal ritual that is universal, if not recognised formally as such. The altar call reinforces an understanding of “human response” to include the divine invitation to salvation and the communal and individual response in a move to, tarrying and transformation, and ultimate release from the altar. This soteriology is reflected in the emphasis of the full gospel on conversion, sanctification, Spirit baptism, divine healing, and the commissioning on behalf of the kingdom of God as transformative moments at the altar that characterise various experiences of salvation (Vondey 2017a). This framework offers an important move away from more individualistic notions of salvation and allows for a broadening of soteriology to consider other communal rituals within Pentecostalism.

Central to salvation as praxis is the emphasis of Pentecostal soteriology on embodiment (Trementozzi 2018, 157–92). Spiritual and doxological practices form important expressions for the Pentecostal experiences of salvation, particularly evident in the giving of testimonies, often linked closely to adult baptism, and manifested in worship services and personal encounters (Poloma 2009, 48). Pentecostal testimony is often attributed to inspiration by the Holy Spirit, in witness of Christ, so that it may be considered a charismatic speech act, along the lines of prophesy, words of knowledge, and speaking in tongues (Cartledge 2006, 83; Milton 2015, 49). When testimony, closely aligned with giving witness to one's personal experience of salvation, is considered to be a Spirit-inspired speech, then each personal testimony serves as a building block continuing the biblical salvation story by filling in "the gaps" between the history of the Epistles and the fulfilment of the events indicated in Revelation. Believers are not only invited to participate in the salvation story but to continue to tell it through their own experiences and witness.

Salvation and prosperity

Given the Pentecostal emphasis on experience and praxis, we must also consider what is believed to happen in the life of the individual as a result of their response to salvation. Typically, salvation is seen in terms of the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from evil, and healing of the body (Yong 2005, 90–91) manifested through a whole range of experiences including personal-spiritual, individual-physical, communal, socioeconomic, and ecological dimensions of life (Volf 1989): salvation is personal, familial, ecclesial, material, social, cosmic, and eschatological (Yong 2005, 91–98). This broad and holistic understanding of salvation can be seen most acutely in prosperity theology, which expects material and physical prosperity to result from faith.

Prosperity Theology is not universally adopted within Pentecostal groups and is more often equated with neo-Pentecostal expressions (see Chapter 38). The influence of holiness traditions and theologies of sanctification may also have contributed to the individualism and human-centrism in this soteriology, whereby the human response of faith is awarded a high place in the proceedings. Nonetheless, prosperity reflects an underlying holistic and materialistic expectation present within Pentecostal soteriology more generally. In Korean Pentecostalism, for example, holistic salvation is composed of blessing, wholeness, and healing (Bae 2005, 537). Prosperity theology, even when viewed critically, manifests the importance of the inherent this-worldliness of Pentecostal soteriology that is lacking in other traditions (Agana 2015). Nevertheless, this emphasis must be integrated in the whole story of salvation that identifies a soteriology as Pentecostal. The beginning (Fall and atonement) and the middle (human response) of the Pentecostal story highlight the delicate balance between salvation as the work of God and the importance of human participation and response to God's saving work.

Destiny: the climax of salvation

The Pentecostal salvation story is building towards a climax. In fact, for the believer there are multiple possible climaxes towards which their salvation propels them. These can be categorised under the concept of "destiny:" (1) a destiny to be fulfilled during the present life on this earth, (2) a destiny of eternal life after death, and (3) a destiny for the whole of creation in the eschaton. Pentecostal destiny is a divinely guided and motivated future gained through salvation, along with regeneration and a renewed identity (Milton 2015). Although

salvation is immediately obtained at initial conversion, its response and realisation are oriented towards both this world and the eschaton as a destiny in this life and an eschatological destiny. This dual focus reaches beyond the individual to the community and to the whole of creation.

Individual destiny

The individual's renewed destiny is made possible by liberation from sin and restored relationship with God. It results from the atoning work of God but is applied as a result of an act of faith: righteousness; holiness; and, ultimately, eternal life. Despite differences as to whether this takes place across two or three stages, Pentecostals agree that there is an ongoing formation which is directly related to the empowerment of the Spirit present for believers at the time of or following initial conversion. For Coulter (2008, 450), the summary of Pentecostal soteriology, and its destiny in particular, is in the acquisition of the divine life and liberation from sin. It is participation in the life of God, a new life in the Spirit (Rybarczyk 2018, 87), and the biblical promises for that life of ultimate victory and empowerment that can lead Pentecostal theology to be accused, at times, of triumphalism. However, within what can be a heavily spiritualised viewpoint of an eschatological destiny obtained after death, there emerges also a strong belief in God's plan for the individual in the present. Salvation means that God is present and active in practical aspects of the current life including career progression, fertility, or inter-personal relationships. Here again, where soteriology is in danger of becoming overly spiritualised on the one hand, we find within Pentecostal theology a counterpart oriented towards salvation realised in this world. The destiny that is made possible, and in which the believer is invited to participate, has very earthly evidences.

Corporate destiny

The personal destiny of individuals is linked closely to the destiny attributed to the believing community. Believers' personal testimonies are drawn back into line with the biblical narrative especially through a focus on the eschatological dimensions of salvation (see Chapter 25). Early Pentecostal groups held an imminent belief in the end times, and eschatology played a very real role in the formation of salvation beliefs and practices (Thompson 2010). The eschatological dimension highlights that salvation aims not only at individuals but at a saved community, and the ultimate expression of that salvation is the church at the second coming of Christ. Here we find the combining of soteriology oriented towards this world and the next (Yong 2005, 97) by anticipating that the world will be restored to wholeness, and God's people will experience their restored relationship with God and one another in its fullness.

In more recent times, and in line with progressive theologies across denominations, we are seeing expressions of ecological salvation emerging from Pentecostal scholarship (Studebaker 2008; Swoboda 2013; Lamp 2014). This extension of traditional and individualistic accounts to the realm of creation should not come as a surprise given the Pentecostal focus on wholeness in salvation. Thomson (2010) draws a link between human stewardship and the implications of sin, concluding that just as the divine-human relationship will be fully restored, all that was broken by the Fall will ultimately be restored to wholeness at the eschaton. Still, this idea of sin and salvation reaching beyond the human condition and into the rest of the created order has been controversial, and not all Pentecostals consider it to be on the

Pentecostal agenda. The environmental implications of salvation (see Chapter 33) are one of the important considerations for Pentecostal theologians who are interested in exploring the contributions of Pentecostal soteriology to global Christian theology.

Ecumenical debates

The fact that Pentecostalism is a deeply soteriological movement “places Pentecostalism firmly within pietist streams of Christianity and gives it continuity with many doctrinal traditions” (Coulter 2008, 448). Pentecostal soteriology has engaged in dialogue with three main ecumenical conversations: Evangelical Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy. These conversations have sharpened Pentecostal theology and identify both its differences from and contributions to Christian soteriology. The extent of salvation (universalism), its unrepeatable character, and transformative nature (deification) form the dominant concerns of debates about Pentecostal soteriology today.

Universal salvation

The Pentecostal salvation story does not, on the surface, differ much from that of its evangelical Protestant cousins. The narrative of the Fall and redemption, and the requirement of a restored relationship with God through submission to Christ, remains very much the same, and much of Pentecostalism’s individualistic anthropology can perhaps be attributed to its close connection to evangelicalism. Typically, the soteriological difference from Evangelicalism is the Pentecostal hermeneutic of experience and the means of holistic participation in the continuing biblical story as an ongoing story that is modelled and experienced by the believer in line with the biblical narrative. Encounter with God takes precedence (Warrington 2008), and the biblical narrative is accessed to support and shed light on those experiences. Salvation is an invitation to participate in the divine life and to continue the narrative through to its anticipated completion. Similar to Pentecostals, Charismatic-evangelical theologian Clark Pinnock (1996, 149–85) has emphasised that the goal of salvation is union with God and that justification is just one part of this union. Where Pinnock moves beyond, certainly classical Pentecostal theology is in his emphasis on universalism. Pentecostals have historically held an exclusivist view of salvation, moving towards a pneumatological inclusivism more recently (Yong 2005; Richie 2011; Milton 2018), but rarely to a soteriological universalism. The materialistic and participatory soteriology of Pentecostals, based on the idea that the work of Christ demands a genuine response, limits the unrestrained teaching of a universal granting of salvation.

Unrepeatable salvation

While Pentecostal theology in the West finds many of its roots in Evangelical Protestantism, the movement also reveals close similarities with Roman Catholic aspects of soteriology. For Roman Catholics, the similarities lie in a shared rationale for salvation (sin and atonement), the realisation of salvation through the atonement (Jesus Christ), and the extent of human participation (Christian initiation), although Pentecostal soteriology is more subjective and pneumatological (Vonhey 2017a, 52). Del Colle (2003, 94) sees commonality in that “the Church exists in the outpouring of the Spirit into which believers are incorporated via the rite of Christian initiation (baptism/confirmation) for Catholics and conversion/Spirit-baptism for Pentecostals.” Both aspects involve a process that is not repeatable as “entrance

into the journey toward Christian fullness” (94). If conversion (like water baptism) is an initial participation aimed eventually at the realisation of the fullness of salvation, then both traditions can agree that conversion (at least from the perspective of God) is not a repeatable practice. Similarly, Pentecostals would emphasise that once baptised in the Spirit, the believer may experience a refilling but not a renewed baptism. While Catholic soteriology relies primarily on sacramental practices, Pentecostals, however, emphasise the importance of continued transformation which relates the practices of salvation not only to the Incarnation and the cross but also to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Salvation as deification

Similarities with Eastern Orthodoxy lie in the anticipated consequences of salvation, or sanctification, the process of becoming like Christ, otherwise known as *theosis* or deification. A comparison of Eastern Orthodox and classical Pentecostal theologies of sanctification can draw close parallels between the ways that each tradition places the transformation of the believer towards a more Christ-like state as central to the Christian life (Rybarczyk 2004). Despite differing context, anthropology, and soteriology, the significance of *theosis* as the ultimate goal of the believer for both groups is striking. Some have identified that Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity has aided the rise of deification as a dominant theme in the West (Bloor 2015). However, while Eastern Orthodox soteriology depends on sacerdotal and institutional practices, Pentecostal soteriology is more synergistic and personal (Vondey 2017a, 53). Still, drawing on Pentecostal notions of justification beyond traditional forensic models of the West, Pentecostals can view justification and sanctification as “two overlapping and mutually complementary lenses” rather than two “distinct stages or dimensions of one’s salvation” (Macchia 2010, 8). Hence, participation in the divine life can be seen as more than a supplementary stage following salvation (narrowly defined as justification); rather, Pentecostal theology can speak of salvation as deification made possible by God in the human response through the empowerment and sanctification of the Holy Spirit evident throughout the Christian life.

Conclusion

Pentecostal theology is thoroughly soteriological, and salvation plays a central part in almost all aspects of Pentecostal beliefs and practices. Despite historical links with a limited soteriology in terms of justification, Pentecostal soteriology is now broadening its vision to allow for a representation of the wider scope of Pentecostal experiences. At the core of Pentecostal soteriology stands participation in the divine life reflecting a biblical narrative of holistic and persistent practices of transformation. Pentecostalism has always held a space in-between, walking a thin line between the earthly and the heavenly realms. In its soteriology, this threshold position is clearly present and at times leads to uncertainty and confusion. The theological reliance on a seemingly linear biblical narrative means that some elements of salvation can be missed from the story. Significantly, the possibility of losing one’s salvation (and the possible return to the faith) or of a non-linear progression of faith does not yet have a place in the soteriological discussion. It can be easy to ignore more complicated testimonies that involve triumph as well as lament, but without these the Pentecostal narrative will remain incomplete. There is a long way to go in presenting Pentecostal soteriology in a systematic way; nonetheless, the approach to salvation from the ground up and based first and foremost on encounter and transformation presents an important challenge.

By emphasising a holistic approach and commitment to salvation as the uniting of earth and heaven, Pentecostals have much to contribute to the broader understanding of salvation among the Christian traditions.

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