

Towards a Global Vision of the Church

Explorations on Global
Christianity and Ecclesiology

Faith and Order Paper 239

Volume II



EDITED BY
Cecil M. Robeck, Jr
Sotirios Boukis
Ani Ghazaryan Drissi



World Council
of Churches

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Introduction

This is the second of the two-volume set *Towards a Global Vision of the Church*. It is part of the work done by the ecclesiology study group of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on Faith and Order between 2015 and 2022. In the introduction to the first volume, we gave a brief overview of the WCC's long-standing interest in the subject of ecclesiology.¹ Previous Commissions on Faith and Order produced three important studies on ecclesiology: *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* (1998), *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (2005), and, in 2013, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (TCTCV).

After the publication of TCTCV, the ecclesiology study group worked along two lines. One part of the group reviewed and analyzed the responses to TCTCV that the churches had sent to the Commission. The results of their study were published as *Churches Respond to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,² *Common Threads: Key Themes from Responses to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,³ and *What Are the Churches Saying About the Church?*⁴

At the same time, another part of the group undertook the task of broadening the table of ecclesiological dialogue by going into more and wider conversations with ecclesiological perspectives from various regions (especially Asia, Africa, and Latin America), denominational families (such as Evangelical, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and independent churches), and forms of being church (such as

1. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, eds., *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), vii–xxv.

2. Ellen Wondra, Stephanie Dietrich, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, eds., *Churches Respond to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Papers Nos. 231 and 232 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021).

3. Ellen Wondra, Stephanie Dietrich, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, eds., *Common Threads: Key Themes from Responses to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 233 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021).

4. Faith and Order Commission, *What Are the Churches Saying About the Church? Key Findings and Proposals from the Responses to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 236 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021).

ecclesial movements, new forms of monasticism, and online churches), “which have not always been clearly or strongly part of discussions on the way to *TCTCV*, and whose understandings of ecclesiology we want to discover and to enter into dialogue with.”⁵

The commission believed that the ecclesiology study group could turn to some of these churches and seek responses to *TCTCV* from their ranks through a series of consultations that was organized with theologians representing many of the above perspectives. With these additional responses, the commission hoped it could construct a more globally informed portrait of what the church is. How do they understand the church in light of *TCTCV*? Do they see themselves as being well-represented in that document? From their perspective, what do they view as missing from that document? What do they believe they could bring to the study of ecclesiology that would enrich the WCC’s understanding of the global church?

The first volume in this set included 24 chapters written from the perspectives of theologians from the global South: Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The majority came from Pentecostal or Charismatic churches. The commission responded well to its publication, as have other readers since its release.

In this second volume, nearly all of the chapters have come from commissioners who have worked on ecclesiological issues during this past term. In the first section, several commissioners have reviewed official reports from existing international dialogues of Pentecostals or Evangelicals with the Roman Catholic Church, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, or the Lutheran World Federation. The editors chose also to include the dialogues of Pentecostals with various member churches of the WCC, known as the Joint Consultative Group. These contributions have met the goal of harvesting the fruit of other ecumenical conversations that include many of the churches absent from the WCC.

The second section focuses on Pentecostal and Evangelical perspectives on the church. Some of these chapters were presented in the consultation that Faith and Order organized at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, in the United States on 26–30 June 2018, under the title “Towards a Global Vision of the Church.” Some other chapters are ecclesiological studies on Pentecostal

5. Faith and Order Commission, *Minutes of the Meeting at the Monastery of Caraiman, Busteni, Romania, 17–24 June 2015*, Faith and Order Paper No. 222 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2015), 55. See also Faith and Order Commission, *Minutes of the Meeting at the eMseni Christian Centre, Benoni, near Pretoria, South Africa, 15–21 June 2017*, Faith and Order Paper No. 223 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2015), 29.

and Evangelical perspectives on ecclesiology that have been published elsewhere. They are included here because the ecclesiology study group found them to be useful in its discussions along the way, and it believed that these chapters would aid further ecclesiological discussions.

In the third section, the ecclesiology study group has identified some key themes which deserved further exploration after reflection upon the contributions which are being published in these two volumes. While each chapter of this section is the work of a commissioner from a particular tradition, taken together, these chapters reflect the insights and collective input of the entire group. Some of these chapters harvest the fruits that the commission's consultations have brought forward on specific key themes by identifying contributions that could advance the ecclesiological conversation. Other chapters focused on specific topics that could help the commission gain a greater understanding of topics about which Pentecostals often speak (such as experience, gifts of the Spirit, baptism in the Spirit) or on topics where there appears to be little discussion by Pentecostals but that are frequently raised by most other churches (such as sacraments, authoritative teaching). We also chose to include a discussion of the challenging topic of proselytism, as this continues to be a sensitive issue in dialogues of Pentecostals or Evangelicals with other denominations. Finally, three chapters address the relationship between ecclesiology, pneumatology, and spirituality from different perspectives, offering insights into a topic worth further exploration in the future.

At the end of this volume, five appendixes can be found. The first four include the reports of the Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostals, published here for the first time in an official WCC publication. The fifth appendix offers resources on bilateral ecumenical dialogues where Evangelicals or Pentecostals have been involved. These are offered in the hope of assisting future researchers and scholars who are interested in exploring what has already been discussed in such dialogues.

Overall, the work published in these two volumes reflects the ecclesiological contributions which occurred through this "broadening of the table of conversation." This broadening was extremely strategic for at least four reasons.⁶ First, it boosted global inclusion by finding ways to include in the dialogue a significant part of the one-quarter of World Christianity (half a billion Christians) that was not involved with Faith and Order work. Second, it found a creative way to show faithfulness to ecumenical tradition, as the spirit of the ecumenical

6. For a more thorough analysis of these, see the Introduction in Robeck, Boukis, and Ghazaryan Drissi, *Towards a Global Vision of the Church*, Vol. 1, xiv–xv.

movement has always been about engaging with the whole of World Christianity. Third, it ensured continuation with the previous steps, as it continued the task that the WCC had undertaken in recent decades to keep broadening the table, by creating opportunities for interaction both outside its structures (for example, through the founding of the Global Christian Forum) and inside them (for example, through Faith and Order consultations). And fourth, it gave an opportunity to update the work of Faith and Order with some of the latest global developments in World Christianity.

Interestingly, this broadening of the table led to a growth in convergence in the issues discussed, in at least four ways.⁷ First, it unearthed significant common ground: although many aspects of ecclesiology of the aforementioned regions or denominational families seem distant from (or incompatible with) more “traditional” ecclesiologies, the interaction with them revealed significant common ground. Second, this led to the building of further convergences, both in existing and in new ecclesiological issues. Third, this project also helped address part of the diversity that already exists to a certain extent within the WCC or its member churches as well (such as the emergence of charismatic trends within many mainline denominations). And fourth, it reinforced the role of the Faith and Order Commission as a protagonist in the ecumenical movement, as through this project, the commission actively took the initiative to reach out to and interact with important voices of World Christianity.

With these two volumes, we now pass on a body of literature on which scholars, researchers, ecumenists, and, of course, the new Commission on Faith and Order can build from a broadened ecclesial table of conversation. The inclusion of so many newer voices and the reflections on their responses by members of the commission, should enrich all further conversations on the church. The current volume not only broadens the table; it also updates all subsequent conversations on ecclesiology, and it points to the possibility—perhaps the inevitability—of changes in the ways we describe the church in the future.

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Rev. Dr Sotirios Boukis (Evangelical Church of Greece)

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7. This growth in convergence is unpacked further in the Introduction in Robeck, Boukis, and Ghazaryan Drissi, *Towards a Global Vision of the Church*, Vol. 1, xvi–xviii.

SECTION ONE

Insights on the Church from Dialogues with Pentecostals and Evangelicals

Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogues

Krzysztof Mielcarek

Introduction

The convergence document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)* attempted to outline an ecumenical “meta-ecclesiology” reflecting the convergence of the churches traditionally involved in the ecumenical movement. After the 2013 World Council of Churches (WCC) assembly in Busan, the Faith and Order Commission was challenged to also reflect on the ecclesiological significance of contemporary changes in World Christianity and to go into more and wider conversations with ecclesiological perspectives from various regions, denominational families, and forms of being church which had not always been clearly or strongly part of discussions on the way to *TCTCV*. One important purpose of such conversations would be to explore commonalities and differences, possible new areas of convergence, as well as mutual gifts that such encounters could bring to all parties involved.

One of the streams of Christianity or family of churches on which the research of the commission focused was Pentecostalism, and one area of particular interest included the international bilateral dialogues of Pentecostals with other Christian traditions: What insights into and areas of convergence on ecclesiology could be traced there?

The purpose of this chapter is to search for such elements within official documents of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue.

The dialogue between the Dicastery (formerly the Pontifical Council) for

Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and some classical Pentecostal churches and leaders is a long and fruitful story.¹ The first phase of Catholic–Pentecostal dialogue took place from 1972 to 1976; it focused on baptism in the Holy Spirit, Christian initiation and the charisms, scripture and tradition, and the human person and the gifts. In the second quinquennium (1977–82), consideration was given to faith and religious experience, speaking in tongues, and Mary. The third phase, entitled “Perspectives on *Koinonia*” (1985–89), was especially devoted to ecclesiology, even though the results of that stage of the conversation could not be called a regular ecclesiology. Catholics and Pentecostals met for the fourth time to study especially the subjects of evangelization, proselytism, and common witness (1990–97). The fifth phase touched “On Becoming a Christian” in the light of scripture and the patristic writings (1998–2006). The most recent round of the dialogue, its sixth, ended in 2015; the final report was published the following year. The main subject chosen by both parties was “Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church.”

None of these published documents is strictly ecclesiological, but some of them do have theological elements connected to the doctrine of the church, especially the one on *koinonia*. The general challenge, however, is that with respect to the Pentecostal tradition, one cannot speak of a single or homogeneous ecclesiology. There are many elements of different ecclesiologies rooted in the local Pentecostal churches, depending on which type of ecclesial tradition they represent. Some of them are more episcopal, some have elements of presbyterian polity, but most of them are congregational.² Another major challenge of such a study is comparing an ecclesiological synthesis such as *TCTCV* with detailed and extensive papers such as those produced by the Dicastery (formerly the Pontifical Council) for Promoting Christian Unity and Pentecostal representatives for the past 50 years. Last but not least, even in such an ecclesiological document as “Perspectives on *Koinonia*,” the main perspective is more practical than theoretical: that is, the authors of the bilateral agreement looked at the ecclesiology by “exploring the life and spiritual experience of Christians and the Churches” (I.5).

Since the main goal of my efforts was to find any new dimensions or

1. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, “Fifty Years of Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue, 1972–2022: A Pentecostal Assessment,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 44 (2022), 220–50.

2. See “Perspectives on *Koinonia*: The Report of the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 1989,” *Pneuma* 12:2 (1990), 117–42, §84.

elements of ecclesiology within these documents, I decided to focus on the results of the third round of dialogue, “Perspectives on *Koinonia*,” and two other documents which at least partly touch the subject of ecclesiology: the study “On Becoming a Christian” (1998–2006) and the latest document, on spiritual gifts (2011–15).

“Perspectives on *Koinonia*”

The theme of *koinonia* proved to be fruitful in the reflection about ecclesiological self-understanding (“Perspectives on *Koinonia*,” §9).³ Nonetheless, Pentecostals, being a movement that is only a century old, have had little opportunity to engage in theological reflection on ecclesiology (“Perspectives on *Koinonia*,” §11). The first chapter of “Perspectives on *Koinonia*” (titled “*Koinonia* and the Word of God”) strongly affirms both the Christology and the ecclesiology of *TCTCV*. One sees the same accentuation of the role of Jesus Christ as the perfect Word of God and the function of scripture (“Perspectives on *Koinonia*,” §14–28). Equally convergent is the picture of *koinonia* being rooted in the life of the triune God (“Perspectives on *Koinonia*,” §29) and the Holy Spirit being the source of *koinonia* or communion (“Perspectives on *Koinonia*,” §30).

Pentecostals see respective Christian denominations as legitimate manifestations of the one universal church, depending upon the degree of their faithfulness to scripture (“Perspectives on *Koinonia*,” §35). Thus, they do not long for any kind of uniformity. However, they are convinced that because of God’s gift of *koinonia*, Christians are obliged to endeavour to overcome their divisions.

“Perspectives on *Koinonia*” shares the same vision of baptism as *TCTCV*.⁴ Pentecostals agree that baptism is a “means of grace” and an “integral part of the whole experience of becoming Christian” (“Perspectives on *Koinonia*,” §50).

3. “Perspectives on *Koinonia*” was also published in Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* N. 75 (1990/IV), 179–91; as “Zicht Op ‘Koinonia’: Internationale Dialoog Pinksterkerken/Rooms-Katholieke Kerk—Derde Fase (1985–1989),” *Kerkelijke Documentatie* 121, 19:9 (1991), 29–46; and as “Perspectieven op Koinonia,” *Parakleet* 11/39 (1991), i–xii. It was likewise published in Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, eds. *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982–1998* (Geneva: WCC Publications and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 735–52; and in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity, Vol. 1: Ecumenical Documents and Critical Assessments* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 133–58. A copy is available at http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/pe-rc/doc/e_pe-rc_pent03.html.

4. See chapter 3 of *TCTCV*, esp. §40–44.

They believe that baptism publicly demonstrates one's personal identification with the death and resurrection of Christ and signifies his or her incorporation into the Body of Christ ("Perspectives on *Koinonia*," §54). Most Pentecostals baptize in water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and believe the rite is not to be repeated ("Perspectives on *Koinonia*," §54).

Just as is the case among some other post-Reformation churches, there is some controversy about practising infant baptism. Most Pentecostals do not baptize infants and are rather suspicious about this practice among other Christians ("Perspectives on *Koinonia*," §61–63).

In chapter 4, titled "*Koinonia* in the Life of the Church," Pentecostals declare acceptance of the full ecclesial status of churches ordered in various ways, while the scriptures are the criterion ("Perspectives on *Koinonia*," §84). They also recognize the need for and the value of ordination for the life of the church. This is a public acknowledgement of a God-given charism which a person has received prior to the act of ordination ("Perspectives on *Koinonia*," §85–86). However, they prefer presbyterian and/or congregational ecclesial models as expressing better the mutuality or reciprocity demanded by *koinonia*.

"Perspectives on *Koinonia*" §94 speaks also about the church as a sign and an instrument of salvation (see also *TCTCV* §27), but it accordingly stresses the fact that each person, being a member of the church, is also both a sign and an instrument of salvation.

Chapter 5 of "Perspectives on *Koinonia*" deals with the church as *communio sanctorum*. Here, Pentecostal representatives declare that the preaching of the word is the central element of worship. They consider it a "pre-sacramental experience," creating the church. Participation in baptism and the Lord's Supper is viewed as being of secondary importance ("Perspectives on *Koinonia*," §96).

Even though Christians may rightly be called "saints," the offices and structures of the church are in continual need of renewal. That is why Pentecostals do not believe they are any less the church, even though they have only slightly more than a 100-year history. They are rightly convinced that continuity in history by itself is no guarantee of spiritual maturity or of doctrinal fidelity ("Perspectives on *Koinonia*," §106–107).

“On Becoming a Christian”

The second fruit of Catholic–Pentecostal dialogue—“On Becoming a Christian” (1998–2006)⁵—is another document worthy of mention here. Its ecclesiological features are especially present in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 contains a paragraph titled “Contemporary Reflections on Experience in the Christian Life,” where the role of personal experience in coming to faith is especially treated. In chapter 5, the special place in Christian initiation is given to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The presentation of the most common Pentecostal position on personal experience is given in “On Becoming a Christian” §153–57. According to the authors, the process begins within the heart of the person. The Holy Spirit stimulates the heart, resulting in conversion and repentance, and starts a deeper process of conversion, faith, and sanctification.

Repentance is seen as a decisive break in the individual’s life that is brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not a question of affections but a profound change in the way the new believer lives his or her life. Even though many people today come to faith in Christ through a gradual process, they are expected to reach the point where they are able to confess their faith publicly and follow Jesus in their lives. The same goes for collective conversions, which ultimately require a personal profession of faith.

“On Becoming a Christian” §164–73 presents a Pentecostal perspective on baptism in the Holy Spirit experienced by both individuals and the community as a whole. Pentecostals believe that the experiential aspect of faith is a matter of daily efforts—not only in terms of practicing prayer and devotion, but also by

5. “On Becoming a Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings with Some Contemporary Reflections”—The Report from the Fifth Phase of the International Dialogue between Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders and the Catholic Church (1998–2006) was published in Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* N. 129 (2008/III), 162–215; in *Service d’information* N. 129 (2008/III), 163–219; in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity, Volume 2: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 95–216; and in Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA, John Gibaut, Jeffrey Gros, FSC, and Despina Prassas, eds, *Growth in Agreement IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 2004–2014* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2017), 1:401–70. Copies of the English version are available at http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/pe-rc/doc/e_pe-rc_5-contents.html; http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj18/2007RC_Pent_Dialogue.pdf; and <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-dialogo/testo-del-documento-in-inglese1.html>.

participation in any kind of activities of the congregation directed to those who are in need. All of this is possible because of the real work of the Holy Spirit, who transforms the followers of Christ into his image (2 Cor. 3:18).

Spiritual experience may lead to both individual and ecclesial expressions. These are viewed as numerous gifts of God given to individuals, which are clear evidence that God is at work in their lives (“On Becoming a Christian,” §167). These gifts are not limited to devotional services but extend towards all aspects of human lives in evangelizing culture and pursuing peace and justice (“On Becoming a Christian,” §168), since according to the scriptures, every generation of Christians should live in the perspective of “the last days” (Acts 2:17; “On Becoming a Christian,” §169). To answer such great challenges of human life, one needs extra power, which is available from above. Thus, Pentecostals view as important the fact that believers should seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which enables them to live a holy and empowered life (“On Becoming a Christian,” §170).

Chapter 5 of “On Becoming a Christian” deals specifically with this phenomenon from the perspective of Christian initiation. According to Pentecostal understandings, the Holy Spirit has always been present in the church with grace, signs, and gifts (“On Becoming a Christian,” §193). Two principal moments of the Spirit’s presence in the lives of Christians are conversion and baptism in the Spirit. This conviction does not mean that Pentecostals limit the presence of the Holy Spirit to those “baptized in the Holy Spirit [“On Becoming a Christian,” §198], but the manifestation of tongues has had, and continues to have, particular importance.”⁶

Baptism in the Holy Spirit does have a biblical background (“On Becoming a Christian,” §201–207) as well as a patristic one (“On Becoming a Christian,” §208–16). Great examples of Christian faith in the early period of the church—

6. “Final Report of the Dialogue between the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Leaders of Some Pentecostal Churches and Participants in the Charismatic Movement within Protestant and Anglican Churches, 1972–1976,” §16, in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (Fall, 1990), 88; William G. Rusch and Jeffrey Gros, eds. *Deepening Communion: International Ecumenical Documents with Roman Catholic Participation* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 370-71; Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyers, and William G. Rusch, eds. *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998* (Geneva: WCC Publications/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 715.

such as those of Tertullian (c. 160–225),⁷ Hippolytus (c. 170–235),⁸ Origen (c. 185–254), Hilary of Poitiers (c. 314–67), Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315–86), Basil of Caesarea (c. 330–79), John Chrysostom (354–407), and Philoxenus (c. 440–528)—all speak about experiences that can be understood as referring to baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁹

“Contemporary Pentecostal Reflections on Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” presented in chapter 5, provides a historical and general panorama about the very origin of Pentecostal identity, in which baptism in the Holy Spirit has been a central feature. Without such an experience, the Christian life is considered to be greatly impoverished (“On Becoming a Christian,” §240). On the other hand, those partaking in this baptism in the Spirit are living proof of the apostolic faith restored (“On Becoming a Christian,” §245).

Most Pentecostals do not understand baptism in the Holy Spirit as being the same as the reception of the Holy Spirit at conversion (“On Becoming a Christian,” §254). However, becoming a Christian in all its fullness implies, among other things, receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. There is some debate among Pentecostals over what the evidence of such an experience is. It is generally agreed, however, that while “speaking in tongues” continues to be normative for most Pentecostal groups, “speaking in other tongues, dancing [in the Spirit], having visions, prophesying, or engaging in any manifestations that are consistent with the Word of God (Scripture)” may also be viewed as good evidential examples of baptism in the Holy Spirit for others (“On Becoming a Christian,” §257).

“Do Not Quench the Spirit”

The most recent document produced by a bilateral body of Catholics and Pentecostals, entitled “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” is a systematic reflection on

7. *Peculia gratiae distributiones charismatum subiacere*; see Tertullian, *On Modesty* IX, 9; and *On the Soul* 1,4.

8. Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 22.

9. Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier/The Liturgical Press, 1991, rev. 1994).

charisms in the life and mission of the church.¹⁰ This report of the sixth phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue is the fruit of discussion in the years 2011 to 2015.

The second chapter of the document deals specifically with the subject of charisms in the life and mission of the church in the following steps: common ground between Catholics and Pentecostals (§9–14), biblical background of *charismata* (§15–20), some brief historical observations (§21–23), and few general doctrinal statements (§24–28).

In chapter 3, the authors of the document focus on specific charisms: the gifts of prophecy (§30–51), healing (§52–72), and discernment (§73–90). The last chapter discusses some examples of misusing the gifts of the Holy Spirit and thus postulates a necessary pastoral oversight.

The richness of the material on spiritual gifts is obvious, but I find it difficult to connect it to *TCTCV*, which contains only a few brief mentions of such gifts (§16, §18, §22, §46). This might be a genuinely new and important area for Faith and Order to explore. Since traditional ecclesiology does not seem to accentuate the place of charisms or focus on the important role that spiritual gifts play in the life of the church within the rapidly growing tradition of Pentecostal churches, it would seem that the World Council of Churches could benefit from further exploration in this area.

10. “‘Do Not Quench the Spirit’: Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church—Report of the Sixth Phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (2011–2015),” Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* N. 147 (2016/I), 47–62. The document is available in English at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-del-documento-in-inglese.html> and in French at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-del-documento-in-inglese/testo-del-documento-in-francese.html>.

Ecclesiological Insights from the Dialogue of the Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals

Krzysztof Mielcarek

Introduction

As the Commission on Faith and Order is seeking to broaden the table of conversation on ecclesiology, the purpose of this chapter is to highlight some elements of this broadening that have already taken place in previous years through the Joint Consultative Group (JCG) between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Pentecostals. This is important: not only because it helps us to understand the background and work of the JCG but also because it provides some key ecclesiological insights that have been discussed in that context and are worth studying in light of the convergence document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*.

In 1975, for the first time, the charismatic renewal became the focus in the WCC assembly in Nairobi. In 1980, Pentecostal concerns were brought to the attention of the WCC with the work of the Consultation on the Significance of the Charismatic Renewal for the Churches.¹ Since the 6th Assembly of the WCC in Vancouver in 1983, a dialogue with Pentecostals became one of the WCC's priorities. Consultations and working groups were initiated with representatives from charismatic and Pentecostal movements both within and beyond the WCC. In 1991, at the WCC assembly in Canberra, special attention

1. Arnold Bittlinger, ed., *The Church Is Charismatic* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1981).

was given to the relationship with Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement. It passed a number of recommendations regarding these movements that set the stage for further action.²

Subsequently, the WCC convened several consultations, which led to new contacts with Pentecostal churches. The first of these took place in Lima, Peru, on 14-19 November 1994. The discussions focused on various situations in Latin America, especially on Pentecostal identity, spirituality, evangelism, social commitment, women's participation, unity, cooperation, and dialogue.

The representatives of the two groups produced a common statement titled *Living in the Unity of the Spirit*, which contains eight points of recommendations:

1. Engage a North-South Pentecostal dialogue
2. Open up a forum for dialogue between the Pentecostal churches and some sectors of the Catholic Church
3. Endorse the participation of women and recognition of women's ministry
4. Initiate and develop Pentecostal youth work
5. Promote and strengthen work with indigenous groups
6. Continue supporting the Pentecostal Process for Unity and Cooperation
7. Develop the dialogue on Mission and Evangelism and all topics relating to the quest for new ways of being the church today
8. Extend the ecumenical dialogue between CEPLA³ and the WCC on the biblical concept of jubilee and the struggle for life in an increasingly inter-dependent world⁴

In Leeds, UK (30 November–2 December 1995), WCC representatives met again with Pentecostals from African and Afro-Caribbean churches. The outcome of this meeting was a series of recommendations for further study and ecumenical actions. The WCC was asked to promote interaction, dialogue, and networking with Europe's established churches and to allow African and African Caribbean Christian communities to be regarded as equal partners theologically, culturally, and ecclesialogically. It was underscored that Black theologies reflect and express Black people's experiences with God, who affirms the identity of all

2. Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report, Seventh Assembly* (Geneva: WCC Publications/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 107–108.

3. *Comisión Evangélica Pentecostal Latinoamericana* (Latin American Evangelical Pentecostal Commission).

4. *Consulta con Las Iglesias Pentecostales Lima, Peru, 14 al 19 de Noviembre de 1994* (Geneva: Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, 1994); *Consultation with Pentecostal Churches*, Lima, Peru, 1994 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994).

and seeks justice for all, and that the Black-majority churches have much to offer to other Christians in Europe: a spirituality of “belonging,” the bringing of the whole person into worship, seeing God’s actions in very practical terms, and healing ministry.

Since African and Afro-Caribbean Pentecostals differ from other ethnic minorities in the UK, some of the Pentecostal Church’s assignments in the field of justice and peace—such as racism, immigration, prison population, and political rights—were also underlined.

Participants paid special attention to connections between faith, culture, and identity. The common conviction was expressed that more attention needs to be given to the Black concept of church as an ‘extended family’ or fellowship, which served as a vehicle for community building or community capacity building. Black-majority churches also consider evangelism and mission as important. The first is understood as ministering to both the spiritual and material needs of people, while the second is viewed more broadly than evangelism, since it covers the world and can never be separated from the context of politics. It takes mutual respect, sharing, and dialogue for the church to act efficiently. Leading people to Christ should be the goal, rather than getting them “back to church.” Mission and evangelism must build all-inclusive congregations and not just ethnic groups.⁵

On 9-14 January 1996, in Ogere, Nigeria, a consultation of the WCC and African Instituted Churches (AICs) took place. Participants discussed some important issues, such as the use of symbols (water, oil, palm fronds, etc.); polygamy; limiting the role of women in church ministry; Christianity rooted in African culture; the ministry of prayer and healing; the misuse of the Bible in pastoral practices; and the relationship of AICs to Muslims.⁶

About 30 participants from throughout the Americas gathered in San Jose, Costa Rica (4-8 June 1996). They produced two separate statements: one by representatives of the WCC and one by the Pentecostals, with the two appearing under a common preamble. One can find at least one ecclesiological statement there. The representatives of WCC member churches acknowledged that, at times, the WCC’s membership policies imply a certain ecclesiology of historic

5. Roswith Gerloff and Huibert van Beek, eds., *Report of the Proceedings of the Consultation between the World Council of Churches (Office of Church and Ecumenical Relations at the General Secretariat) and African and Africa-Caribbean Church Leaders in Britain at the New Testament Church of God, Harehills, Leeds, England, 30 November–2 December 1995* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996).

6. Huibert van Beek, ed. *Consultation with African Instituted Churches: Ogere, Nigeria, 9-14 January 1996* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996).

churches that could exclude newer Christian groups and movements. They also expressed their will to move closer to the Pentecostals and urged a continued bilateral dialogue between WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches at every level of leadership—including, specifically, a dialogue between Pentecostals and the Orthodox family of churches. The foci of the future, they concluded, should include evangelism, *koinonia*, ecclesiology, and worship.⁷

The Joint Consultative Group

The crucial step in WCC–Pentecostal dialogue was made in 1998 at the 8th Assembly of the WCC in Harare, Zimbabwe when the JCG between Pentecostals and the WCC was formally established. The goals of the group were defined as consolidating existing relations, initiating studies and exchange, and exploring possible ways and forms of collaboration.

The five subsequent years of the JCG’s efforts were extensively summarized in WCC and Pentecostal recommendations issued in the report of the JCG to the 9th Assembly, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2006.⁸

The members of the JCG expressed their hope that their working together would strengthen relationships between the Pentecostals and other churches “by developing a genuine mutual interest in learning about and from one another.”⁹ They also recommended the continuation of the work of building relationships through ongoing theological conversations and studies, with a special focus on the nature of the church, mission, charismatic gifts, sacraments, and the nature of scripture. Furthermore, they suggested that dialogue should continue at every level of the WCC, both geographically and denominationally.¹⁰

The first meeting of the JCG took place on 19–23 June 2000 at the Abbey of Hautecombe, France. It was mostly devoted to team building through personal sharing as well as defining the tasks that the group would undertake: understanding one another, mutual learning and action, sharing their experience

7. Huibert van Beek, ed., *Consultation with Pentecostals in the Americas: San Jose, Costa Rica, 4–8 June 1996* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997).

8. This report, as well as the two reports submitted to the two subsequent WCC assemblies, can be found in the appendices at the end of this volume.

9. “Report of the Joint Consultative Group (WCC–Pentecostals), 2000–2005, to the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Porto Alegre, Brazil,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 342.

10. “Report of the Joint Consultative Group, 2000–2005,” 342.

of Christian witness and ecclesial life, and discussing challenges.

The second meeting gathered the JCG members at the Seminario Sudamericano, a seminary of the Church of God (Cleveland) in Quito, Ecuador, with the primary focus on “Perceptions of One Another” (2001). This meeting included some features concerning theology and ecclesiology. Questions were posed about the relationship between Pentecostalism and the existing traditional theologies; the possibility of reconciling the process of institutionalization with the less static idea of “moving of the Spirit”; the legitimacy of the Pentecostal theological approach; and the diversity present within the Pentecostal movement and its impact on the process in the formation of Pentecostal theology. Healing, proselytism, and dialogue with non-Christian religions were also discussed.

Kwang Lim Methodist Retreat Center, north of Seoul, Korea, hosted the third meeting of the group. Ecclesiology was again at the heart of the discussion.¹¹ Issues such as living out the marks of oneness and catholicity of the church, the understanding of unity on various levels, and possible convergences on the matter were addressed. The JCG also debated the use of the Bible within the various Christian traditions.

The same subject of church unity was the main agenda for the fourth meeting, which was held at Lee University in Cleveland, USA. However, the group went beyond the previous theological perspective and reflected on some of the “non-theological” factors of disunity (such as racism, economic injustice, and gender) and especially on the question of discernment of the workings of the Spirit. It was noted that the differences on both sides are possible sources of growth and enrichment. Yet, the need for oneness in Christ was affirmed.

In September 2004, Kempton Park Conference Centre in Johannesburg welcomed the JCG members to their fifth meeting. The Bible studies on the gifts of the Spirit and unity of the people of God provided the main discussion points. They challenged the differences between them and addressed some ecclesial prejudices.

The group met for the sixth time in June 2005 at St Mark’s Centre, at the Coptic Orthodox Church in Cairo. This final gathering was structured around Bible studies on John 13–17. They discussed themes such as the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us, the call of Christ to serve each other, the essential place of love in the Christian life and Christian spirituality, and the prayer of Jesus for his disciples about their perseverance in service and unity.

The final common statement, titled “Affirming Our Faith Together,”

11. “Unity of the Church,” was the topic of discussion during the 2002 meeting of the Joint Consultative Group.

completed the work of the group.¹² Ecclesiology was an important part of this document. The JCG members affirmed that there is only one church: the church “of our Lord, Jesus Christ.” The scriptures are “an unparalleled authority for the ongoing life of the church.” They acknowledged the visible diversity between denominations and churches as both an enrichment and a challenge, since the present divisions among Christians “hinder the work and witness of the church in the world.”¹³

Some important fields for further study and dialogue were drawn: deepening mutual understanding about respective churches; the tension between evangelism and proselytism; the gifts of the Holy Spirit and their definition, manifestations, and recognition; sacraments; interpretation of scriptures; spiritual discernment; and defining the most important ecclesial criteria. These recommendations were also sent to the 9th Assembly of the WCC.¹⁴

After the 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, a second round of the JCG discussions was initiated. The outcome of the meetings was planned as a future resource for the WCC assembly in Busan, South Korea (2013). The JCG chose to discuss thoroughly the subject of ecclesiology, taking as a starting point the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed with its four marks of the church: oneness, catholicity, holiness, and apostolicity.

The second round of the JCG was initiated in 2007 in Baar, Switzerland, at the Focolare Centre. The official agenda became dialogue on the nature and mission of the church. Thus, the JCG meeting in Helsinki (2008) was devoted to the oneness of the church. The meeting in Hong Kong in 2009 was an occasion to study the holiness of the church, and the meeting in Bossey, Switzerland, in 2010 focused on the catholicity of the church. The fourth mark of the church, apostolicity, was discussed and debated in Riga, Latvia, in 2011, and the JCG report was completed the following year at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute.

To a certain extent, the discussions of the JCG paved the way for the *TCTCV* document (§22–24). The participants saw the church as one in Christ and reflecting the nature of the Holy Trinity. They declared that there was one church, one people of God, one body of Christ, one gospel, one baptism, and one communion of saints (Eph. 4:4-6), noting that it is expressed in many ways (sharing, fellowship, communion, sacraments, prayer, and mission). However, they also acknowledged that in many churches worldwide, oneness is understood

12. “Report of the Joint Consultative Group, 2000–2005,” 357.

13. “Report of the Joint Consultative Group, 2000–2005,” 359.

14. “Report of the Joint Consultative Group, 2000–2005,” 341.

differently, depending on their history and their theological sensibility.¹⁵

The holiness of the church originates in God and “is freely communicated by Him through the Spirit to His creation.” The redemption brought by Jesus Christ made it accessible to all His followers (Col. 1:22) through the Holy Spirit. Thus, Christians are named the “cleansed” ones (Eph. 5:26-27) and “the temple of God,” indwelt by his Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Nonetheless, the holiness of the Church (Eph. 5:27) and the holiness of the individual Christian are not easily reconciled.¹⁶

The catholicity of the church signifies to the JCG members the presence of the risen Christ and affirms the true faith. Some denominations view it as a task of the church rather than a possession. In fact, each denomination has its own understanding of catholicity. Pentecostals see it in terms of the “full gospel” and the life in fullness (John 10:10).¹⁷

The triune God is also the very source of apostolicity of the church. The Son, sent by the Father, constantly sends his disciples into the world (*martyria*). Thus, every human being following Christ becomes a witness to the gospel. Yet, it must be noted that it is the twelve and their successors that were entrusted to guard the treasure of faith (2 Tim. 1:14) and to pass it on to all generations (2 Tim. 2:2). The message embodied originally in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus exists now in the biblical (1 Cor. 12:3; 15:1-11) and post-biblical affirmations of faith (the creeds and Tradition).¹⁸

The separate histories of different churches cause divisions regarding how the process of passing on the deposit of faith is safeguarded. Is it sacramental or charismatic? Who is a minister? What is the role of succession in guaranteeing the deposit of faith? The diversity of views concerning apostolicity of the church characterizes both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal churches. “Pentecostals contend that the apostolicity of the church is also closely related to apostolic life (Acts 4), apostolic work (John 14:12), and apostolic power manifested in spiritual gifts as well as ‘signs and wonders’ (Acts 2:4).”¹⁹

15. “Report of the Joint Consultative Group between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches” [2007–2012, to the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Busan, Republic of Korea,] in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 371.

16. “Report of the Joint Consultative Group [2007–2012],” 372.

17. “Report of the Joint Consultative Group [2007–2012],” 373-74.

18. “Report of the Joint Consultative Group [2007–2012],” 373.

19. “Report of the Joint Consultative Group [2007–2012],” 374.

The third round of the JCG began its work in 2017. The first meeting took place in Pasadena, California, on 11 April 2017, hosted by Fuller Theological Seminary. The group discussed the subject of discipleship and formation in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit. The question they sought to answer was “How does the Holy Spirit work in the Church to form disciples and transform the world?” Thus, the third round is not, strictly speaking, ecclesiological, but certain aspects of commonly recognized ecclesiology became a starting point for a reflection over some pastoral models in the church’s mission.

One of the important goals of this round of the JCG was to provide a unique perspective on authentic discipleship in light of the World Mission Conference that met in Arusha, Tanzania, on 8–13 March 2018 under the theme “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship.” The JCG members participated fully in the larger discussions, but in their own meeting they focused their attention on the formation of disciples.

While a number of JCG delegates participated at the Arusha conference, the JCG used its 7–13 November 2019 gathering at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey to unpack its meaning. There, the conversation revolved around the relationship between baptism and discipleship, beginning with various biblical texts, moving through a theological discussion, and reflecting on Faith and Order’s earlier work, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (1982). While the COVID-19 pandemic upended the plans of the JCG to meet at Iliff Seminary in Denver in 2020, the executive group representing both teams continued to work together online, producing the report that it offered to the WCC’s 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2022.

That report outlined the journey that the JCG has taken through the years. Importantly, it called attention to the many changes that are taking place regarding relationships between Pentecostals and many historically ecumenical churches. The Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF), for instance, has established a commission to oversee ecumenical relations. The WCC general secretary has participated in the last three PWF global gatherings. The Global Christian Forum has helped to break down walls between them as well. The JCG concluded that the Holy Spirit is working in the church and the world, and it will continue to surprise us in the future.²⁰

20. The results of the third round of JCG discussions were first published in the “Report of the Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostals,” in *Resource Book: World Council of Churches 11th Assembly, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2022* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 97–105. They are republished in appendix four of this volume.

Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on the International Bilateral Dialogues of Pentecostals with Reformed and Lutheran Churches

Sotirios Boukis

Introduction

Since the publication of the convergence document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*, several responses have been submitted to the Faith and Order Commission by churches, organizations, and individuals, offering insights and suggestions to *TCTCV* from various traditions. While most of the received responses came from churches traditionally involved in the ecumenical movement, the Faith and Order Commission considers it a crucial priority to enter into more and wider conversations with ecclesiological perspectives from regions (especially Asia, Africa, and Latin America), denominational families (such as evangelical, Pentecostal, charismatic, and independent churches), and forms of being church (such as ecclesial movements, new forms of monasticism, and online churches) “which have not always been clearly or strongly part of discussions on the way to *TCTCV*, and whose understandings of ecclesiology

we want to discover and to enter into dialogue with.”¹ This “broadening of the table” is crucial, since these voices represent some of the fastest-growing parts of World Christianity; thus, their inclusion is important “so that Faith and Order may continue to be part of the growing understanding of what it means to be the Church within the contemporary context of world Christianity.”²

Among the churches whose input could be particularly enriching are the Pentecostal and charismatic churches. In order to hear their perspectives on ecclesiology in the best possible way, the Faith and Order Commission decided to engage them in two ways: first, by holding consultations in various parts of the world with Pentecostal and charismatic theologians;³ and second, by studying the official bilateral dialogues of Pentecostals with other churches. We hope to harvest the fruits of these dialogues by identifying the convergence points already noted in them on topics related to ecclesiology.

This chapter is an example of this second approach, as it explores Pentecostal insights on ecclesiology through the preliminary⁴ bilateral dialogue between

1. World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, *Minutes of the Meeting at the Monastery of Caraiman, Busteni, Romania*, Faith and Order Paper No. 222 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2015), 88.

2. World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, *What Are the Churches Saying about the Church? Key Findings and Proposals from the Responses to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 236 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), §5.

3. The results of several of these consultations may be found in Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, eds., *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022).

4. The result of the first official five-year round of discussions between representatives from the churches of the Lutheran World Federation and representatives from the Pentecostal World Fellowship between 2016 and 2022 is titled “The Spirit of the Lord Is upon Me.” It includes sections on (1) Identity, (2) Mission and Proclamation, (3) Mission and the Poor, (4) Healing and Deliverance, and (5) Looking towards the Future. The report is available in print as: The Lutheran World Federation and Pentecostal World Fellowship, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” International Lutheran-Pentecostal 2016-2022 Dialogue Statement (Geneva: LWF, 2023). It is also available at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/resources/publication-spirit-lord-upon-me>.

Pentecostals and Lutherans titled *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*⁵ and the first two⁶ bilateral dialogues between Pentecostals and Reformed, titled “Word and Spirit, Church and World”⁷ and “Experience in Christian Faith and Life.”⁸

The only category of Pentecostals that participated in these bilateral dialogues were Classical Pentecostals; therefore, all further references to “Pentecostals” are to them and not to other categories, such as Charismatic, “Third Wave,” or “Oneness” Pentecostals.⁹ While many of the points made throughout this paper can certainly be true for them as well, it is important to acknowledge the need for a future, separate, study of these categories, in order to explore their distinctive aspects of theology in further detail.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore commonalities and differences between the ecclesiology of *TCTCV* and the ecclesiological views shared by Pentecostals and Lutherans or Reformed in the above bilateral dialogues to

5. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together* (Strasbourg: Institute for Ecumenical Research; Pasadena: David du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality; and Zurich: European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010). While the LWF had shown interest in engaging in dialogue with Pentecostals as early as 1994, because of their important work on the “Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” and other previously scheduled commitments, it would take another decade before the official dialogue began. In the meantime, Dr Theo Dieter, Director of the Ecumenical Research Institute in Strasbourg, reached out to Pentecostals to begin an initial exploration of the topic of “encountering Christ.” That discussion began in 2005 and published the results in 2010. This chapter interacts with the work of the preliminary discussion.

6. Since this chapter was prepared, the International Dialogue between the World Communion of Reformed Churches and Pentecostals published the results of its third round of dialogue (2014–20), under the title “Called to God’s Mission.” It has been published in *The Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 23:2 (2020), 5–41; *Pentecostal Education: A Journal of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education* 61 (2021), 55–86; and *Reformed World* 69:1 (2021), 117–48. It can be downloaded at <http://www.epcra.ch/papers.html>.

7. “Word and Spirit, Church and World: International Pentecostal–Reformed Dialogue 1996–2000,” in *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998–2005*, eds. Jeffrey Gros, Thomas F. Best, and Lorelei F. Fuchs (Geneva: WCC Publications and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 477–97. The document is available online at <http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj8/WARC.html>.

8. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community and Justice—The Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 2001–2011,” *Reformed World* 63:1 (2013), 2–44.

9. Technically, “Oneness Pentecostals” have the same historical root as the Trinitarians (so, in one sense they can claim that they are Classical Pentecostals as well). However, while they come from the same root, from 1913 on, they diverged in their understanding of God. Hence, this chapter uses the term “Classical Pentecostals” to refer only to the Trinitarians.

identify the extent of their convergence. This identification could then be a valuable contribution to the further ecumenical ecclesiological discussion from *TCTCV* and beyond.

The thesis of this chapter is that these bilateral dialogues reflect important commonalities for all four chapters of *TCTCV* but also some important differences, such as the emphasis on the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit, the role and ministry of the laity, the emphasis on the local (rather than universal) church, and the possibility of salvation outside the ministry of the gospel.

The structure of this chapter will follow that of *TCTCV*, being divided into four sections (one for each *TCTCV* chapter). Each section thus draws insights from the above bilateral dialogues and shows what they have already said on the topics discussed in the equivalent chapters of *TCTCV*, highlighting the major commonalities, differences, as well as areas of possible future convergence.

Chapter 1

The first chapter of *TCTCV* includes many statements that could be shared by Pentecostals as well, as indicated in their bilateral dialogues with Reformed and Lutherans.

For example, Pentecostals affirm that the one church is constitutive of God's saving, unifying design for the whole world (*TCTCV*, §1). As noted in the Reformed–Pentecostal bilateral dialogues, they affirm that the church serves God's mission for the world and that the church exists, serves, and hopes for the fulfillment of the kingdom but is not identified strictly with it (“Word and Spirit,” §64, 77).

They also share the view of the church as a community of witness, worship, and discipleship (*TCTCV*, §2). This community is led by the Holy Spirit as it “confesses its faith, gathers as a community of worship, grows in edification and fellowship, responds to its mission in the world” (“Word and Spirit,” §42), and considers discipleship as “communal, centred in worship and expressed in Christian practice” (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §49).

Pentecostals also affirm the importance of the oneness of the church towards the accomplishment of its mission (*TCTCV*, §7) by describing the role of Christian unity as a response to the proclamation of the gospel (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §29). As they observe, “the unity of the whole community of faith is not sought for institutional or pragmatic reasons, but as a witness to the fractured world of *koinōnia* with the one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and with neighbours near and far” (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §128).

Apart from the above points of convergence, one topic is worth exploring as an area of possible convergence in the future. This point focuses on one of the

central messages of the Pentecostal movement since its beginning: namely, the reference to Jesus Christ as Saviour, Sanctifier, Spirit Baptizer, Healer, and Coming King.¹⁰

While this approach to Christology is distinctively Pentecostal, it would be interesting to ask what its implications for ecclesiology would be and whether these implications could provide some areas of possible convergence on the topic of ecclesiology. Namely, if Christ is Saviour, Sanctifier, Spirit Baptizer, Healer, and Coming King, then the church is the community of people who are saved, sanctified, baptized in the Holy Spirit, healed, and servants of the kingdom. It could be argued that such a description of the church could be shared by other Christian traditions as well, even though the content of these terms may be understood differently between them.

Apart from the above areas of convergence (or possible convergence), there is one important point of divergence between the first chapter of *TCTCV* and these bilateral dialogues: the second paragraph of *TCTCV* refers to the earthly ministry of Jesus (his teaching, his proclamation of the kingdom, and his healing) and then exposes the missiological implications of the above. However, in the rest of Chapter 1, these implications are restricted to the first two (teaching and proclamation), without any unpacking of the third one (healing). A Pentecostal could not but observe this omission.

In fact, Jesus' ministry of healing, casting out demons, and feeding the hungry are central to Pentecostal theology, and Pentecostals expect that those things that Jesus "did in the power of the Spirit during his earthly ministry, he can do and is now doing in the church and in the life of believers—saving and healing them, releasing them from evil, and providing for their daily needs" (*Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, §10). Thus,

by proclaiming the gospel, healing the sick, and confronting demonic powers, Pentecostals seek to be involved in a vibrant proclamation of the gospel, accompanied often by manifestations of the power of God. Healing is probably the most common manifestation of God's power among Pentecostal churches worldwide. Healings (including exorcisms) manifest the presence, compassion, and power of God.¹¹

Chapter 2

10. The Reformed–Pentecostal dialogue identifies this reference as the heart of Pentecostal Christology ("Word and Spirit," §17).

11. "Word and Spirit," §24.

Most Pentecostals share the trinitarian view of God described in the second chapter of *TCTCV* and its implications for a trinitarian ecclesiology, which considers the church as “People of God, Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit” (*TCTCV*, §21; “Experience in Christian Faith,” §125).¹² They affirm that the one church is called into being by the Father, grounded in the Son (*creatura Verbi*), and enlivened by the Holy Spirit (*TCTCV*, §13–16); in fact, they describe the church as “the Creature of the Word and Spirit,” “the Community of the Holy Spirit’s Leading,” and “the Community of the Spirit’s Gifts” (“Word and Spirit,” §36). This Trinitarian approach helps clarify the common misconception that Pentecostals have a one-sided focus on the Holy Spirit: quite the contrary, they also have a strong Christology linked to their pneumatology (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §10).

Pentecostals also share the view of the church as a sign and servant of God’s design for the world (*TCTCV*, §25–27) by using similar terms to describe it as “a sign of the reign of God that has been inaugurated by Jesus Christ” (“Word and Spirit,” §64), “an instrument of the kingdom that Jesus Christ proclaimed and inaugurated” (“Word and Spirit,” §79), and “an instrument for the transformation of the world” (“Word and Spirit,” §59).

As far as the understanding of the church as both local and universal is concerned, Pentecostals consider the local congregation to be the basic form of the church, although they acknowledge that “the congregation is not in itself a sufficient form of the church” (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §124). This phrase seems to imply a contrast with the Ignatian understanding of catholicity of the local church, according to which each local church is “sufficient” (or “catholic”) if “the whole mystery of Christ is present in it, as in the celebration of the eucharist” (*TCTCV*, §23).

However, the above phrase needs to be carefully read in its context, which makes clear its nuance: namely, that a local congregation cannot feel self-sufficient if it is cut off in isolation from the other congregations. As they put it, the need for communion “presses beyond the congregation to embrace other congregations” (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §128), and “communion is widened as congregations are drawn into communion with other worshipping communities locally, regionally, and globally” (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §125). Thus, the statement that “the congregation is not in itself a sufficient

12. This view is not shared, however, by a wing of Pentecostalism known as “Oneness Pentecostals,” who affirm only the oneness of God (“Word and Spirit,” §17). As was noted in the introduction, however, this chapter examines only the views of Trinitarian Classical Pentecostals.

form of the church” does not deny the Catholicity of each local congregation: it criticizes the idea of self-sufficiency in isolation from other congregations.

That said, it is nevertheless true that Pentecostal ecclesiology often tends to put more emphasis on the local level than on the universal.¹³ It is also true that the existence of thousands of independent Pentecostal congregations throughout the world suggests that there must be a certain ecclesiology (or lack of ecclesiology) behind the frequency with which divisions occur between or among Pentecostal churches. This frequency is significantly greater compared to that found in mainline Protestantism or in much of evangelicalism. The exploration of this phenomenon, the implicit ecclesiological presuppositions behind it, and the grounds considered as “legitimate” for division among Pentecostals would be interesting areas for future study on this topic.

This, of course, does not mean that Pentecostals are not committed to Christian unity but that they have a different approach to it. In fact, they certainly acknowledge that “communion among congregations is lived out in denominational relationships, associations for cooperative mission, interdenominational fellowship, and ecumenical engagements” (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §128). However, they also express some scepticism about the extent to which regional judicatories (dioceses, districts, conferences, presbyteries, etc.) or denominations enable relationships among congregations (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §136). This statement is an interesting example of how Pentecostal ecclesiology often approaches the topic of unity primarily in terms of spirituality rather than in terms of visibility.

The bilateral dialogues in view do not have a direct description of the Pentecostal view of the Nicene Creed’s marks of the church (unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity), even though the Reformed–Pentecostal dialogue identifies this as a topic for future exploration (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §130). Nevertheless, one can see in these dialogues some basic elements of the Pentecostal understanding of these terms. Thus, according to Pentecostals:

- The *oneness* of the church is affirmed by the statement that all “those who are disciples of Jesus Christ are all members of the one Church” (“Word and Spirit,” §2), which is similar to the *TCTCV* statement that all the churches are “founded in the one Gospel” (*TCTCV*, §13).
- The *holiness* of the church has a direct implication on the calling of its members “to live their personal lives with an eye to ‘holiness’” (*Lutherans*

13. The discussion about discernment is a characteristic example of an ecclesiology that focuses primarily on the local congregation (see “Word and Spirit,” §42–49; “Experience in Christian Faith,” §84; *Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §12).

and *Pentecostals*, §52). *TCTCV* agrees that “the essential holiness of the Church is witnessed to in every generation by holy men and women and by the holy words and actions the Church proclaims and performs in the name of God, the All Holy” (*TCTCV*, §22). Interestingly, *TCTCV* also highlights not just the personal calling to holiness but also the communal aspect of holiness as a reflection of God’s holiness. As far as the relation between the church’s holiness and human sin is concerned, Pentecostals recognize that ecclesial realities of immorality and sin threaten the church from within, and thus the church is called to remain faithful to the truth and to truthful living (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §135; see also *TCTCV*, §35).

- The *catholicity* of the church is reflected in its universal mission to witness to the ends of the earth (“Word and Spirit,” §66). Overall, the word “catholic” is rarely used in the bilateral dialogues in view.
- Finally, the *apostolicity* of the church in its Pentecostal understanding is not understood in terms of “apostolic succession” but in terms of following the “apostolic faith” or “apostolic practice.” Classical Pentecostals generally view their ecclesial character as the result of a divine restoration of apostolic patterns in both faith and practice (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §32, 45).

Chapter 3

Pentecostals share the understanding of the church as an eschatological community and as the eschatological people of God (*TCTCV*, §33; see also “Word and Spirit,” §74). They also share the notion of the kingdom of God that is both present gift and future hope (“Word and Spirit,” §77). The eschatological urgency that Pentecostals feel is not limited to an anticipation for Christ’s return but as a context for understanding mission and a firm realization that there remains a responsibility to humanity of providing for the needs of people, such as shelter, education, food, and medical concerns (“Word and Spirit,” §86). *TCTCV* holds a similar view for the missional implications for this eschatological understanding of the church (§34); however, there is an interesting difference: while *TCTCV* emphasizes the need for Christians to fight for justice and peace, Pentecostals also raise the need to fight beyond the forces of evil and sin (“Word and Spirit,” §77).

The largest part of the third chapter of *TCTCV* focuses on growing in the essential elements of communion: faith, sacraments, and ministry. As far as faith is concerned, *TCTCV* states that “faith is evoked by the Word of God, inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit, attested in Scripture and transmitted through the

living tradition of the Church” (*TCTCV*, §38). While Pentecostals would agree on the first three, the mention of tradition would make them skeptical. In fact, while Pentecostals have enacted confessions or statements of faith written in formal propositions, most of them “tend not to place much value upon either history or Tradition as it came to be expressed through concepts such as apostolic succession or in creedal formulations, but rather they value the place of immediacy, experience, and the spontaneous reality of divine intervention in their lives” (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §32). Sometimes they are very critical of what they would call “dead forms and creeds,” contrasting them to a “living, practical Christianity” such as personal testimonies and prophecy (“Word and Spirit,” §29, 49; *Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §37).

As far as the sacraments are concerned, the overall observation on these bilateral dialogues is that there is very little discussion of them. There are a few general points of agreement on them, such as that “through baptism and communion, we bear witness to God’s *shalom*” (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §171), that “baptism is a response to God’s work and strength for the task ahead” (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §16), and that some effects of the Lord’s supper “probably hold great promise for commonality: forgiveness of sins, binding into one body, encountering the real presence, healing of body and soul, and empowerment for service” (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §18).

It is also observed that “because of their consistent emphasis on the real presence of God in worship, Pentecostals expect the Lord to be present in his Supper” (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §17–18). This is an interesting observation that is in contrast to the symbolic understanding of the supper that some Pentecostals have at times held: according to the above statement, practical experience and piety indicate that many Pentecostals do believe in some kind of real presence beyond a strictly symbolic or memorial understanding of the supper.

Apart from the above basic points of convergence, it is worth noting that the bilateral dialogues in view have limited references to the sacraments. This may be explained partly because Pentecostals often prefer the term “ordinances” rather than “sacraments” (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §15–16), or because many Pentecostal churches tend to focus more on the invisible rather than the visible elements of the church, but also because many Pentecostal approaches to ecclesiology have some different emphases than traditional “word and sacrament” ecclesiologies.

Three emphases which are central from a Pentecostal point of view are, however, entirely absent from *TCTCV* and thus constitute three major omissions of its ecclesiology from a Pentecostal perspective.

The first has to do with baptism in the Holy Spirit: while *TCTCV* says quite a few things about baptism in water (§41), it says nothing about baptism in the Holy Spirit. From a Pentecostal viewpoint,

baptism in the Spirit is distinct from and a separate event following conversion to Christ (logically, if not always temporally) that is not salvific. It is strongly encouraged and cultivated among Pentecostals. The majority of Pentecostals anticipate that this experience will be accompanied by some form of evidence, most frequently, speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4) . . . Following Spirit baptism, a believer may expect the flowering of spiritual gifts of a variety of kinds, such as tongues, healing, words of wisdom, and prophecy.¹⁴

This “evidence” of speaking in tongues is intended “to provide the power necessary for Christians to be the compelling witnesses that Jesus had predicted in Acts 1:8” (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §35). This empowerment “includes divine calling, equipping, commissioning, and the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit throughout mission” (“Word and Spirit,” §66).

The second major omission of *TCTCV* from a Pentecostal viewpoint has to do with other core elements of worship (apart from baptism and eucharist) that are central to Pentecostal theology, such as testimonies, altar calls, joyful songs of praise and adoration, preaching, prayers of intercession for healing and other needs, and “the potential for personal participation by all through the manifestation of spiritual gifts or charisms such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, and discerning of spirits, among others” (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §38; *Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §12).

Through all of the above, Pentecostal worship eagerly anticipates encountering God, recognizing God’s very real presence among those who seek God (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §31), and acknowledging in a literal way that the word of God speaks to today’s world (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §13). Pentecostal worship is also characterized by spontaneity, as it “makes space for the unexpected, for surprises of silence or tears when the congregation suddenly recognizes a movement of the Holy Spirit among them, as well as in movement of the Holy Spirit through charisms” (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §42).

The third (and most important) omission of *TCTCV* from a Pentecostal viewpoint is about the role of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. To be fair, it is true that *TCTCV* makes quite a few references to this topic, as it acknowledges that “every

14. *Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §19.

Christian receives gifts of the Holy Spirit for the upbuilding of the Church and for his or her part in the mission of Christ. These gifts are given for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:11-13) and place obligations of responsibility and mutual accountability on every individual and local community” (*TCTCV*, §18; see also §21, 28, 44, 52). The bilateral dialogues in view also affirm the above, namely that spiritual gifts enhance the faith of believers, deepen their fellowship with God, edify the church, empower mission in the world, and are given to the church to work together for the common good (“Word and Spirit,” §52; see also “Experience in Christian Faith,” §59; *Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §19).

For Pentecostals, however, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are also much more than the above: the role of the gifts is so central to their ecclesiology that they even define the church as “the Community of the Spirit’s Gifts” (“Word and Spirit,” §50). As the Reformed–Pentecostal dialogue puts it, “they tend to identify the faithful Church as the community where Jesus Christ is lifted up, the Word of God is preached and obeyed, and where the Spirit’s gifts are manifested in the lives of believers” (“Word and Spirit,” §39). Thus, they define ecclesiology in terms of “word and gifts” rather than “word and sacraments” (without meaning that they deny the idea or value of sacraments/ordinances).

Furthermore, Pentecostals often offer the criticism that while most churches invoke the Holy Spirit and acknowledge the gifts of the Spirit, they fail to demonstrate that these gifts can or do play a role in the ongoing worship life of the church, except in leadership and education. For example, while many mainline Protestant ecclesiologies tend to focus mainly on the gifts of the Spirit in ways that have more to do with education than with cultivating particular experiences (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §20), Pentecostals usually put primary focus on the nine gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, even though that does not mean they consider that passage to be an exhaustive list (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §19; “Word and Spirit,” §52). From a Pentecostal viewpoint, spiritual gifts such as healing, prophesying, casting out demons, speaking in tongues, and other charisms enrich the lives of persons and the life of the community of faith; they are signs that God is with God’s people and that God’s power is revealed through such manifestations of grace (“Word and Spirit,” §51).

Pentecostals agree that all prophetic gifts must always be discerned and that they are never allowed to compete with scripture (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §94). They also agree that “no single gift or set of gifts is normative for every believer, every congregation or every church in every time, or place” (“Word and Spirit,” §54). This includes the gift of tongues, which, according to them, is not expected to be given to all Christians. However, many of them do argue that the Pentecostal experience of Acts 2 of speaking in tongues as a sign

or evidence that one has been baptized with the Holy Spirit is ultimately available to all who believe, thus making a distinction between the *gift* of tongues and the evidential *experience* of tongues (“Word and Spirit,” §56).

Finally, a significant part of *TCTCV*'s third chapter focuses on the role of ministry (ordained ministry, threefold ministry, and oversight). While the bilateral dialogues in view do have some references to these topics, it is interesting to observe that many of them do not examine the role of ministry by itself but in reference to the understanding of the leading of the Spirit and of the process of discernment. In other words, from a Pentecostal viewpoint, the topic of the leading of the Spirit is not just a subset of pneumatology but also (and primarily) a subset of ecclesiology and of the broader discussion on the sources of authority.

Pentecostals affirm that “the Spirit of God continues to speak in and through the Church” today (“Word and Spirit,” §35; “Experience in Christian Faith,” §103) and that “all charismatic manifestations, beliefs, and theological claims are to be accompanied by a process of discernment in the community of the church and subject to Scripture as the ‘norming norm.’ ... While special responsibility for discernment typically rests with the ministries of oversight ... discernment is also a task that involves all believers” (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §12). In fact, the Pentecostal expectation is that the exercise of discernment is distributed throughout the entire congregation so that all members are called to exercise their gifts in ministry, are accountable to the group, and are required to participate actively in the discernment as to who has “the mind of the Spirit” on an issue (“Word and Spirit,” §49).

Pentecostals also extend the call to discernment not just to every believer but also to each congregation and to the whole church (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §106), thus acknowledging both the individual and communal dimensions of the search for the leading of the Spirit (“Word and Spirit,” §26; “Experience in Christian Faith,” §107).

Pentecostals encourage other churches to acknowledge that God speaks not only through the ordained but also through ordinary people and thus to consider opening further responsibilities (even the ministries of elders and deacons) to all believers, based on the principle of the priesthood of believers (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §112). In fact, there is a tendency in many Pentecostal congregations to decentralize the communication of God’s word and to encourage ordinary believers to speak for God alongside the preaching ministry of the ordained minister (“Word and Spirit,” §25). This, of course, must be done through a process that includes communal discernment.

Finally, Pentecostals have a different understanding of the notion of conciliarity than that of “traditional” ecclesiologies: while some of the latter

focus on passages like Acts 15 to highlight the importance of councils that discern the will of God on debated topics, Pentecostals focus on passages like 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, which emphasize the centrality of the local congregation in the process of discernment as equally important (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §84).

Chapter 4

Pentecostals share the view that the church needs to participate in God’s healing work in a broken world and that its mission towards that goal includes both proclamation and social engagement, which cannot be separated (*TCTCV*, §59, 64; see also “Word and Spirit,” §75). Therefore, they declare their commitment both to evangelizing and to feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, and uplifting the downtrodden (*Lutherans and Pentecostals*, §6). As they observe, at the very core of the story of Pentecost lies the action of the Holy Spirit, who empowered the church to overcome the racial, ethnic, gender, class, and linguistic divisions of that society by introducing new ways of relating while at the same time promoting personal and social righteousness (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §162).

While Pentecostals agree with mainline Protestant ecclesiologies that the church needs to speak prophetically to one or another social ill by resisting injustice, they also note that the prophetic dimension of the church cannot be limited only to these concerns: it also has to be extended to the more traditional way of prophecy of hearing the voice of God and of conveying a message from God (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §88–95, 164).

The same is true for the Pentecostal understanding of healing. While Pentecostals and mainline Protestant ecclesiologies agree that the church is a community of healing, the mainline ecclesiologies often emphasize the metaphorical dimension of healing. Pentecostals, however, also focus on its literal dimension and highlight the importance of the mission to care for the total person. As the Reformed–Pentecostal dialogue notes, “prayer for healing and ministry to the personal needs of people such as food and education have always been present in Pentecostal missions.” The same dialogue, however, also observes that Pentecostal missions have not always challenged social or structural issues prophetically, pointing out two reasons for this. First, the social location of Pentecostals was, on the whole, marginal to society, and Pentecostals had limited access to the power centres of the social establishment. Second, those structures were viewed as the part of the system which Jesus’ coming would replace by the righteous reign of God (“Word and Spirit,” §87).

An additional element that affects the way Pentecostals approach today’s

society has to do with their cosmology, which involves spiritual beings similar to those portrayed in the Bible. While this way of looking at the world may be understood in different ways among Pentecostals, with some emphasizing spiritual warfare, others deliverance ministry, and still others the miraculous healing power of Christ, the question of the discerning of spirits takes on a form that appears strange in secular Western societies which are heavily affected by rationalism (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §100; “Word and Spirit,” §94). Of course, this challenges other ecclesiologies (particularly those of mainline and evangelical Protestantism¹⁵) to rethink the possibility that some disorders may have spiritual origins and, by implication, to rethink the importance of confidence in the redeeming power of God and the healing power of faith (“Experience in Christian Faith,” §111).

Finally, an important comment needs to be made concerning the discussion on religious pluralism (*TCTCV*, §60). Pentecostals agree that the Holy Spirit is present and active not only in the church but also among peoples of other faiths and that the Spirit goes ahead of the church to prepare the ground for the reception of the gospel. However, their above affirmation does not go as far as believing that there is saving grace outside of the ministry of the gospel (“Word and Spirit,” §20–21, 23).

Pentecostals (as well as many evangelicals and many mainline churches) find it impossible to accept the idea that salvation might be found outside Jesus Christ, and they do not acknowledge the presence of salvific elements in non-Christian religions because they view this as contrary to the teaching of the Bible (“Word and Spirit,” §73). The very inclusion of the possibility of salvation outside the ministry of the gospel could well be a serious hindrance for many Pentecostals to engage in dialogue with *TCTCV*; one could wonder if the inclusion of this possibility helps or hinders the dialogue with them.

Conclusion

The exploration of the bilateral dialogues of Pentecostals with Lutherans and Reformed offers many interesting insights that can be enriching towards the advancement of the ecumenical conversation on ecclesiology after *TCTCV*. As noted in this chapter, these bilateral dialogues reveal significant commonalities

15. Interestingly, while the Orthodox and Catholic traditions seem to have enormous differences from Pentecostal theology on other topics, on this topic they are much closer, as they never stopped being open to the possibility of the supernatural in the church and in the world.

of Pentecostal perspectives on ecclesiology with the convergence ecclesiology described in *TCTCV*, as well as some significant differences.

Among the most important commonalities, one should note the view of the church as a community of witness, worship, and discipleship; as a sign and servant of God's design for the world; and as the eschatological people of God, entrusted with the task to participate in God's healing work in a broken world. Classical Pentecostals also share a trinitarian view of ecclesiology as well as the importance of the oneness of the church towards the accomplishment of its mission.

Among the differences noted, the most important ones are the centrality of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Pentecostalism; the centrality and role of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially in corporate worship; the Pentecostal emphasis on the physical (rather than merely spiritual) dimension of healing; the emphasis on the invisible (rather than visible) elements of ecclesiology; the emphasis on the local (rather than the universal) church; and the possibility of salvation outside the ministry of the gospel. They also include a different approach to the role and ministry of the laity, including the Pentecostal emphasis on the participation of the entire congregation in worship and discernment (personal and communal). Finally, they include a different approach to the supernatural world and the possibility of the miraculous in the church and in the world.

Beyond the obvious commonalities and differences between Pentecostal and Lutheran or Reformed ecclesiologies, this chapter has also highlighted some interesting areas that are worth exploring in the future in the process of taking the multilateral ecclesiological discussion further. One such topic would be the view of the church as the community of the people who are saved, sanctified, baptized in the Holy Spirit, healed, and servants of the kingdom, which would contribute to exploring ecclesiology in terms that would be more familiar to Pentecostals.

Another important topic worth exploring would be to analyze some Pentecostal perspectives on the four marks of the church and on how Pentecostals understand the oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the church. Furthermore, more reflection should be done on the Pentecostal understanding of unity (in terms of spirituality rather than visibility) but also on the grounds considered as "legitimate" for division by Pentecostals.

Finally, these bilateral dialogues reveal the need for more discussion on the concrete reality of worship (how it is approached by Pentecostals compared to other churches), its core elements (such as the emphasis on spontaneity versus formal liturgy), and the notion of the real presence of God during worship.

While Pentecostal approaches to many of the above topics often seem

radically different than those of mainline Protestant churches, the experience of these bilateral dialogues shows that, quite often, what seems irreconcilable at first sight may eventually reveal many areas of possible convergence and further approach. It is our hope and prayer that future discussion on ecclesiology will achieve to reveal and unpack such areas and will contribute to the achievement of further convergence as the ecumenical discussion on ecclesiology continues.

Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on the International Bilateral Dialogues of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance

Tiran Petrosyan

Introduction

Increasing contacts between Evangelicals and Catholics during the 1970s and 1980s provided a background for the international consultations between the World Evangelical Fellowship (now the World Evangelical Alliance) and the Catholic Church that have taken place since 1993.¹

Among these contacts, an international dialogue on mission between some Evangelicals and Roman Catholics took place between 1978 and 1984. This dialogue led to an important report, published in 1985—the first in which Evangelicals and Catholics discussed together such themes as salvation,

1. This historical introduction relies mainly on “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*: Report of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Alliance (1993–2002),” especially on its first appendix, “Evolution of this International Consultation: A Brief Overview,” in *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998–2005*, ed. Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Thomas F. Best, and Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA, Faith and Order Paper No. 204 (Geneva: WCC Publications/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 268–94. It is available at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/evangelici/dialogo/documenti-dialogo/testo-in-inglese1.html>.

evangelization, religious liberty, and proselytism.²

Another important international venue in which Evangelical and Catholic leaders have encountered one another is at the annual meetings of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CWC). This informal group of general secretaries representing about 30 global families of churches (Methodist World Council, Baptist World Alliance, Pentecostal World Fellowship, Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches, etc.) includes the general secretary of the World Evangelical Alliance as well as the secretary of the Dicastery (formerly the Pontifical Council) for Promoting Christian Unity of the Catholic Church. They meet to pray together, share information of mutual interest, discuss mutual concerns, encourage greater cooperation, and represent the interests of the churches before various governments. “Their general aim has been to foster greater mutual understanding and better relations.”³

During the 1988 meeting of the secretaries of Christian World Communions in Jerusalem, representatives from the World Evangelical Fellowship and representatives of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity met to evaluate where things stood between them. A second preliminary meeting took place beside the Secretaries’ 1990 meeting in Budapest. The 1990 preparatory meeting led to the conclusion that the important topics of “Scripture, Tradition (including the development of doctrine), and the nature of the church as communion,” as well as the doctrine of justification, would need to be addressed. Yet, participants highlighted two specific divisive issues for further study and discussion: “the nature of the church as communion” and “the nature and practice of mission and evangelism.”⁴

The first consultation in the official dialogue between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Fellowship began in Venice in 1993. Four years later, in 1997, delegates from each group met in Tantur, Jerusalem. They met in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, in the USA in 1999; in 2001, their meeting took place in Mundelein, Illinois, USA. Swanwick, England, became the site of the final meeting of this round of discussions.

As the Preamble to the report notes,

2. “The Evangelical–Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission 1977–1984,” in *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level: 1982–1998*, eds. Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, Faith and Order Paper No. 187 (Geneva: WCC Publications/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 399–437.

3. Documentation for these meetings may be found in “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” Appendix I, Sections 1 and 2, 289–90.

4. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” Appendix I, Section 2, 290.

Initial meetings led [the group] eventually to focus on two general areas: the church and its mission. As the discussion continued, it became clear that a common reflection on the biblical notion of *koinonia* would help both sides to clarify some convergences and differences between them on the church (Part I). The focus on mission evolved into reflection on evangelization and the related issues of religious freedom, proselytism and common witness in light of *koinonia* (Part II).⁵

The consultations were constructed to help overcome various misunderstandings between Catholics and Evangelicals and to develop greater understanding between them by studying their lives and heritages as Christians, thereby enabling better relations between them.

As with any successful dialogue, participants committed themselves to offer a clear, honest, and candid account of the theological convictions giving rise to or stemming from their ecclesial traditions. This meant they also had to listen carefully to the explanations given to them by their dialogue partners. Their hope was to make clear those places where they found agreement with each other and those places where they found convergences that contributed to the hope of working more pointedly to turn them into points of agreement. Of course, there were also places where they anticipated that they would find issues that continued to divide them from the time of the Protestant Reformation. Yet, their ultimate hope was that they might find that they were closer to one another at the end of their time together than they were when they began this process, and this would foster greater unity between their churches.

Communion

The concept of *koinonia* has been instrumental in numerous ecumenical dialogues in recent years. It has influenced tremendously the ecclesiology of *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*, both in a general sense (throughout the document) as well as in the particular sense (for example, in sections such as §13–24 that focus specifically on it). The use of *koinonia* brings an important biblical term to bear on ecclesiology, as it suggests those things that bind Christians together. *Koinonia* is undoubtedly “an early and important aspect of

5. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” “Preface,” 269.

the church and its unity.”⁶ The biblical word *koinonia* can be translated in various ways: “fellowship,” “belonging,” “communion,” “participation,” “partnership,” or “sharing in.” Evangelicals often use the term “fellowship,” while Catholics frequently use the term “communion.”⁷

Both understand that communion with Christ entails “a transformative union whereby believers are ‘*koinonoi* of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world by lust’ (2 Pet. 1:4).”⁸ While Catholics typically interpret *koinonia* here as a “participation in the divine life and ‘nature,’” evangelicals often view it in terms of a “covenant companionship,” because it involves “escaping moral corruption and the way of the world.”⁹

The report does not limit itself to Catholic and Evangelical positions here. They acknowledge that the Orthodox tradition embraces a special understanding of *koinonia* on which they base their doctrine of *theosis*. Many Eastern fathers have taught through the centuries that “the believer’s participation in the life of Christ and the Church leads to the process of the believer’s divinization (*theosis, deification*).”¹⁰ Evangelicals are reluctant to embrace the idea of *theosis*. First, the word is not found in the Bible. Second, they believe it is an ambiguous idea that, in some way, “believers shall possess the essence of deity.”¹¹ Like their Evangelical counterparts, Catholics agree with this critique. Evangelicals contend, however, that

the redemptive grace on the one hand restores the original godlikeness that was marred and defaced by human sin (Col. 3:10), and on the other hand that the Spirit transforms believers into the likeness of the Second Adam, “from glory to glory” (1 Cor. 15:48, 49; 2 Cor. 3:18), a process that will reach completion only when Christ, the Lord and Saviour, comes from heaven (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 5:23-24).¹²

On the other hand, Catholics look to explain the transformation of believers. They are Christ’s instruments to affect the transformative union with the divine

6. John Reumann, “*Koinonia* in Scripture: Survey of Biblical Texts,” in *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Faith and Order Paper No. 166 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), 62.

7. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §1.

8. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §5.

9. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §5.

10. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §5.

11. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §5.

12. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §5.

nature (1 Cor. 12:12-13, where they see water baptism, and 10:16-17, where they see the eucharist). In this way, and elsewhere in scripture, “they hear ... more sacramental and participatory connotations in the word ‘*koinonoi*’ than are expressed by the word ‘fellowship.’”¹³ While many evangelicals use the term “sacraments,” they often understand them as “dominical means of grace or ‘ordinances’ which are ‘visible words’ that proclaim (*kataggellete*, 1 Cor. 11:26) or are signs and seals of the grace of union with Christ – grace to be received and enjoyed on the sole condition of personal faith.”¹⁴

Historically, Evangelicals have not bestowed the sacraments with the same level of significance as Catholics have, nor have they linked them specifically with sanctification or holiness, such as might be ascribed to the phrase *communio sanctorum*, a position found in Catholic teaching. Evangelicals are more likely to affirm the “forensic” meaning of justification, preferring the language of drama and law. Their understanding of the Bible favours such categories as “covenant-breaking and covenant-renewal, condemnation and acquittal, enmity and reconciliation, to the category of participation in being. But they do affirm with the apostle Paul that anyone who is in Christ is a ‘new creation’ (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). The Holy Spirit effects a radical change, a new birth from above.”¹⁵

While Catholics and Evangelicals both anticipate “perfect communion” in the future kingdom that will accompany the final coming of Jesus, their report on “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*” encouraged both parties to strive for a deeper communion in this world. In spite of current disagreements, and in spite of the differences between them over how much they can achieve regarding unity before Christ’s return, they agreed that it was a worthy goal towards which they could continue to work.

Since the biblical texts are authoritative for both Catholics and Evangelicals, they provide a solid foundation for their conversations. The growing familiarity with biblical categories on both sides, combined with recent reinterpretations of sacramental theology, suggests that *koinonia* continues to be a promising topic for further explorations in their conversations.¹⁶

At the same time, all ecumenical dialogues on *koinonia* (including dialogues

13. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §6.

14. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §6.

15. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §8.

16. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §9.

based on *TCTCV*) need to be mindful of the above distinctions on how the term may be interpreted differently across different traditions.

Visible Unity and Discipline

Both sides in this discussion recognized the significant changes in the self-understanding of the Catholic Church regarding ecclesiology. These changes were passed during the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) and are best seen in *Lumen gentium* (*LG*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), suggesting a less institutional approach to the subject as it lifted up the church as “the people of God.” In the case of the Catholic Church, *Lumen gentium* shifted Catholic teaching from a simple identification of the Catholic Church with the church of Jesus Christ to the idea that “the Church of Christ . . . subsists in the Catholic Church” (*LG* 1.15). It clearly recognized that there are many outside the Catholic Church “who are sealed by baptism which unites them to Christ,” and “in some real [albeit, imperfect] way they are joined to us in the Holy Spirit” (*LG* 1.15).¹⁷

According to the evangelical participants in this dialogue, the “evangelical movement received its characteristic modern shape from the influence of the eighteenth and nineteenth century revivals (preceded by Pietism and Puritanism): these revivals crossed denominational boundaries and relativized their importance.”¹⁸ The evangelical participants went on to point out that many evangelicals are currently rethinking their understanding of ecclesiology, especially as they study the subject of mission.

“From the Roman Catholic side, the recognition of the ‘others’ as belonging to Christ takes the form of an emphasis on truly Christian elements and endowments in their communities; and from the evangelical side, on the acknowledged presence of true believers indwelt by Christ’s Spirit among Catholics” and other Christians.¹⁹ *TCTCV* contains several important discussions on the relationship of visible and invisible unity (such as §26, 34, and 44); hence, the clarifications mentioned above can help readers understand how these two traditions differ in their approach to such topics.

As “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*” notes, “in its *Decree on Ecumenism* (*Unitatis redintegratio*, or *UR*), Vatican II brings the concept of ecclesial elements into correlation with that of *koinonia*. The decree

17. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §10.

18. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §11.

19. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §11.

illustrates the Catholic perspective on full communion. The Holy Spirit, it affirms, “brings about that marvellous communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church’s unity” (*UR 2*). The decree goes on to say that the Spirit brings about and perfects this wonderful union by means of the faithful preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and the loving exercise of pastoral authority (*UR 2*).²⁰

Evangelicals also emphasize that the most important bond between all Christians is “the life of the Spirit, which flows from union with Christ.” It “is created when the Gospel is received in faith and is foundational for the visible expression of the oneness or *koinonia* of all Christians. For Evangelicals the visibility of the church is subordinate to this primary truth.”²¹

Both Catholics and evangelicals agree on and thus contend for the need to have both “disciplinary and doctrinal criteria” in place and for these criteria to become expressions of their ecclesial unity in Christ. “Church discipline biblically based and under the direction of the Holy Spirit is essential to the wellbeing and ministry of God’s people,” they asserted.²² At times such as the current ones, in which pastors and other church leaders have fallen, church discipline might require breaking specific fellowship. This is also true when “brothers and sisters” break with the “apostolic teaching” (see 2 Thess. 3:14-15). “This applies to deviations in all spheres of life, both in the confession of faith as well as in behaviour, which cannot be ultimately separated. Some evangelicals hold that the concrete possibilities of fellowship depend on the degrees of agreement on the apostolic testimony as handed down in the New Testament.”²³

Ministry and the Local Church

Catholics and Evangelicals hold far more in common than might be anticipated without further study. For instance, they share “Sacred Scripture and belief in its inspiration by the Holy Spirit.”²⁴ They affirm “the unique mediatorial role of Christ, His incarnation, His death and resurrection for our salvation.” They

20. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §13.

21. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §17.

22. “The Chicago Call: An Appeal to Evangelicals” (1977), in *Growing Consensus: Church Dialogues in the United States, 1962–1991*, eds. Joseph Burgess and Jeffrey Gros, Ecumenical Documents, Vol. 5 (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 579.

23. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §18.

24. They share the majority of biblical books, but the Catholic canon also includes the books Protestants call “the Apocrypha” and Catholics call the “Deutero-canonical” books.

“affirm together their faith in the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” They both pray the Lord’s Prayer and confess some common creeds.²⁵ They “share a common hope of Christ’s return, as judge and redeemer.”²⁶

According to the report on “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” all participants agreed that the Pentecost event described in Acts 2 played a very significant role. It marked “the emergence of the Church of the new covenant.” Its mission to make disciples of all nations is already in view with “the presence of persons from every nation at Pentecost.” Both the Catholic and Evangelical representatives agreed that the church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20).

They recognize in the evangelizing mission of the apostles the founding of local churches. The communion of local churches in the New Testament was served by the ministry of the apostles and by the meeting of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). Support of one another, letters of recommendation, the collections for other churches, and mutual hospitality characterize this communion among churches. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics recognize the importance of subsequent developments in the life of the church, but give different weight and appreciation to these developments.²⁷

As *TCTCV* notes (§32), different traditions use the term “local church” in different ways. For evangelicals today, the “local church” designates the congregation in a particular place. For Catholics, a “local” or “particular” church is broader. It “refers to a diocese, composed of a number of parishes, with a bishop at the centre, assisted by his presbyters and other ministers of pastoral service to the faithful, for the sake of the Gospel.”²⁸

For Catholics, the Holy Spirit was present in a number of important developments within the early centuries of the Church’s growth and development. These developments included the understanding of

25. “Confessing the One Faith: An Evangelical Response by World Evangelical Fellowship Task Force on Ecumenical Issues,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 18 (1994), 35–46. Evangelicals easily confess the Apostles’ Creed, and many, if not most, evangelicals confess the Nicene Creed.

26. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §20.

27. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §23.

28. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §24.

bishops as successors to the apostles; the emergence of the threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon; the clarification of the apostolic faith especially by ecumenical councils and the universal creeds; and the gradual acknowledgement of the effective leadership of the bishop of Rome within the whole Church. Even from early times, the Bishop of Rome had a prominent role in fostering the communion of local churches over which bishops presided, the initial expressions of a primacy that developed over the centuries. Since Vatican II there has been greater stress on the mutual relationship between the local churches and the Church of Rome.²⁹

For their part, evangelicals are overwhelmingly found in Protestant churches, independent churches, and Pentecostal churches. These churches typically emphasize the local congregation: the place in which “the Word of God is proclaimed, the sacraments are administered, and God’s people are gathered.”³⁰ Evangelicals have embraced different types of institutional structures in their churches. “Churches whose origin lies in the magisterial Reformation (e.g., Lutheran, and Reformed) as well as Anglicans and Methodists, have a strong sense of the universality of the church in time and space, but the way they function stresses the regional or national body and, for example, gives significance to regional or national synods.”³¹

Many other evangelical churches, however, have adopted a congregational form of governance, which concentrates responsibility in the hands of the local community. This community, then, becomes “the concrete embodiment of the *koinonia* of the Spirit. It is the locus of spiritual life, mutual upbuilding through the diversity of gifts, and training for service in the world.” These “free churches” express [their] solidarity through international agencies or alliances, denominational or interdenominational. Anabaptists in particular have had a strong tradition of community life; a vigilant discipline makes the assembly into a closely-knit family of faith.”³²

Evangelicals willingly admit that organizing churches in this way does not guarantee that life in and between these local congregations will be easy—a perfect example of lived *koinonia*. Over the years, they have had to fight divisive tendencies and, in the context of today’s secularization, they have often been

29. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §25.

30. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §25.

31. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §26.

32. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §26.

plagued by the destructive influences of individualism. The famous evangelical declaration *The Lausanne Covenant* candidly acknowledged: “We confess that our testimony has sometimes been marred by sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness and mission” (*The Lausanne Covenant*, §7).³³

There are other differences between the ways that evangelicals conceive of ministry and the understanding of ministry in the Catholic ecclesial teaching. For instance, “Catholic ecclesiology reserves certain sacramental functions to bishops who are understood to have received the fullness of the sacrament of orders.”³⁴ In the case of most evangelical churches, leadership is more found in the ministry of the pastor. His or her role is equated with the *episkopos/presbyteros* role found in the New Testament. “The pastor may be the ‘teaching elder’ in association with the ‘ruling elders’ of the church or parish, (1 Tim. 5:17).”³⁵ Further diversity may be found among other evangelicals, including a few free churches, which “have distinct ministries of oversight, but the difference is slight: the bishop or superintendent is charged with administrative tasks, but is not considered to have particular sacramental roles, a concept foreign to the evangelical interpretation of ministry.”³⁶

The Universal Church

Evangelicals began their dialogues with Rome in 1977 with their Dialogue on Mission (1977–84). That first dialogue was followed up by the one reviewed in this chapter: Church, Evangelization and the Bond of *Koinonia* (1993–2002). Their findings from these two important discussions parallel the findings in the international dialogues between Catholics and Pentecostals, which have been ongoing since 1972, some of which are reviewed elsewhere in this volume.³⁷ What Catholics have found in these discussions has shown that there is a growing sense of mutual understanding at all levels: local, regional, national, and international. This does not mean that there are no further differences, but Catholic episcopal conferences; synods of Oriental Catholic churches; and local, regional, and national evangelical churches, alliances, and organizations are better able to enter into meaningful conversation with one another than at

33. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §26.

34. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §27.

35. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §27.

36. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §27.

37. See chapters 1, 3, and 19.

any time in the past. “Diocesan bishops are able to relate to the regional evangelical officials as their counterparts, even if they are not bishops. There is a certain convergence with the renewed emphasis of Catholics on local church and of evangelicals on worldwide fellowship.”³⁸

At the same time, while Catholics use the language of reciprocity when they consider the relationship between the universal and the particular church for them, the universal church is not simply a federation of local churches. There is a sense in which Catholics can admit the priority of the local church since, in the words of Vatican II: “In and from such individual churches there comes into being the one and only Catholic Church” (*LG* 23). This allows the priority of the local church, but *Lumen gentium* §23 makes clear that “each particular church is ‘fashioned after the model of the universal church.’” Thus, as the *Report* notes, “the biblical evidence, as interpreted in Catholic theology, indicates that the church originated as a single community, into which people are incorporated by faith and baptism.”³⁹

From an evangelical perspective, the church has been called into being by the Word (*creatura verbi*; see *TCTCV* §14). That Word is revealed in Christ, written in scripture, and ultimately received through hearing. “The Word calls forth faith and a community of faith in time and space, a visible church. But final judgment belongs to God as to believers and unbelievers within the visible church. God knows His own.”⁴⁰ As the evangelical document *The Amsterdam Declaration* states: “Here in the world, the church becomes visible in all local congregations that meet to do together the things that according to Scripture the church does. Christ is the head of the church. Everyone who is personally united to Christ by faith belongs to his body and by the Spirit is united with every other true believer in Jesus.”⁴¹

Evangelicals, like Catholics, recognize the value of worldwide fellowship; however, they view the relationship between the universal church and local churches differently because they come to the biblical text with different theological presuppositions and interpretations. Importantly, this dialogue explained that

evangelicals understand by “universal church,” all those everywhere

38. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §30.

39. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §31.

40. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §32.

41. “The Amsterdam Declaration: A Charter for Evangelism in the 21st Century” (2000), in *The Mission of an Evangelist* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 2001), §9.

and in all ages, who believe and trust in Christ for salvation. “All” includes believing Roman Catholics. Evangelicals have appealed to Luther’s distinction between the church invisible and the church visible. They affirm the universal church whose bond of unity, the Spirit of Christ, is invisible (Eph. 4:3-4); they stress incorporation by “faith alone,” a faith by which all share in the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2). Christ, however, also willed the founding of visible churches into which people are incorporated by (water) baptism. While primarily local, these congregations may seek federations and alliances as means to express the universal character of the church’s nature and mission.⁴²

According to the evangelicals, history—and, one could add, culture and pragmatism—have shaped both the visible structural and organizational manifestations of the church. These structural and organizational manifestations are always subject to change. It is because most evangelicals see *no single pattern* for organizing the church in the Bible throughout history and everywhere that we find various approaches to organization among them. They have attempted to organize themselves in keeping with the various “models of ministry and church order” that they find in the New Testament. Their affirmation of this variety distinguishes their understanding of ecclesiology from that which Catholics embrace. However, “these differences do not impede fellowship or membership in the invisible church.”⁴³

Most evangelicals do not view the universal church as something which is entirely and only invisible. They recognize that there is not a perfect one-to-one correspondence that exists between the visible and the invisible church, and they concede the concrete reality “expressed in the visible churches in particular times and places, and the trans-local bonds they cultivate.”⁴⁴ Even so, they contend that “false brethren” may be found (Gal. 2:4) who do not really belong (1 John 2:19). While the relationship between membership in the visible and invisible church and baptism varies among evangelicals, these differences do not hamper fellowship and collaboration. Visible communities have been endowed by Christ with institutions so that they may build themselves up and fulfil their mission in the world” (see *TCTCV* §24).⁴⁵

This overview of “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*” has

42. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §33.

43. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §34.

44. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §35.

45. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §35.

revealed a number of differences between Catholic and evangelical understandings of the church. However, these differences do not amount to a simple opposition to one another. Indeed, the participants noted in their official report that they had fruitful conversations over these differences. Their mutual understanding “has opened avenues for further dialogue.”⁴⁶ In fact, the study of these discussions, when taken alongside *TCTCV*, can help the reader to understand better where and how Catholics and Evangelicals differ. Such a study may also illuminate how they could reach further convergence in the future study of the church.

46. “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §42.

SECTION TWO

Pentecostal and Evangelical Perspectives on the Church

The Church: A Pentecostal Perspective*

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr

Introduction

It may come as a surprise, but until quite recently, Pentecostals wrote very little about ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church.¹ That is not to say that Pentecostals did not think about this doctrine; they did. But the first generation of Pentecostals had experienced the Holy Spirit in a powerful way that seemed to be different from that seen in congregations outside the Pentecostal Movement. As a result, they were far less interested in writing theology than they were in sharing their experience and winning others to Christ. The return of the Lord

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1. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Clifton Shane, *Pentecostal Churches in Transition: Analyzing the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia*, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2009); John Christopher Thomas, ed., *Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010); Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, JPT Supplement 38 (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2011). Two books published since this chapter appeared are Terry L. Cross, *The People of God's Presence: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019) and Frank D. Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church: A Dogmatic Inquiry* (London: T&T Clark, 2020).

seemed to be so imminent that early Pentecostals believed they had to carry forth the message of the gospel as broadly as they could in as little time as possible. As a result, the earliest generation of Pentecostals went throughout the world, bearing witness to Jesus Christ and to their experience of the Holy Spirit.

During its second generation, the Pentecostal Movement established Bible schools that were intended to pass along this message. Bible school teachers were rightly first *Bible expositors*; to a lesser extent, they became *biblical theologians*. Typically, these teachers were not trained in the ancient biblical languages or in the classical theological disciplines, though they were often insightful and gifted teachers. People such as Myer Pearlman in the United States and Donald Gee in England are examples of such teachers. Often, they were also charged with teaching the practice of ministry through many “how to” courses on preaching, soul-winning, establishing Sunday schools, and the like. It was during this second generation that Pentecostal *historians* began to appear as they searched their foundational documents to explain to present and future generations the development of their Pentecostal fellowships, denominations, doctrines, and ministry practices.

Only towards the end of the third generation did *systematic theologians* begin to develop: people who were classically trained, who would explore the full range of theological doctrine, including the doctrine of the church, often in conversation with those outside Pentecostalism. They would engage or interact with historical, biblical, and theological developments through the centuries.² This progression of disciplines within Pentecostalism parallels quite closely the developments that took place among the first generations of Christians in the early church.³ It is a sign of the growing maturity of Pentecostalism as a movement.

2. Matthew S. Clark, Henry I. Lederle, et al., *What Is Distinctive about Pentecostal Theology?* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989), 68.

3. The earliest contributors to the faith were the 1st-century apostles, who with Luke (1:1-4; Acts 1:1-5) served as historians who bore witness to what they had seen and heard during their earthly walk with Jesus (1 Jn 1:1-3). By the earliest years of the 2nd century, they were followed by various bishops, who passed along the apostolic tradition to subsequent generations. Pastoral care became a primary concern of these apostolic fathers, and fixed liturgical forms were increasingly set in place (see *Didache* 7:1-4; 9:1-10:7). The apologists of the late 2nd century became the first philosophical and systematic theologians (Justin Martyr, *Apology I-II*; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*).

The Church in the Book of Acts

The doctrine of the church is best explained beginning with the specific details, metaphors, and descriptions it receives in scripture, and the place to begin is at the beginning. The birth of the church is most commonly recognized as taking place on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41). It began among those who had followed the direction of Jesus to wait in Jerusalem, where they would receive the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4-5, 8). They waited, prayerfully anticipating the promise, and on the day of Pentecost they received their answer. “This is what was spoken through the prophets,” proclaimed Peter (Acts 2:16). “This is that”!

That first Christian Pentecost was sufficient to attract an initial hearing for the gospel, and Peter rose to the occasion, proclaiming that what those who were witnesses to, the event they now saw, was God’s answer to his long-awaited promise. God was doing something new among his people, something for which Moses could only yearn (Num. 11:29). Yet, God had promised through the prophets (Ezek. 37:12-14; Joel 2:28-29) and ultimately through Jesus (Acts 1:8) that it would take place. When it finally took place on the day of Pentecost, Peter urged the people to repentance and baptism, and that day, some 3000 people joined the 120, and together they became the church (Acts 2:22-41).

What Did It Mean for Them to Be the Church?

What were the implications of this event for them and, ultimately, for us? How were they to make sense of it? It is in the midst of such questions that they discovered several things about themselves and, thus, about the nature of the church. First, they recognized that they had received the Holy Spirit in a new and vital way. Just before he left his disciples, Jesus promised in his “Paraclete sayings” that he would send the Paraclete, who would strengthen them, encourage them, teach them, and remind them of all that Jesus had said. The Paraclete, that is, the Holy Spirit, would guide them into all truth, glorify Christ, and declare new things to them (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15). The church was the people of God who were now indwelt by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9), a fact that would lead them to further discoveries regarding the power that the Holy Spirit brought to their lives and the ways they were to engage with the Holy Spirit and with one another. As they began, all they had in common was a singular commitment to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Lordship of Jesus in their lives, and a newly shared spiritual experience rooted in the person of the Holy Spirit, which they saw manifested

in one another.

It is fascinating to realize that Jesus had left them with no specific design that they were to follow. There was no constitution to which they had to adhere, no doctrinal statements that would provide them with boundaries, and no texts from which they might take their identity other than what they found in their local synagogues: the books of Moses, the prophets, and the teachers of wisdom. It would be at least 15 years before the earliest book of the New Testament would even be written. There were no Christian theological books, no leadership seminars, and no Bible schools or seminary programs that would help to define the church. These new believers were forced to rely upon what they had.

The Apostolic Teaching

They quickly realized that they had direct access to the apostles, those men who had been called and had spent three years with Jesus, watching him, listening to him, and doing what he had asked of them—men who would prove to be invaluable resources. As they sat with the apostles, they quickly recognized the importance that the *apostolic teaching* held for them. But what was this apostolic teaching? It consisted of the testimony of those who had walked and talked and sat at the feet of Jesus for three years. As the apostles reflected on their lives with Jesus, the memories of what Jesus had said to them or done before them, as well as accounts of their experiences with him, were passed along to all of those who sat at their feet. These oral narratives or testimonies would form the collective memory of all who were present, initially made possible because these new Christians sat at the feet of the apostles. Jude would later call it the faith “once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3, NRSVA) that they received.

Thus, the church began with an oral narrative based upon the testimony of the apostles. “We declare to you what we have seen and heard,” John would later write, “so that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 1:3). The apostolic teaching bore witness to what the apostles had seen and heard, and they passed along this tradition which made fellowship possible, not only with the apostles but also with the Lord (1 Jn 1:3). The first fellowship experienced by these new Christians came through the proclamation of the apostles, through their sharing of the apostles’ teaching—together. Later, the memories and teachings of the apostles and a few of their closest associates like Mark and Luke would be written down, collected, and, after considerable discussion, published to form the New Testament, but in the beginning, it was the oral testimony of their lives with Jesus that brought these early believers together. This apostolic teaching, given

through apostles and prophets, provided a rich foundation for the church (Eph. 2:20-21), aligned with the chief cornerstone, Christ Jesus.

Koinonia

As the earliest Christians gathered at the feet of the apostles, they also recognized that they were forming new relationships, not only with the Lord and with the apostles, but with one another. These relationships were described by the Greek term *koinonia*, which is typically translated as “fellowship.” It is not easy to find an equivalent that does justice to the concept of *koinonia*. These people were strangers at one level, but they quickly found themselves being transformed as they sat together at the feet of the apostles. They began to recognize their need for one another. Jesus had not told them exactly what to do or how to live in so many words, but as they gathered together, they understood what needed to be done. They had a desire *to be with* one another. They wanted to learn together. They found it important to pray together. They wanted to break bread together. They found that their new relationship led to mutual nurture and to mutual sharing. They were a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), and they began to recognize themselves as being a new people (Eph. 2:15) who were to live under a new commandment (John 13:34; 1 John 3:23-24) under Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This new relationship led them to do things that they might never have anticipated doing before: not for themselves, but for one another. The Great Commandment to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10:27) took on new meaning. By recognizing their life together, their *koinonia*, as constitutive of who they were as the church,⁴ they quickly realized that this new relationship inevitably led to new actions. They found that the ways they had related previously, marked by more worldly standards such as selfishness, or animosity, or competition, or envy, were being transformed. In place of these earlier standards, they found a new ability to share,

4. Over half a century ago, the Swiss pastor/theologian Emil Brunner noted that “The Body of Christ is nothing other than a fellowship of persons. It is ‘the fellowship of Jesus Christ’ [1 Corinthians 1:9] or ‘fellowship of the Holy Ghost’ [2 Corinthians 13:13; Philippians 2:1], where fellowship or *koinonia* signifies a common participation, a togetherness, a community life. The faithful are bound to each other through their common sharing in Christ and in the Holy Ghost, but that which they have in common is precisely no ‘thing’, no ‘it’, but a ‘he’, Christ and His Holy Spirit” (Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* [London: Lutterworth Press, 1952], 10–11).

to give to one another, and to consider all things as belonging to the God who now lived among them through the Holy Spirit. They sold their possessions and goods and distributed the proceeds from them to everyone who had a need (Acts 2:45). Their actions were now based upon the needs of others rather than on their own needs and desires, clearly following the teaching of Jesus to serve rather than to be served (Mark 10:4-45; Luke 22:24-27).

When the church began in Jerusalem, there was much more fellowship, much more togetherness, than what would later be found in the Corinthian congregation.⁵ There was genuine *koinonia*, which made it possible for the needs of all, even those of the Hellenist widows (Acts 6:1-6), to be met. They reached out to their sisters and brothers, helping to meet their physical needs. Luke testifies that “There was not a needy person among them” (Acts 4:34-35). This level of *koinonia* led further to the spread of the gospel and to an increase in the number of converts to the Christian community. As good as this new community was, it was not perfect. There were those, such as Ananias and Sapphira, who attempted to deceive the rest, but the exposure of their sin and their very public deaths (Acts 5:1-11) led to this new fellowship breaking new ground (Acts 5:12-16).

Sharing Bread

These early “Pentecostal” Christians also realized that their fellowship was tangible. It was evidenced in their breaking bread together. They enjoyed their fellowship with one another to such an extent that they ate together with glad and generous hearts (Acts 2:46), sharing the meal with one another. That action was not only symbolic of what their Lord had done for them, but it helped them realize that *they were one body*. It made them eager to be *with* one another, to nurture, to uplift, to aid, and to affirm one another. They came to realize that there is no room in the church for the isolated Christian. The table is a place for serving, for eating, and for enjoying the fellowship of one another together. We are typically very selective about who it is that we invite to eat with us, and these earliest Christians were no different. The table is a special place that we open up

5. Paul wrote two letters to the Corinthians, urging unity among them. This congregation seems to have ignored Paul’s counsel. Sometime between 92 and 101 CE, Bishop Clement of Rome wrote another letter to the Corinthians to address what he described as “that shameful and detestable sedition, utterly abhorrent to the elect of God which a few rash and self-confident persons have kindled to such a pitch of frenzy that your venerable and illustrious name worthy to be universally loved, has suffered grievous harm” (*Epistle to the Corinthians* 1.2).

to our family and friends. Their “life together,” if I can borrow a phrase from the Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer,⁶ was clearest when they broke bread together, when they shared with one another the most basic item that provides sustenance and life.

The table would become a powerful symbol of their unity. When the apostle Paul was later confronted by the Corinthian congregation’s violation of that table fellowship, he was appalled at their actions, and he refused to commend them. “When you come together,” he wrote, “it is not really to eat the Lord’s Supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk” (1 Cor. 11:20-21). He went on to note that “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves,” he urged the Corinthians, “and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1 Cor. 11:27-28).

The Prayers

These earliest Christians quickly realized that in addition to sitting at the feet of the apostles, enjoying the fellowship of one another, and participating in a common table, they needed to pray together. They were eager to pray with and for one another, with no secrets between them. Acts 2:42 notes specifically that these new Christians devoted themselves not simply to prayer as a discipline but to “*the prayers*.” This term referred to “set” prayers, that is, regularly prescribed liturgical prayers offered at certain times or on certain days.⁷ Today, Pentecostals place a high premium on spontaneity in their prayers. The apostles prayed spontaneously on many occasions,⁸ but these early believers also recognized that there was a place for prayer in their lives together that went beyond either individuality or spontaneity. It also included prayers of studied reflection: written, formal prayers, prayers that were said together. At times, it included praying from the psalms or other prescribed prayers that these believers inherited from their life and the liturgy found in the synagogue and temple.⁹

6. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

7. Stanley M. Horton, *The Book of Acts* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1981), 48.

8. Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 30, calls such prayers “*ad hoc*”; that is, they were offered with specific contexts and needs in mind.

9. Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 191.

On the one hand, their prayers together bore witness to their *continuity* with Israel. Jesus had made it his custom to attend the synagogue each sabbath during his ministry (Luke 4:16). The apostles, following his example, continued to attend the prayers and instruction in the synagogue and temple on a regular basis (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 13:14-16; 22:17). Among the earliest Christians, there is clear evidence that they viewed their life as standing in continuity with Jewish community life that had contributed to their self-understanding as followers of Israel's God (Deut. 6:4) and his Messiah, Jesus the Christ.

On the other hand, these prayers soon enough pointed to the early Christians' *discontinuity* with Israel. While they understood themselves in some ways as continuing within the larger boundaries of the Jewish religious community, Jewish leaders soon viewed them differently. Luke reported that they were recognized soon enough as "Christians" (Acts 11:26) or as belonging to the "sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). Between 70 and 100 CE, the Jewish community adopted a new line in its series of prayers known as the "Eighteen Benedictions" that signalled discontinuity between Jews and Christians. One of these benedictions now contained a curse against Christians. It read, "And for apostates let there be no hope; and may the insolent kingdom be quickly uprooted, in our days. And may the Nazarenes and the heretics perish quickly; and may they be erased from the Book of Life; and may they not be inscribed with the righteous. Blessed art thou, Lord, who humblest the insolent."¹⁰ This curse was intended to ferret out those in the midst of the synagogue who held sympathies for followers of Jesus, the "Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). While personal conversations between Christians and the Jewish community would remain open, fellowship between them was no longer possible.¹¹

From the beginning, however, their prayer life together bore witness to their unity as the new people of God. Their thanksgiving and praise to God were connected with their fellowship with God, now made possible in a new way through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Their prayer together declared that they were those who gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ. Their identification with his name indicated their submission to Jesus, the crucified and risen Christ, and their acknowledgement of his authority in their midst. As a result, their earliest confession became "Jesus is Lord," made possible

10. Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D.135)*, Vol. II (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd, 1885, 1973, rev. 1979), 457.

11. Many of the early Christian apologists continued to speak with Jews who were open to dialogue. See, for example, Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, or Origen, *Against Celsus*. In many cases, the apologists attempted to explain that what was promised to Israel had been fulfilled in the church. The key came in accepting Jesus as the Jewish messiah.

only by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1). In their confession of faith, in their submission to the Lordship of Jesus, in their breaking of bread, in their prayers together, and in their discipleship as they gathered to hear the apostolic teaching, they had become the church, a community or fellowship of “Pentecostal” believers, and their understanding of the nature of the church would henceforth define their actions.

Our understanding of the church is always dependent upon our presuppositions and the definitions with which we work. As we look at the nature of the church, we find that what it means to be the church and what it means to do what the church does are very closely related to one another. How we define the church holds implications for what the church does. A definition of the church arising from Acts 2 demonstrates that the church is the community of believers who have submitted their lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Through repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36-38; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16), they have identified themselves in relation to his death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3). They have discovered one another in a new way: a Holy Spirit-inspired way, as sisters and brothers who now recognize and identify themselves as being in a new relationship with God and with one another that is described as “fellowship” or *koinonia*.

Some Pauline Contributions to Ecclesiology

Called to Be One

Just as a diamond has many facets, each of which contributes to the greater beauty of the whole, so do the many metaphors used by the apostle Paul add greater complexity as well as beauty to our understanding of the church. Paul is the first New Testament writer, for instance, to use the word *ekklēsia* to describe the early Christian community. *Ekklēsia* translates the Hebrew *qāhāl* in the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. As a noun, it refers to an “assembly” or a “gathering.” In its Greek verbal form, *kalēō*, it describes those who are gathered into such an assembly whether for secular or for religious purposes, those who are “summoned” or “called forth” (Lev. 8:4). This designation reveals that the church is never a self-selecting community that gathers itself for its own purposes. It is composed of those who have been “called” or “summoned” by God (Eph. 1:18; 2 Tim. 1:9). God takes the active role, the initiative through his calling, which suggests, according to Paul, that the followers of Jesus have been chosen: they are the “elect” (Eph. 1:4, 11-15), those who have responded to God’s call. They have been summoned through

the proclamation or heralding of the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ (Acts 8:35; 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:21-25; 2 Tim. 4:2); they are those who have been gathered into an assembly or community over which the Lord Jesus is the head (Rom. 1:6; Eph. 1:22-23). In turn, they also become heralds of the Good News by proclaiming it to others (Rom. 10:13-15; Matt. 28:19-20). Paul urged Timothy, for instance, to pass along Paul's teaching to others who would continue to pass along what can only be described as the apostolic Tradition (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

There are many other metaphors that the apostle Paul used to describe this new community, including the fellowship of God's Son (1 Cor. 1:9), the building of God (1 Cor. 3:9, 16), the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33), and, on several occasions, the "Body of Christ," with Christ Jesus as the head of the body (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 5:22-33). While each metaphor reveals a unique insight into the church, what all of these metaphors have in common is the fact that *there is only one church*. When God looks at the church, he sees only one people. It is a people that God has called out of the world to be God's own people, redeeming them through the sacrificial death of Jesus (Titus 2:14) and placing the Holy Spirit within them.

Given human nature, it is not surprising that the potential for division should pose such a large problem for the church. From the day of Pentecost onward, the church was a diverse body, including first Jews and then ever-widening groups of Gentiles (Acts 2:9-11; 8:26-39; 10:1-48). With such potential for division, and with so many divisive issues raising their heads in the church, it is little wonder that Paul should beg the Ephesians to "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).¹² Unity is easily broken if it is neither valued nor constantly cultivated. Indeed, the issue of unity within the church lies at the heart of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Through the church, God makes visible his work of reconciliation accomplished by the blood of Christ. Those who were far off have been brought near. Through Christ, Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled (Eph. 2:11-13).

Paul lifts up the unity issue to the Philippian community as well. And once again he exhorts them to "live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that ... I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving

12. A similar list of character traits that those who are part of the church are expected to exhibit may be found in Colossians 3:12-15. Paul also calls attention the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-26.

side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel and are in no way intimidated by your opponents” (Phil. 1:27-28). He goes on to urge them to “be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:2-5). The ability for the Christian community to be of the same mind, thereby sustaining their unity, is a sign of their maturity (Phil. 3:15).

The diversity that emerged so quickly in the earliest Christian community was not merely confined to race or ethnicity. Paul’s letter to the churches serving the province of Galatia made clear that while the church included diversity in race, social class, and gender, such categories were not relevant within the church (Gal. 3:28). While these categories no longer played a role in the church, the church was still to value some forms of diversity.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, the apostle informed the Corinthians that the Holy Spirit sovereignly distributes a variety of charisms or gifts and then activates them so that the faithful may use them for “the common good.” This passage makes clear that from the beginning, there has been diversity within the church—diversity that stems from the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit. That diversity is present within every congregation and within the whole church. And yet, even as the apostle recognizes and notes the role of the Holy Spirit in engendering that diversity by distributing various charisms or gifts to whomever the Spirit wills, he also notes that there is unity. There is only one body, and it comes under the headship of Jesus Christ. Yet, each of those who are members of Christ represent a diversity in the gifts they have been given and the gifts that they therefore contribute to that one body. Thus, while Paul clearly prizes unity in the church, he also recognizes its diversity within which the Holy Spirit chooses to work.

Pentecostals should be able to understand better than most what it means to be *one* while at the same time being *many*. They should understand that unity within the church does not require uniformity precisely because of the emphasis that Paul places upon the metaphor of the body. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body,” Paul reminded the Corinthians, “so it is with Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). Repeatedly, the apostle speaks of the body when describing the church (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:11-16), especially in those places where he speaks of the gifts or charisms of the Holy Spirit. A charism is a specific manifestation of grace (*charis*) that has been sovereignly given by the Holy Spirit to individual Christians (1 Cor. 12:11). The people of God are given various

gifts; there must be an orderly expression of these gifts within the congregation, for they are to be useful to the *one Body* of Christ in which they are used (1 Cor. 14:26-33). It may be in its charismatic dimension, where unity expressed in diversity may most easily be seen within the church.

Called to Be Holy

No designation is more frequently used by Paul to describe those who make up the church than “those sanctified in Christ Jesus” or those who are called “saints” (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2; etc.). Rooted in the Hebrew *kādōsh* and its Greek equivalent, *hágios*, meaning “holy” (Is. 6:3; Eph. 1:4), this term designates those who have been called by God, made holy, set apart, and sanctified to do the work of the Lord in the world. The apostle notes that since the followers of Jesus have been called to be “saints,” they should live in imitation of him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6). Even in our bodies, we are holy when we give ourselves to God (Rom. 12:1-2).

With respect to holiness, Paul often employs indicative statements of fact, followed by the imperative, instructing his readers how they should live in light of that fact. Since the church is made up of holy people, a sanctified people, a people who together are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16), their lives are to reflect or provide evidence of that fact (see Col. 3:1-17, especially 12-17). Ephesians 4:1-3 reverses the order but with the same intention. They have received a “calling” (*klēseōs*) with which they have been “called” (*eklēthēte*); as a result, they are to live their lives in a manner that is worthy of that calling. This discovery of who they are or who they have become—those who have been called out of the world and into Christ—holds clear implications for how they are now to live and what they are now to do together.

In a sense, the apostle holds up before the people of God what might best be described as an idealized portrait of the church even as he writes to less-than-ideal people. Part of our problem in understanding the nature of the church as holy is that we tend to individualize holiness as something that we as human beings do. It is true that in Acts, the church is very early confronted by challenges like the duplicity of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11), bickering between Hebraist and Hellenist Christians over the care of the widows (6:1), suspicion when Saul claims that he is now a follower of Jesus and wants to join the disciples in Jerusalem (9:26), and strong differences of opinion over whether Gentiles must become Jews in order to be part of the Christian community (15:1-2). While, in his epistles, Paul addresses various congregations as “saints,” he also chides them for their many divisions (1 Cor. 1:10-13; Gal. 1:6-19; Phil. 1:15-18, 4:2-3; Col. 2:20; 1 Thess. 2:1-3, 3:11-15; etc.). The congregation in Corinth seems to have

been particularly plagued by the failure of some to live in light of their calling as “saints” (1 Cor. 5:1-2; 6:1-8, 15-18; 7:1-5, 8:4-13; 11:17-22; 14:37-40; 15:12-19). Yet, while all of these challenges and failures exist in the Christian community, Paul still insists upon addressing them as “saints.” He never stops there; he goes on to hold up the ideal towards which they are to strive. But in the end, it is Christ who has made his church *a holy church*, and it is this church that will ultimately appear at Christ’s return without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:25-27).

Called to be Catholic

It must be acknowledged that the term “catholic” sometimes raises questions in the minds of Pentecostals. When the fathers of the church decided that one of the historic marks of the church was its catholicity, they did not have in mind what many Christians have in mind when they see the word “catholic.” It is not a reference to the Catholic Church, headed by the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. Nor does it refer to Greek Catholics. The term “catholic” has a much more basic meaning than any denominational designation. At one level, the notion of catholicity refers to the universality of the church. It appeared for the first time in the letter of Bishop Ignatius to the congregation at Smyrna, about 15 years after the apostle John completed the Book of Revelation. “Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is (*hē catholicē ekklēsia*) the catholic church” (*To the Smyrnaeans* 8). Its meaning within the context clearly refers to the universal character of the church.¹³

While the church may have begun in Jerusalem with Pentecost, it quickly spread to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Paul’s observation is that in spite of any geographical distance between congregations, because every Christian within those congregations has been baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13), that is, into Christ, then every congregation is present in the whole church. There is no separation between them. There is nowhere that the church is present in this world where your congregation is not in some way present.

At another level, catholicity conveys the idea that the Church universal, made up of all who have placed their faith in the promise of God (Heb. 11:1-2, 39-40) that has been manifested in Christ Jesus (Heb. 12:1-2) regardless of time or place—that is, all who have been made spiritually one with the people of God in all ages and in every place—is in some way present in each local church. It is only with this concept of catholicity that Paul’s remark “If one member suffers,

13. Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1973), 310–12, note 2.

all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor. 12:26) makes sense. This fact is quite easy to see at the local level. At the universal level, one needs to think only of Christians who are suffering for one reason or another throughout the world to recognize that their suffering is our suffering as well. For this reason, the Christians in the congregation at Antioch took up an offering for the church at Jerusalem because of an impending famine (Acts 11:27-30). For this reason, Paul encourages the Galatians to bear the burdens of one another (Gal. 6:2), thereby fulfilling the “law of Christ.” That is why the apostle charges the Ephesians to “pray in the Spirit” and to “persevere in supplication for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18). The whole church is present in each local assembly, and the suffering as well as the honor that comes to any one congregation of Christians is to be embraced by all, while the suffering and the honour given to the whole is to be felt by each congregation.

Called to be Apostolic

Among the earliest names that Pentecostals took for themselves was that of the Apostolic Faith Movement. This choice of names was intended to convey the idea that Pentecostals are those who are truly apostolic: that is, they contended that they believed what the apostles believed and they did what the apostles did.

“Apostolicity” is a term that is used by some historic denominations, such as Catholic and Orthodox churches, to describe the process known as apostolic succession that they understand has guaranteed the faithfulness of the church to the teachings of the earliest apostles. In the early centuries of the church’s existence, Christians were concerned to follow the lines of succession through the bishops in order to guard against heresy. There is no question but that as the apostles died, their successors in the church were bishops. The bishops provided stability for the congregations they served. As Paul noted, the bishop would serve as “God’s steward” who “must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching [of the apostles], so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it” (Titus 1:7-9). In this way, the bishop was to “take care of the church” (1 Tim. 3:5).

That the role of the bishop in guaranteeing the apostolic character of the church was assumed may be seen in the writings of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. Ignatius wrote to the church at Smyrna about 105 CE, “See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; ... Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop” (*To the Smyrnaeans* 8–9). He conveyed similar instructions to the congregations in Magnesia and in Philadelphia (*To the Magnesians* 7; *To the Philadelphians* 7). Similarly, Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, wrote about 180 CE that

the “knowledge of the truth,” that is, faithfulness to the “teachings of the Apostles,” had been guaranteed through the succession of bishops from the time of the earliest apostles (*Against Heresies* 4.33.8). Thus, the rules of faith (*regulae fidei*) and creedal formulations, such as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 CE), were intended to provide summaries of the apostolic teaching that the faithful could understand and confess together.¹⁴

What is clear, however, is that in subsequent years, all bishops did not live up to their calling; the result was that at the time of the Reformation, nearly all Protestants broke with the Catholic Church over what they understood to be the episcopal office (the bishop), which had become unfaithful to the apostolic teaching. The result was that the Protestant community appealed to scripture alone, *sola scriptura*, as their all-sufficient source of authority, rather than to scripture and the teachings of the apostles as interpreted by the bishops. Pentecostals have joined this tradition, rejecting apostolic succession in favor of scripture as their written authority. But they have gone further than their Protestant sisters and brothers and allowed for the Lord’s continuing guidance within the church through other means, namely through the various word gifts that were given to the church during apostolic times: prophecy properly discerned, tongues with interpretation, words of wisdom, and words of knowledge.¹⁵ These words are not understood as adding to scripture, only as providing specific ad hoc guidance, which can never contradict the received canon of scripture.

Some Johannine Contributions to Ecclesiology

Just as Paul provided various metaphors for the church, so, too, does the apostle John. Many of his metaphors come from the teachings of Jesus found in John’s Gospel. Jesus noted that those who continue in his word are his disciples, the true descendants of Abraham (John 8:31), a theme developed later by the writer to the Hebrews (Heb. 11:1–12:1-2). Jesus likened himself to “the good shepherd” who “lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Concern for his

14. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, “Canon, *Regulae Fidei*, and Continuing Revelation in the Early Church,” in *Church, Word, and Spirit: Historical and Theological Essays in Honor of Geoffrey W. Bromiley*, ed. James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 65–91, esp. 73, 86–90.

15. Donald Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1972); Donald Gee, *The Ministry-Gifts of Christ* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1930); Donald Gee, *Spiritual Gifts in the Work of the Ministry Today* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1963).

sheep led Jesus, shortly before his ascension, to place the ongoing care of his sheep into the hands of the apostle Peter (John 21:15-17). Jesus also equated himself to a gate through which those who entered would be saved (John 10:9). He claimed, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). And Jesus used agricultural imagery, describing the Father as the vine grower, himself as the true vine, and those who abide in him as his disciples. Abiding in him is critical if the branches are to bear good fruit (John 15:1-11). While these metaphors were given to Jesus' disciples prior to Pentecost, they may be understood as applying not only to the twelve, but to all who follow him. Thus, these are valid metaphors for the church today.

In his first epistle, John reminds those who read his letter that their lives must reflect the fact that they have fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. At one level, since he is in the light, those who follow him must also walk in the light (1 Jn 1:6-7). The church, therefore, must be a body that lives in transparency, neither walking in darkness, nor living with unconfessed sin, nor lacking in love for one another. Indeed, John spoke repeatedly of love as a hallmark of those who follow Jesus. He quoted Jesus as commanding his followers to "love one another" (John 13:34-36). Those who love him, Jesus said, keep his commandments (John 14:15; 1 John 2:3). It is not surprising, then, that John should repeat this same expectation. The church is made up of those who love their sisters and brothers (1 Jn 2:9-11); indeed, it is the love of the Father that has made us his children (1 Jn 3:1-2a). The church is the people in whom God's love is perfected (1 Jn 4:12). That is why John exhorts us as little children, "Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action" (1 Jn 3:18). Unity requires visible demonstration of what we claim to believe: namely, that the church exists as one. Here, it may be understood as the one family of God.

John is the only writer to record Jesus' prayer for the church (John 17:1-26). Of particular note is Jesus' concern that all who follow him, including those who follow him through the words of his earliest disciples, should be one (John 17:20-21). Thus, according to John, the unity of the church was important to Jesus. This prayer of Jesus does not make sense if the type of unity possessed by the church is only spiritual unity. It is that, but it must also be something that is visible, for the result for which Jesus prayed was "so that the world may believe" that the Father had sent Jesus (John 17:21) out of love (John 17:23).

Some Petrine Contributions to Ecclesiology

The apostle Peter used other metaphors, such as a "living stone" (1 Pet. 2:4), a "chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people of God" (1 Pet.

2:9-10). The church is those who have been ransomed through “the precious blood of Christ,” enabling the church to place their faith and trust in God (1 Pet. 1:18-21). The church is called to be holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16) and to free itself from those things that are not consistent with holiness (1 Pet. 2:1-3). It is to have “unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind” (1 Pet. 3:8). Like Paul and John, Peter exhorts the church to “maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). The purpose of the church is to “proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). In a passage that is quite Pauline, each member of the church has received a gift (*charisma*) over which he or she is a steward. Thus, whoever speaks must faithfully proclaim the words of God, and whoever serves must acknowledge that they do so with the strength that God supplies (1 Pet. 4:11).

Conclusion

The church continues to find its strength, its power, its purpose, its proclamation, its fellowship, its table, its prayer today in “Pentecost.” Jesus Christ continues to speak to us directly, through the written word and by the Holy Spirit, especially through the exercise of various charisms. If we understand the nature of the church as it has been described in this chapter, we need to ask ourselves several questions. What will be important to our congregation as we gather together for worship? What should take priority in our community life together? What will the theological curriculum look like for a person training for full-time ministry among us? What does this mean for the way we relate to the world around us?

Pentecostal Ecclesiology*

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr

Introduction

Pentecostal ecclesiology is a challenging subject. The term “Pentecostal” is complicated by issues of definition as well as self-definition. It is likely that when we think of Pentecostalism, we have one set of churches in mind. The largest single global organization of the oldest Pentecostal groups, Classical Pentecostals, is the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF). Yet, many thousands of Pentecostal congregations and organizations around the world, classical or otherwise, do not belong to the PWF. Either they have chosen not to become members, or the PWF doctrinal commitments have excluded them. What is a Pentecostal? Who has the right to define the term “Pentecostal”? Who has the right to claim that they are Pentecostals? Answers to these questions are many, and they are not easily reconciled. Thus, a single meaning for the term “Pentecostal” and a single Pentecostal ecclesiology are highly elusive.

The PWF does not admit such groups as La Iglesia Metodista Pentecostal (Santiago, Chile) and La Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile (Curicó, Chile) because it maintains that speaking in tongues is the evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit, while these groups embrace a broader palette of evidences.¹ Early Classical Pentecostal leaders in the United States, who first applied the term “Pentecostal” to their churches, knew of these and other groups that took this broader position. While these groups embraced speaking in tongues as a charism, and many of

* This chapter was previously published in Kimlyn J. Bender and D. Stephen Long, eds., *T & T Clark Companion to Ecclesiology* (London: T & T Clark, 2020), 241–58. This chapter was written for a general audience. It is used here by permission.

1. C. Alvarez, B. Correa, M. Poblete, and P. Guell, *Historia de la Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile* (Santiago: Ediciones Relue, undated), 54.

their members spoke in tongues, some USA leaders dismissed them as merely precursors to the real “Latter Rain” (more on this below). These groups did not accept the narrow definition given by various North Americans, and they did not clearly identify themselves as Pentecostals until *after* the revival began at the Azusa Street Mission in 1906.² Yet, these groups fit the definition of Classical Pentecostal and understand themselves to be fully Pentecostal.³

Groups such as the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (Indianapolis, IN, USA), La Asamblea Apostolica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús (Rancho Cucamonga, CA, USA), La Iglesia Apostólica de la fé en Cristo Jesús (Mexico), and the United Pentecostal Church International (Weldon Spring, MO, USA) cannot join the PWF even though they self-identify as Classical Pentecostals. Fr Kilian McDonnell, OSB, was the first to define Classical Pentecostals as “those groups of Pentecostals which grew out of the Holiness Movement” at the beginning of the 20th century. These Pentecostals fit that definition, but the PWF embraces the historic trinitarian position, while these Pentecostal groups, known as Oneness Pentecostals, do not.

While the PWF is not a juridical body, still other Pentecostal groups, especially independent ones, refuse to join, fearing anything that appears to be too institutional in nature. The PWF Statement of Faith says only that “We believe in the church of Jesus Christ and in the unity of believers.”⁴ It gives no further definition to the “church of Jesus Christ,” no reference to institution, no expansion of this phrase. From this brief introduction, it is evident that there are different types of Pentecostals, although most member churches would view the church as that body whose members only God knows. The question that remains is whether there is any distinctive Pentecostal ecclesiology. Yet again, the answer remains elusive.

The Origins and History of Pentecostals

The Pentecostal Movement began with the Classical groups that emerged from the 19th-century Holiness Movement, but there are many variations even on that theme. Their different polities cover a wide spectrum: from episcopal, to presbyterian, to congregational, to radically independent free churches, each of

2. A.J. Tomlinson, *The Last Great Conflict* (Cleveland, TN: Water D. Rodgers, 1913), 211.

3. Kilian McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).

4. “Our Statement of Faith,” Pentecostal World Fellowship website, <https://www.pwfellowship.org/about-us>.

which is led by a single charismatic (in the Weberian sense) figure. The polity and, in some cases, the doctrine adopted by each group has typically reflected that of the prior denomination out of which most of their earliest members came.⁵

Those with Methodist or Wesleyan Holiness backgrounds, such as the Church of God (Cleveland, TN, USA), or the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, or even the Church of God in Christ, adopted variations on an episcopal polity. They also emphasize the doctrine of entire sanctification, carried over from their Holiness forebears. Others, like the Assemblies of God or the Congregação Cristã no Brasil, drew from a wider swath of denominations that included various Holiness churches, but they were more strongly influenced by Christian and Missionary Alliance, Presbyterian, and Waldensian churches. They ultimately adopted a type of presbyterian polity at the denominational level, and while they hold to high holiness standards, they do not accept the doctrine of entire sanctification.⁶ Those influenced most strongly by Baptist backgrounds, such as the Filadelfia churches throughout Scandinavia and their mission churches throughout the world, took a congregational position.⁷ Still other churches, especially some megachurches, answer only to their apostolic leader. These differences demonstrate that there are various types of Pentecostals, and these variants point to divergent understandings of ecclesiology.

Another difficulty resides in the issue of Pentecostal origins. When and where did this movement actually begin? North Americans have dominated the discussion to date, claiming to be the original centre of this global movement. Yet, after more than a century, Pentecostal scholars from around the world are

5. Peter Althouse, "Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: Participation in the Missional Life of the Triune God," in *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader*, 8, ed. Chris Green (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 227.

6. Mario Hoover, *Origins and Structural Development of the Assemblies of God* (Mario G. Hoover, 1970).

7. Bertil Carlsson, *Organizations and Decision Procedures within the Swedish Pentecostal Movements* (Privately published, 1974); Torbjörn Aronson, "Spirit and Church in the Ecclesiology of Lewi Pethrus," *PentecoStudies: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Research on the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* 11 (2012), 192–211.

still engaged in debates on this point.⁸ If we look at the first Pentecost described in Acts 2 as the origin of the church, one can argue that the entire church is Pentecostal or Charismatic.⁹ Most scholars acknowledge that Pentecost was the birthday of the church, and as such, the entire church has the right to declare itself Pentecostal. Yet, a more discreet movement of the Holy Spirit within the church of the 20th and 21st centuries describes itself more narrowly as “Pentecostal,” “Pentecostal/Charismatic,” or “Charismatic,” as something discreet from, yet part of, the whole church.

Beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, those who led the movement viewed the Pentecost event recorded in Acts 2 as applying uniquely to them. They admitted that the Holy Spirit indwells all who follow Christ (Rom. 8:9), but when they spoke in tongues, they claimed that they had experienced the Holy Spirit in a way “as definite and observable as ... an attack of influenza”¹⁰ that was not shared by the rest of the church. The events recorded in Acts 2 functioned as a mirror. They believed that Peter’s appeal to Joel 2:28-29, when he preached his first Christian sermon (Acts 2:14-36), was critical for *them*.

When Peter declared, “This is that,” interpreting the events of Acts 2 as a fulfillment of the promise in Joel 2, they understood that like the first group of Christians gathered in Jerusalem, the Spirit now fell upon them in a manifestation

8. D. Irvin, “Pentecostal Historiography and Global Christianity: Rethinking the Question of Origins,” in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 27 (2005), 35–50; Cornelis van der Laan, “What Good Can Come from Los Angeles? Changing Perceptions of the North American Pentecostal Origins in Early Western European Pentecostal Periodicals,” in *The Azusa Street Revival and Its Legacy*, eds. Harold D. Hunter and Cecil M. Robeck, Jr (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 141–59; Adam Stewart, “From Monogenesis to Polygenesis in Pentecostal Origins: A Survey of the Evidence from the Azusa Street, Hebden, and Mukti Missions,” *PentecoStudies* 13 (2014), 154–70; Cecil M. Robeck, “The Origins of Modern Pentecostalism: Some Historiographical Issues,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr and Amos Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 13–30; Juan Sepulveda, “The Power of the Spirit and the Indigenization of the Church: A Latin American Perspective,” in *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Latin America and Latino Communities*, eds. Nestor Medina and Sammy Alfaro (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 17–33.

9. Arnold Bittlinger, *The Church Is Charismatic: The World Council of Churches and the Charismatic Renewal* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1981).

10. B.F. Streeter, *The Primitive Church: Studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan, 1929), 69.

of power that set them apart from the rest of the church.¹¹ They argued that the Holy Spirit now encountered them in a way that went beyond the experience of those Christians in whose ranks they had come to faith. Not only did they emphasize their spiritual encounter with the Holy Spirit as being the same “baptism in the Holy Spirit” that early Christian believers experienced, they emphasized the restoration of the full range of charisms or gifts listed in scripture (1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; 13:1-3; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11-13), as well as actions described as signs, wonders, and exorcism in mission and ministry.¹²

They quickly adopted another marker that they believed made them unique among all other Christians. It included a reading of the “early rain” and “latter rain” mentioned in Joel 2:23 as the hermeneutical key by which to understand the history of the church. If the apostles experienced the “early rain” of the Spirit, two millennia later, they were experiencing the “latter rain.” In Joel’s prophecy, they read about the losses that Judah endured for its unfaithfulness to Yahweh (Joel 1:4), and they saw the historic church. They also noted the promise of renewal (Joel 2:25-27) conditioned upon Judah’s repentance, and they saw themselves.¹³

From their perspective, the church had slowly lost her power through apathy, or apostasy, or compromise. Many believed that God began the church’s restoration when Martin Luther emphasized the doctrine of justification. It continued with John Wesley’s emphasis on sanctification. Others would follow with their contributions. Thus, the theme of “loss and restoration” would play out repeatedly in many subsequent self-descriptions of Pentecostals.¹⁴ If the first Christian Pentecost described in Acts 2 was the *beginning* of the “last days,” as Joel 2:28 seemed to suggest and Peter interpreted it to his audience (Acts 2:17), then in light of a “lost and restored” hermeneutic, they must be living at the *end* of the “last days.” Thus, they adopted a “Restorationist” understanding of church

11. Aimee Semple McPherson, *This Is That: Personal Experiences, Sermons and Writings* (Los Angeles: The Bridal Call Publishing House, 1919); Carl Brumback, *What Meaneth This? A Pentecostal Answer to a Pentecostal Question* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1942); M. Stibbs, “This Is That: Some Thoughts Concerning Charismatic Hermeneutics,” *Anvil: An Anglican Evangelical Journal for Theology and Mission* 15 (1998), 181–93.

12. Peter Hocken, “The Significance and Potential of Pentecostalism,” in *New Heavens? New Earth? An Encounter with Pentecostalism*, eds. Simon Tugwell, George Every, John Orme Mills, and Peter Hocken (London: Longman & Todd, 1976), 22.

13. T.B. Barrett, *In the Days of the Latter Rain* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co, 1909); D. Wesley Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power* (Chicago: Evangel Publishing House, 1910).

14. McPherson, *This Is That*, 380–406.

history with strong eschatological expectations.¹⁵

Most Pentecostals, however, were ordinary lay people who merely claimed that they had encountered God's Spirit in a way that they had never encountered him before. This encounter with the Holy Spirit had transformed and empowered them. They wanted to share their experience with others with whom they traditionally worshipped. They believed that what had happened to them in this divine encounter that they called baptism in the Holy Spirit was also available to their peers. They wanted to encourage their families, friends, and fellow church members to seek God with the expectation that they, too, could enjoy a similar life-changing encounter with the Holy Spirit, and if they sought and received that experience, it would bring revival and renewal to the church. They also wanted to worship openly in such a way that all the charisms of the Holy Spirit could be manifested among them. Thus, their worship would typically not be programmed in advance but left to the spontaneity of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

Sometimes their testimony was accepted. As a result, their family or friends, or even the majority of a congregation, joined them in seeking and receiving the encounter that proved to be as transformative to them as it had been to those who told them about it.¹⁷ In many cases, however, the pastors and churches refused their testimony, labelling it "a disgusting amalgamation of African *voudou* superstition and Caucasian insanity"¹⁸ or "dangerous."¹⁹ Admittedly, some of the earliest Pentecostals brought rejection upon themselves from those they had hoped to convince that what had been promised by the prophet Joel and proclaimed by the apostle Peter was now accessible to them (Acts 2:39).²⁰ All too often, they made overly zealous appeals, or they made sharp judgments towards those who differed with them.²¹

15. W.F. Carothers, *Church Government* (Houston: J.V. Dealy Co, 1909), 62; W.T. Gaston, "The Latter Rain," *The Pentecostal Evangel* (Sept. 2, 1922), 6; Edith Blumhofer, "Restoration as Revival: Early American Pentecostalism," in *Modern Christian Revivals*, eds. E. Blumhofer and Randall Balmer (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 145–60.

16. Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

17. W.H. McGowan, *Another "Echo from Azusa"* (Covina: Privately published, 1956), 6; R. Davis, *The Move of God: The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit from Azusa Street to Now* (Tulsa: Albury Press, 1983), 24.

18. "New Religions Come, Then Go," *Los Angeles Herald* (24 Sept. 1906), 7.

19. "Young Girl Given Gift of Tongues," *Los Angeles Express* (20 July 1906), 1.

20. Josephine M. Washburn, *History and Reminiscences of the Holiness Church Work in Southern California and Arizona* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985 [South Pasadena: Record Press, 1912]), 383–85.

21. "Tongue Priestess Denounces Clergy," *The Cleveland Leader* (10 Jan. 1907), 5.

In a real sense, it was the rejection of these early Pentecostal believers as much as it was the transformation of a few small Holiness groups into Pentecostal ones that led to the formation of new and discrete Pentecostal congregations, denominations, and, ultimately, to a definable movement. Yet, it was not the intention of these earliest Pentecostals to do so. Their intention was only “to turn people again to the apostolic faith,” what they read about in the New Testament, bringing revival and renewal to existing churches.²² In some cases, such as the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), that was exactly what happened.

Often, the church where they held their membership invited them to leave, or they soon withdrew because they felt no longer welcome.²³ Most Holiness churches viewed them as heretical.²⁴ Pietists and Fundamentalists called them fanatical,²⁵ with demonic practices.²⁶ Others viewed them as demented.²⁷ As a result, Pentecostal churches came into existence more as an accident of history than as a planned event or movement. They found one another through shared personal testimonies and shared publications. While many of them believed that the institutionalization of Christianity and its historic alignment with the State had contributed to the apostasy of the church, the rise of higher criticism and charges of unbelief in contemporary Protestant churches also led Pentecostals to organize themselves into newer bodies that rejected these things. Even so, they organized in fear and trembling, often informally, since most of them considered official designations or ordination to be reasonably unimportant. As Edith Blumhofer has noted, “Ordination was not so much an acknowledging of authority within a specific group as fervent prayer for effectiveness in witness.”²⁸

22. “Divine Healer,” *Houston Daily Post* (6 July 1905), 4.

23. Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 169.

24. G.W. Griffith, “A Grievous Error,” *The Free Methodist* [Chicago] (6 Nov. 1906), 2 (706); “Delusions of the Last Days,” *The Free Methodist* [Chicago] (21 May 1907), 8 (328); August Youngren, “The Tongues Heresy,” *The Free Methodist* [Chicago] (16 June 1908), 11 (379); “The Tongues Heresy,” *The Burning Bush* 7:30 (23 July 1908), 12–13; “Third Work of Grace a Confusion of the Devil,” *The Gospel Trumpet* (3 Dec. 1908), 3–4 (755–56); “The Tongue Heresy,” *Pillar of Fire* 7:51 (19 Dec. 1906), 6, 7, 11.

25. “Report of the Tenth Annual Convention of the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association, Chicago, May 13–20, Resolutions and Reports” (June 1928), *The Christian Fundamentalist* 1(12), 6.

26. Dieter Lange, *Eine Bewegung bricht sich Bahn: Die deutschen Gemeineschaften im ausgehenden 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert und ihre Stellung zu Kirche, Theologie und Pfingstbewegung* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag/Dillenburg: Gnadauer Verlag, 1979), 288.

27. “In Grip of the Holy Rollers,” *Los Angeles Daily Times* (14 August 1907), 2.2.

28. Edith Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), I:357.

Still, they hoped to renew the church through their “Pentecostal message” or to manifest the “true” nature of the church in their Pentecostal way.²⁹

Ordination, Ministry, and Liturgy

While Pentecostals frequently appeal to the prophecy in Joel 2 and Acts 2 that tells of the Spirit being poured out on women as well as men, their record on women in ministry is, at best, uneven. Those with a Holiness background, such as the Church of God or the Church of God in Christ,³⁰ do not ordain women to senior pastor positions. On the other hand, the Assemblies of God offers ordination to women on an equal footing with men. While women have made substantial gains in the Assemblies in recent years, especially at top leadership levels, such as its executive leadership team and the Executive Presbytery, the number of women in the General Presbytery and in senior pastoral positions is still quite low, and the number of single women missionaries has lost considerable ground.³¹

It should come as no surprise that formal training for ministry often takes a back seat to personal experience. One can argue that ministers within Classical Pentecostal churches are primarily lay men and lay women who often lack formal or accredited theological training. What is important is that they have an experience—salvation followed by baptism in the Spirit, a “blameless Christian life,” and evidence of a call to ministry. As the Assemblies of God has stated in its bylaws, “Any level of formal academic achievement (diploma or degree) shall not be a requirement for credentials....”³² That said, through the years, it has added various correspondence courses on specific doctrines, a certain level of expertise obtained through self-study and demonstrated to decision-makers, or a diploma from some theological institution ranging from a non-accredited Bible institute to a fully accredited theological seminary as criteria for examination.

29. The groups that most embodied this position were those founded by A.J. Tomlinson: Church of God (Cleveland, TN) and Church of God of Prophecy.

30. Anthea D. Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

31. Barbara Cavaness and Deborah Gill, *God’s Women: Then and Now* (Springfield, MO: Grace & Truth, 2004); Estrela Alexander and Amos Yong, *Philip’s Daughters: Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Leadership* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2009).

32. *Constitution and Bylaws of the General Council of the Assemblies of God Updated as of the 59th General Council, Orlando, Florida, August 3-6, 2021* (Springfield, MO: Office of the General Secretary, 2021), Article VII: Ministry, Section 2 h, “Basic Education Requirements,” 46.

While some, even without high school, have proven to be effective ministers, such limited requirements sometimes lead to limitations that appear in other forms. They include such things as personal insecurity when confronted by someone with better qualifications, suspicion of those who have a formal theological education, an unwillingness to be open to other church traditions due to ignorance and fear, and the inability to understand or cross various cultural boundaries due to a lack of tools that would enable them to do so. Many are proud of their pastoral success accomplished without formal theological education.

If Pentecostals follow any of the 16th-century reformers when it comes to liturgical understanding, it would probably be Ulrich Zwingli, though it is doubtful that the majority of Pentecostals know who he was. Pentecostals typically lack a formal liturgy, though they do have predictable liturgical patterns. They generally view baptism and the Lord's Supper in symbolic terms, with no developed theology that explains their meaning. Most Pentecostals consider these practices to be ordinances, typically rejecting sacramental language as bordering on magic. Some add the washing of feet to the list of ordinances, though this is common mostly in the Holiness Pentecostal stream.³³ It may be because of their Methodist and Holiness background that in recent years, several Church of God theologians have been exploring notions of sacrament and sacramentality, especially regarding baptism and the Lord's supper,³⁴ but also including healing.³⁵

Pentecostal Identity and Charismatic Renewal

There is little question that Classical Pentecostals stand at the beginning of a broad and energetic Pentecostal movement. Yet, the question remains: Are they the only group that has rights to the self-designation "Pentecostal"? At one level, their narrow claim seems to have merit, just as there is merit to the broader claim that the entire church is Pentecostal. Classical Pentecostals came some

33. John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*, in JSNT Supplement, Ser. 61 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); Lisa Stephenson, "Getting Our Feet Wet: The Politics of Footwashing," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 23 (2014), 154–70.

34. Daniel Tomberlin, *Pentecostal Sacraments: Encountering God at the Altar* (Cleveland, TN: Cherohala Press, 2019); Chris E.W. Green, *Towards a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper: Foretasting the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012).

35. Kim Alexander, "The Pentecostal Church: A Sacramental Healing Community," *Ecumenical Trends* 4 (2012), 1–3, 14.

400 years after the Protestant Reformation, but they existed for over 50 years before most others began to use the term “Pentecostal” as a self-designation. Today, Classical Pentecostals constitute only a small part of a much larger movement, while many newer groups have identified themselves as Pentecostals, too, making the task of definition much more difficult. Those who keep track of these older and newer groups describe them as constituting a single movement with few nuances.³⁶

When charismatic renewal began to enter mainstream Protestant churches in the 1950s, publications often focused on their Pentecostal features.³⁷ Their subsequent self-designation as Neo-Pentecostals or New Pentecostals continued for at least three decades, though along the way they frequently adopted the slightly broader designation of “Charismatic.”³⁸ They believed that this latter designation provided them with a bit of distance from what they deemed as the narrower dogmatic stance of some Classical Pentecostals. Ultimately, they did not keep the self-designation “Pentecostal” for several reasons. One was that they often came from a higher social class than did most Classical Pentecostals.³⁹ A second was that they were typically more open to ecumenism than Classical Pentecostals were.⁴⁰ Their primary concern, however, was that most Classical Pentecostals insisted on speaking in tongues as *the* evidence of baptism in the Spirit, while they were open to other evidences as well, thereby unknowingly adopting the position of certain early Classical Pentecostal churches in Latin America and India. At the same time, many Pentecostal churches refer to themselves as Charismatic to make it clear that they are open to all the biblical

36. Todd M. Johnson, Gina A. Zurlo, Albert W. Hickman, and Peter F. Crossing, “Christianity 2018,” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 42 (2018), 24.

37. John Gunstone, *Pentecostal Anglicans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982); E.T. Quanabush, *The Changing of the Guard: Neo-Pentecostalism* (Burbank: Vision Enterprises, 1971); C. Bradfield, *Neo-Pentecostalism: A Sociological Assessment* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979); W. Wietake and J. Hustad, *Towards a Mutual Understanding of Neo-Pentecostalism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973).

38. John Stevens Kerr, *The Fire Flares Anew: A Look at the New Pentecostalism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); Cephas Nash Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana*, Missiological Research in the Netherlands: 32 (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2002).

39. Bradfield, *Neo-Pentecostalism*, 1; Joseph H. Fichter, *The Catholic Cult of the Paraclete* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 72–74.

40. Bradfield, *Neo-Pentecostalism*, 64; Peter Hocken, “The Significance and Potential of Pentecostalism,” in *New Heavens? New Earth? An Encounter with Pentecostalism*, eds. Simon Tugwell, George Every, John Orme Mills, and Peter Hocken (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), 22.

charisms.

Many Pentecostal members of historic Protestant and Anglican churches claimed they had received their baptism in the Spirit at the time of their conversion-initiation but with no charismatic manifestation accompanying it.⁴¹ Others claimed that it came subsequent to their salvation; they accepted speaking in tongues or other manifestations as evidence of their baptism in the Spirit (Acts 2:4), while still others enjoyed this fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit but understood their speaking in tongues solely in terms of a charism or gift rather than an evidence (1 Cor. 12:8-10). These New Pentecostals joined the older Classical Pentecostals in recognizing both this fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit (often describing it as baptism in the Spirit or the fullness of the Spirit) and also the same charisms that now appeared among them. They differed only on the full meaning of speaking in tongues.⁴²

The designation “Charismatic” did not deny their Pentecostal character, but it allowed Charismatics to encounter the Holy Spirit in a new Pentecostal way yet remain where they were, integrating and explaining their encounter in ways that were consistent with the existing theological positions of their respective churches.⁴³ Second, it embraced the broader spectrum of charisms that Classical Pentecostals embraced. These two points remain distinguishing characteristics that identify them as Pentecostals.

During the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), the bishops of the Catholic Church declared,

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the People, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts according as he wills (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11), he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church, as it is written, “the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit.” (1 Cor. 12:7). Whether these charisms be very remarkable or some simple and widely diffused, they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation since they are fitting and useful for the

41. James D.G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970).

42. Arnold Bittinger, *Gifts and Graces: A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

43. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 240.

needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be rashly desired, nor is it from them that the fruits of apostolic labors are to be presumptuously expected. Those who have charge over the Church should judge the genuineness and proper use of these gifts, through their office not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good (cf. 1 Thess. 5:12 and 19-21). (*Lumen gentium* 2:12)

Following the council, Catholics also began to embrace the same experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit to which Classical Pentecostals had borne witness for over half a century. They embraced the self-designations “Catholic Pentecostals” or “Pentecostal Catholics.”⁴⁴ That may be because of the impact of David Wilkerson’s *The Cross and the Switchblade*, which told of Wilkerson’s Pentecostal ministry among New York City’s gangs, and John Sherrill’s subsequent work, *They Speak in Other Tongues*, the first in-depth treatment of Pentecostalism in the United States. The first Catholics, mostly university students, who read these books asked God to baptize them in the Spirit.⁴⁵ When they prayed, they began to speak in other tongues just like their Pentecostal forebears.

Cardinal Suenens, who had actively provided leadership in the Second Vatican Council, and the Catholic sociologist Margaret Poloma of the University of Akron both maintained that the church was undergoing a *new* Pentecost.⁴⁶ Pentecostal Catholics even claimed that Mary was the quintessential Pentecostal.⁴⁷ Catholic teaching on charisms strongly paralleled Classical Pentecostal teaching

44. Kevin Ranaghan and Dorothy Ranaghan, *Catholic Pentecostals* (Paramus: Paulist Press/Deus Books, 1969); Edward D. O’Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1971); Donald Gelpi, *Pentecostalism: A Theological Viewpoint* (New York: Paulist Press, 1971); Robert Heyer, ed., *Pentecostal Catholics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1974); J. Massyngberde Ford, *Which Way for Catholic Pentecostals?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Rene Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977).

45. David Wilkerson with John Sherrill and Elizabeth Sherrill, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (New York: Bernard Gels Association/Random House, 1963); John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

46. Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* (New York: Seabury, 1964); Margaret M. Poloma, *The Charismatic Movement: Is There a New Pentecost?* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Company and Twayne Publishers, 1982).

47. L. Pfaller and L. Alberts, *Mary Is Pentecostal* (Pecos: Dove, 1973); Rene Laurentin, “Mary: Model of the Charismatic as Seen in Acts 1–2, Lk. 1–2, and John,” in Vincent P. Branick, ed., *Mary, the Spirit and the Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 28–43.

on the subject.⁴⁸ Like Protestants, however, they interpreted their experience of baptism in the Spirit in Catholic terms, as residing in their “Christian initiation and ... its reawakening in Christian experience.”⁴⁹ To do so, Cardinal Suenens, whom Pope Paul VI asked to oversee the renewal, asserted that Catholic theologians “had to disassociate it [baptism in the Spirit] from a vocabulary and theology which had their origins in classical Pentecostalism.”⁵⁰ This did not result in Catholics no longer being Pentecostal but, more pointedly, helped them to become more theologically consistent Pentecostal Catholics.

For over a decade, both bishops and theologians continued to wrestle with how best to name this renewal within the Catholic Church. Like their Protestant counterparts, they moved away from the designations “Catholic Pentecostals” and “Neo-Pentecostals”⁵¹ in an effort to distinguish the Pentecostal movement in the Catholic Church from that of the narrower Classical Pentecostals. Catholic teaching re-explained baptism in the Spirit theologically in light of baptismal and confirmation teaching and in keeping with historic Catholic thought.⁵² The term “Charismatic” broadened the Pentecostal teaching reflected in the Catholic commitment to the grace of the Holy Spirit being shared by the whole church, which included the recognition of all the charisms given to the church by the Holy Spirit.⁵³ The Doctrinal Commission of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services points to the fact that the roots of baptism in the Holy Spirit that they celebrate rests upon the foundation laid by early Classical

48. Francis Martin, ed., *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Reflections on a Contemporary Grace in the Light of the Catholic Tradition* (Petersham: St. Bede’s Publications, 1998); “Do Not Quench the Spirit’: Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church: Report of the Sixth Phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (2011–2015),” *Information Service* N. 147 (2016/1), 47–62.

49. Gelpi, *Pentecostalism*; Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier Books, 1991), 89, 97; Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Fanning the Flame: What Does Baptism in the Holy Spirit Have to Do with Christian Initiation?* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 9; Simon Chan, “Evidential Glossolalia and the Doctrine of Subsequence,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2 (1991), 195–211.

50. Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* 223.

51. Bradfield, *Neo-Pentecostalism*.

52. “*Theological and Pastoral Orientations on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*” *Prepared at Malines, Belgium, May 21–26, 1974* (Notre Dame: Word of Life, 1974).

53. Francis A. Sullivan, *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal: A Biblical and Theological Study* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1982), 50–51.

Pentecostals, especially of William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Mission.⁵⁴

The breadth of what I have so far described as Pentecostal did not end with Classical Pentecostals, nor would it end with the inclusion of mainline Protestants or even with Roman Catholics. Charismatic renewal touched Orthodox Christians as well, though it was not as widely accepted there.⁵⁵ Much more open to the actions of the Holy Spirit were Evangelicals who had not been touched by any of the earlier movements. C. Peter Wagner would designate them as “Third Wave” churches,⁵⁶ building upon the imagery of “First Wave” churches being Classical Pentecostals and the “Second Wave” being Charismatics. As he put it, “I see the Third Wave as distinct from, but at the same time very similar to the first and second waves . . . The major variation comes in the understanding of the meaning of baptism in the Holy Spirit and the role of tongues in authenticating this.”⁵⁷

While many “Third Wave” churches would remain independent, John Wimber successfully built a network of such churches into the Vineyard Christian Fellowship.⁵⁸ Scholars sometimes describe the Vineyard as a Pentecostal church.⁵⁹ The Vineyard states its understanding of baptism in the Holy Spirit and the validity of the charisms in the following terms:

We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Jesus Christ and that He is our abiding Helper, Teacher, and Guide. We believe in *the filling or the empowering of the Holy Spirit, often a conscious experience,*

54. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006); “International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services Doctrinal Commission,” in *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Vatican City: International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services, 2012), 9.

55. Kallistos Ware, “Orthodoxy and the Charismatic Movement,” *Eastern Churches Review* 4 (1973), 182–86; Athanasius Emmert, “Charismatic Developments in the Eastern Orthodox Church,” in *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism*, ed. Russell P. Spittler (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976), 28–42; Eusebius A. Stephanou, *Charismatic Renewal in the Orthodox Church* (Fort Wayne: The Logos Ministry for Orthodox Renewal, 1976).

56. C. Peter Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1988).

57. Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 18.

58. T. Higgins, “Kenn Gullicksen, John Wimber, and the Founding of the Vineyard Movement,” *Pneuma* 34 (2012), 208–28; B. Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle: A History of the Vineyard* (Anaheim: Vineyard, 1999); Donald E. Miller, “Routinizing Charisma: The Vineyard Christian Fellowship in the Post-Wimber Era,” *Pneuma* 26 (2003), 216–39.

59. Peter G.A. Versteeg, *The Ethnography of a Dutch Pentecostal Church: Vineyard Utrecht and the International Charismatic Movement* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010).

for ministry today. We believe in the present ministry of the Spirit and in *the exercise of all of the biblical gifts of the Spirit.* We practice the laying on of hands for the empowering of the Spirit, for healing, and for recognition and empowering of those whom God has ordained to lead and serve the Church.⁶⁰

While the manifestation of speaking in tongues is not explicitly mentioned, tongues are often present even though baptism in the Spirit is explained as “the filling or empowering” of the Holy Spirit, as “a conscious experience, for ministry today.” The statement supports the presence and use of “all the biblical gifts of the Spirit,” which includes speaking in tongues. Thus, even without explicitly claiming its Pentecostal character, it is clear that by definition, the Vineyard is Pentecostal. All the Vineyard has done is to distance itself from what it considers to be the baggage of the older Classical Pentecostal groups: the insistence that baptism in the Spirit is authenticated or evidenced solely by the ability to speak in tongues. In the case of the “Third Wave,” it is the insistence that they are *Evangelicals* who are experiencing the Holy Spirit in power that separates them from the “Second Wave” historic Protestant or Catholic Pentecostals. Yet, like its predecessors, the Vineyard carries the primary markers that all Pentecostals carry.

As “Third Wave” churches moved forward, Wagner was again responsible for naming another group of churches. He called them “New Apostolic” churches. This group of churches and pastors preach baptism in the Spirit and manifest all the charisms found in earlier Pentecostal groups. It has reached back into Classical Pentecostalism and adopted the Restorationist motif, promising even the restoration of the fivefold ministry mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-13, including apostles and prophets.⁶¹ While most Classical Pentecostal groups reject the restoration of apostolic and prophetic offices, those groups impacted by a resurgent “Latter Rain” movement that dates from the late 1940s have championed this view.⁶² This way of being Pentecostal has found considerable traction in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and the Netherlands among

60. “The Ministry of the Holy Spirit,” in *Core Values and Beliefs* (Vineyard Resources, 2016), 19, <https://d1h8uvf6sd4tvp.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/20160527184946/Vineyard-Core-Values-Beliefs-RGB.pdf>. Italics mine.

61. C. Peter Wagner, *The New Apostolic Churches* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1998).

62. Richard Riss, “The Latter Rain Movement of 1948,” *Pneuma* 4 (1982), 32–45; D. William Faupel, “The New Order of the Latter Rain: Restoration or Renewal?” in *Winds from the North: Canadian Contributions to the Pentecostal Movement*, eds. Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 239–63.

churches that belong to the World Assemblies of God Fellowship, though it has brought little that is new to the ecclesiological table.⁶³

All language continues to change. Sociologists and historians now employ the term “Neo-Pentecostal” to differentiate the many Pentecostal churches that emphasize prosperity, found especially throughout the global South. Teaching on baptism in the Holy Spirit as well as the charisms in Neo-Pentecostal churches remain classically Pentecostal.⁶⁴ Neo-Pentecostalism include churches such as La Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus in Brazil;⁶⁵ “Brother Mike” Velarde’s “El Shaddai” movement in the Philippines;⁶⁶ that of the late Apostle Benson Idahosa’s Church of God Mission International⁶⁷ as well as David Oyedepo’s Living Faith Church Worldwide, both of Nigeria; and Ray McCauley’s Rhema Bible Church in South Africa. They differ doctrinally from their predecessors, largely in their unique interpretations of scripture passages that address the role of faith, trust in the promises of God, and various economic and stewardship questions. Many of these churches remain independent of one another, or they have developed their own networks of churches with the same or similar beliefs. Authoritarian figures, some calling themselves apostles, lead them. What is important about this group of churches is that their theology is classically Pentecostal, though they have added a variation on the interplay between God’s provisions and the faith of the believer. Some Pentecostal churches have criticized prosperity theology as being

63. William K. Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain: New Ways of Being Church* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2007); R. Knowles, *Transforming Pentecostalism: The Changing Face of New Zealand Pentecostalism 1920–2010* (Lexington: EMeth Press, 2014); Shane Clifton, *Pentecostal Churches in Transition: Analyzing the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 169–74.

64. Allan Anderson, “Globalization and Independent Pentecostals in Africa from a South African Perspective,” in *Who Is Afraid of the Holy Ghost? Pentecostalism and Globalization in Africa and Beyond*, ed. Afe. Adogame (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2011), 134.

65. Bispo Macedo, *Doutrinas da Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (Rio de Janeiro: Universal, 1998), I:52–54.

66. Katherine L. Wiegele, *Investing in Miracles: El Shaddai and the Transformation of Popular Catholicism in the Philippines* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005); K. Wiegele, “The Prosperity Gospel among Filipino Catholic Charismatics,” in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity: The Socio-Economics of the Global Charismatic Movement*, eds. Katy Attanasi and Amos Yong (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 171–88.

67. The Statement of Faith appears at <https://www.cgmglobal.org/Home/About/index.html>. Point 8 reads: “We believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues and in the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts) and other gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12 and Romans 12.”

less about faith than about presumption,⁶⁸ but their core theology remains strongly Pentecostal.

Finally, there are the many churches that have developed as indigenous, independent works, especially in Africa. The largest organization that represents these churches is the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), with its offices in Nairobi, Kenya. Sociologists often distinguish several types of African Instituted Churches (AICs), such as Ethiopian, Zionist, Apostolic/Pentecostal, and Messianic or Judaistic. Allan Anderson, who has spent much of his life studying African Christianity and Pentecostalism, notes that while not all “Spirit,” “Zionist,” or “Apostolic” churches call themselves Pentecostal, their history and theology mark them clearly as part of the historic Pentecostal family of churches.⁶⁹ The Zion Christian Church (Zimbabwe), Christ Apostolic Church (Nigeria), Church of the Twelve Apostles (Ghana), and African Church of the Holy Spirit (Kenya) are but four of hundreds of Pentecostal AICs.

Importantly, while many of these churches self-identify as Pentecostal churches, and their emphasis upon such Pentecostal markers as baptism in the Holy Spirit, the manifestation of biblical charisms, signs and wonders, and exorcism underscore this claim, many older Pentecostal churches, especially in Africa, refuse to recognize them as Pentecostal or, in some cases, even as Christian. Older Pentecostal groups generally link their rejection of the AICs to their alleged lack of discernment of spirits and to various ritual practices that they view as involving unacceptable forms of syncretism. Admittedly, some AICs do not fit traditional standards of Christian orthodoxy, but many do, and it is important to recognize that many AICs also fit the historic theological patterns that mark them as Pentecostal.⁷⁰

68. Gordon D. Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels* (Costa Mesa: The Word for Today, 1979); Charles Farah, “A Critical Analysis: The ‘Roots and Fruits’ of Faith-Formula Theology,” *Pneuma* 3 (1981), 3–21; J.N. Horn, *From Rags to Riches: An Analysis of the Faith Movement and Its Relation to the Classical Pentecostal Movement* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989); Paulo Romeiro, *SuperCrentes: O Evangelho Segundo Kenneth Hagin, Valnice Milhomens e os Profetas da Prosperidade* (São Paulo: Editora Mundo Cristão, 1993).

69. Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 112–16.

70. Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 68–83.

Final Reflections

So, is there such a thing as a Pentecostal ecclesiology, and if so, what does it look like? What this survey should have made evident is the enormous varieties of Pentecostalism. As a result, it should be equally apparent that there is not a single Pentecostal ecclesiology but rather a range of ecclesiological models found in these Pentecostals. At the beginning of the modern Pentecostal Movement, there were no distinct Pentecostal theologies to guide them, only the Bible and their experience together, and Pentecostals have always held a high view of scripture. As a result, they looked to the Bible for patterns of organization, worship, ministry, life, and mission, and in experimental gatherings, they tried to stick closely to scripture. They drew especially from the book of Acts and from 1 Corinthians as providing norms. Yet, Pentecostals are also notoriously pragmatic, so the way they organized themselves varied from place to place. The earliest models were generally makeovers of existing ecclesiologies. Since then, nearly every decade seems to have brought into being new types of Pentecostal churches with their own innovations.

A few Pentecostals have tried to locate and articulate a Pentecostal ecclesiology, but none has so far succeeded. The work of Melvin Hodges, a long-term missionary of the Assemblies of God, was the first such attempt.⁷¹ While Pentecostals are often confused with Evangelicals, these two groups are not the same. Both groups have a strong belief in the authority of scripture. They acknowledge the reality of sin, the virgin birth, the atonement available only through the work of Jesus Christ, and justification by faith. They believe in the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment. They contend that the people of God who make up the church are the means or instruments through whom the lost hear the message of the gospel. The most significant difference, however, lies in their understandings of pneumatology.

Hodges recognized that there already existed a number of “good treatments” of ecclesiology, yet from his perspective, something was missing that separated Pentecostals from Evangelicals. It was the experience of the Holy Spirit in the power of Pentecost, the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.⁷² In the end, the missionary concerns of Hodges motivated him more than did his ecclesiology. He tried to show that mission was the primary task of the church, since Jesus commanded his church to “Go and make

71. Melvin Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1977).

72. Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission*, 30.

disciples.” Hodges argued that it received power to go only when the people of God had received the Pentecostal baptism in the Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:4). Russell Spittler has noted similarly that “Pentecostals have always been better at evangelism than at writing theology ... known more for foreign missions than for writing theological books.”⁷³ This surely holds implications for whether or to what extent Pentecostals are even cognizant of a Pentecostal ecclesiology.

A decade ago, Chris Thomas convened a consultation on Pentecostal ecclesiology and published an edited volume of the papers. Subsequently, Chris Green, who, like Thomas, serves on the faculty of the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) seminary, gathered various other articles and edited a volume on the same topic.⁷⁴ These collections are worthy of further study, yet they fail to provide a comprehensive, cohesive, or compelling Pentecostal ecclesiology. The fact that these are edited volumes, rather than single-author volumes, suggests that no single, coherent Pentecostal ecclesiology currently exists.

Peter Althouse, a theologian from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, has observed, “Pentecostal churches eclectically borrow from other theological traditions and apply their practices in pragmatic and technical ways, but with little understanding of their philosophical and theological implications.”⁷⁵ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, a Finnish Pentecostal theologian well known for his comparative theological studies, has concluded that early “Pentecostals did not ... attempt to develop a distinctive ecclesiology ... They were ‘doers’ rather than ‘thinkers’ and ... they went on living and experimenting the New Testament type of enthusiastic church life.”⁷⁶ Keith Warrington, a New Testament theologian of the Elim Pentecostal Church in England and Ireland, has firmly concluded, “Pentecostals do not own a distinctively Pentecostal theology of the church.”⁷⁷

73. Russell P. Spittler, “The Theological Opportunity Lying before the Pentecostal Movement,” in *Aspects of Pentecostal–Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan (Plainfield: Logos International, 1975), 243.

74. Christopher Thomas, ed., *Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010; Chris Green, ed., *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2016).

75. Peter Althouse, “Ascension – Pentecost – Eschaton: A Theological Framework for Pentecostal Ecclesiology,” in *Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel*, ed. John Christopher Thomas (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 227.

76. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 68–72; “Church as Charismatic Fellowship: Ecclesiological Reflections from the Pentecostal–Roman Catholic Dialogue,” in *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader*, ed. Chris Green (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 4.

77. Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 1–16, 20–27.

Tommy H. Davidson, a Pentecostal scholar on the faculty of the Norwegian School of Leadership and Theology, has contended that any Pentecostal ecclesiology must be trans-denominational, but even now there are too few “concrete ecclesiological studies of the Pentecostal movement” to yield a viable Pentecostal ecclesiology.⁷⁸ And Simon Chan, an Assemblies of God theologian at Trinity College, Singapore, who has written more than any other scholar on the subject, has concluded that “What Pentecostals need is ... an ecclesiology to ensure effective traditioning and the faithful development of Pentecostal faith and experience.”⁷⁹

Chan is the first Pentecostal to attempt a coherent Pentecostal ecclesiology. He has argued, and I think rightly, that “any attempt to develop a Pentecostal ecclesiology, must seriously consider the nature of Pentecostal experience, and be consistent with it.”⁸⁰ In 1974, John Stevens Kerr, an American Lutheran, observed that Classical Pentecostals hold an “individual-spontaneous” understanding of how the Holy Spirit manifests itself within the church. Others, he maintained, including the Pentecostals found within the historic Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches, enjoy the same encounter with the Holy Spirit, but they take a “continuing-collective approach” to the subject.⁸¹ Chan agrees with Kerr’s analysis that for the most part, Pentecostals are individually focused rather than collectively oriented.⁸² Any Pentecostal ecclesiological understanding needs to address this penchant. Still, no distinctly Pentecostal ecclesiology seems to exist.⁸³

In spite of the shared expectation that Pentecostals of all sorts contend for a definitive experience of the Holy Spirit as vital to the Christian life, their diversity suggests why so few Classical Pentecostals have even attempted to develop a

78. Tommy Davidson, *Lewi Petrus’ Ecclesiological Thought 1911–1974: A Transdenominational Pentecostal Ecclesiology* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

79. Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (Blanford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2011), 125.

80. Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, 93.

81. Kerr, *The Fire Flares Anew*, 6.

82. Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, 6.

83. Editor’s note: since the writing of this chapter, an Assemblies of God systematic theologian has published a dogmatic treatment on ecclesiology. See, Frank D. Macchia, *The Spirit-Baptized Church: A Dogmatic Inquiry* (London: T & T Clark, 2020).

theology of the church.⁸⁴ When they do, they seem immediately to speak of the church in terms of spirituality or religious experience rather than in terms of ecclesiology. They typically view ecclesiology in terms of an active living out of what they read in the New Testament. It may even be the case that without knowing it, they find that the closest they come to an ecclesiological approach proposed by a major theologian is the work of Emil Brunner, who spoke of the church in terms of *koinonia* or fellowship.⁸⁵

A review of what Pentecostals have written on the subject of ecclesiology points most frequently to the practices found in the opening and closing verses of Acts 2, namely, Acts 2:1-4 and Acts 2:42-47. Pentecostal ecclesiology, then, begins with baptism in the Spirit as essential to Pentecostal belonging, but it quickly moves on to emphasize a return to apostolic teaching, fellowship (*koinonia*), breaking of bread, and the prayers. These would constitute the primary *apostolic* markers in any Pentecostal ecclesiology, perhaps superseding but not ignoring the other classic marks of unity, holiness, and catholicity. Yet, the subject of a Pentecostal ecclesiology remains largely unaddressed as such. The majority of Pentecostal scholars address only the elements of what Pentecostals call the message of the “Full Gospel,” whether fourfold or fivefold, that includes salvation, sanctification or holiness, baptism in the Holy Spirit, divine healing (and other charisms), and eschatology.

Given the dynamic, action-oriented, charismatic (in the biblical sense) character of the *koinonia* experienced by all who claim to be Pentecostal, how do we describe something that seems to be at home among Classical Pentecostals, Protestant Pentecostals, Catholic Pentecostals, Orthodox Pentecostals, AIC Pentecostals, Third Wave and New Apostolic Pentecostals, Neo-Pentecostals, and other newer Pentecostal groups? Given the spiritual activity in these groups, typically discerned and embraced as the work of the Holy Spirit among them,

84. Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, 23–46; Daniela Augustine, “Pentecost Communal Economics and the Household of God,” in *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader*, ed. Chris Green (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 65–87; Peter Althouse, “Towards a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: Participation in the Missional Life of the Triune God,” in *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader*, ed. Chris Green (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 88–103; Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, “Ekleziologija,” in *Binkoštniki V.21 Stoletju Identiteta, Verovanje, Praksa*, eds. Corneliu Constantineanu and Christopher J. Scobie (Lublyana: Podvig, 2016), translated as “The Church,” in *Pentecostals in the 21st Century: Identity, Beliefs, Praxis*, eds. Corneliu Constantineanu and Christopher J. Scobie (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018), 141–57, “Can We Imagine an Ecumenical Future Together? A Pentecostal Perspective,” *Gregorianum* 100 (2019), 49–69.

85. Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 47–54.

and their ability to recognize themselves and each other as Pentecostal, is the term “ecclesiology” even viable for Pentecostals to consider?

Chan correctly notes, first, that any Pentecostal self-understanding must begin with what the earliest Pentecostals called “baptism in the Spirit.”⁸⁶ When we study the various groups that have used or continue to use the term “Pentecostal” as a self-designation, it is clear that they all come back to this same experience as foundational to their self-understanding. They are still *Pentecostal*. There is no denying this individual or spontaneous element.

The second element that all Pentecostals share is the ecumenical desire for *koinonia* or fellowship with other Christians with similar experiences of the Holy Spirit. This ecumenical quest for broader fellowship may point to the value of the “continuing-collective” approach outlined by Kerr. For the most part, they are much more comfortable in crossing lines or boundaries, in being ecumenical, and in sharing ministry than are their counterparts who have not encountered the Spirit in this existential baptism. The Charismatic Renewal that emerged in the late 1950s and continues today is an example of such boundary crossings,⁸⁷ as were the great ecumenical charismatic gatherings held in the late 1960s and early ’70s that seemed to bring thousands of people from every Christian tradition into a single venue for prayer and praise.⁸⁸

It seems that Pentecostals of all kinds hold the key to a unique way of understanding ecclesiology. They begin with a powerful form of spirituality that is able to engage and transcend most other ecclesiological boundaries. In keeping with their Restorationism, they would argue that they have retrieved this form of spirituality from the dark pages of Christian history or that God has restored it to the church through them. It is a form of spirituality they still seek to share with the entire church, believing that it will revitalize and restore the church to the place that Christ had first envisioned for it.

Pentecostals of all kinds envision the *church* as the people of God that the Holy Spirit leads and empowers in predictable, official ways but also in spontaneous and unofficial ways. As a result, the overwhelming majority of Pentecostals encourage all believers to have a direct encounter with the triune God or the Holy Spirit of God that takes seriously his presence and power both

86. Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, 94.

87. Vinson Synan, *Under His Banner: History of Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International* (Costa Mesa: Gift Publications, 1992), 172; Vinson Synan, *The Spirit Said "Grow": The Astounding Worldwide Expansion of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches*, Innovation in Mission Series (Monrovia: MARC, 1992), 62; Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics II* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 272.

88. David Manuel, *Like a Mighty River* (Orleans: Rock Harbor Press, 1977).

at the institutional level and at the personal level. Pentecostalism recognizes that within this divine–human encounter, understood to be baptism in the Holy Spirit, regardless of the Christian tradition in which it finds expression, a profound transformation is available to the believer. This direct encounter with the Holy Spirit may extend from cleansing to fruitfulness to renewed confidence and result in empowerment for witness (Acts 1:8).⁸⁹ All are possible and, more importantly, expected through the Holy Spirit. No one should be surprised that various manifestations of the Holy Spirit will occur.⁹⁰ This divine encounter moves “life in the Spirit” from something theoretical to something experienced. Thus, life in the Spirit becomes a life lived with spiritual vitality in anticipation that the work of the Spirit moves from the pages of scripture into the ongoing life of the church. It yields an ecclesiology that is compatible with the prophetic promise of Joel: “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters will prophesy” (Joel 2:28; cf. Acts 2:17).

89. Matthew S. Clark and Henry I. Lederle, *What Is Distinctive about Pentecostal Theology?* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989), 43–65, 184.

90. Mark J. Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition*, Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006), 19, 25–27; Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 1–16, 20–27; Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 215–26.

Initial Reflections on Pentecostal– World Council of Churches Dialogue, Cooperation, and Unity

Gastón Espinosa

The purpose of this chapter is to identify ways that could facilitate further cooperation between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches (WCC). It is offered from an Assemblies of God perspective (the world's largest Pentecostal denomination, with 69 million members and adherents), but it is important to state in advance that this is not *the only* (or *the official*) Assemblies of God perspective.¹ The views expressed in this chapter are my own, but I believe that they align with the spirit of many people within the Assemblies of God, a tradition that I know well.

Spiritual Unity is Essential

The Holy Spirit is the only true bridge to *spiritual unity* across the world's 42,000 Christian denominations. Jesus said that he wished that we were all one (John 17:20-21), and Paul reminded us that we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body of believers (1 Cor. 12:12-13). So, in this regard, the foundation of any successful interdenominational or ecumenical movement between the Assemblies of God/Global Pentecostals and the WCC must be Christ-centred,

1. In most countries in which the Assemblies of God are found, they are organized into general councils with leaders from that country. This allows considerable freedom at the national or regional level for each manifestation of the denomination. Globally, these general councils convene as the World Assemblies of God Fellowship. Taken together, the total membership is currently 69 million adherents. Its website is <https://worldagfellowship.org>.

bathed in prayer, and guided by the Holy Spirit.

I believe this bridging is possible because the Pentecostal movement birthed the first truly interdenominational ecumenical movement in the 20th century. Although the WCC traces its roots back to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910, and the World Evangelical Alliance traces its rebirth to 1951, in the late 19th and early 20th century there was a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit that laid the foundation for William J. Seymour's Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906. This revival took place every day for three years from 1906 to 1909 and two to three days per week until 1912.²

People from over 20 nationalities and dozens of denominations attended. Within just a few years, they had representatives in mainline Protestant, Evangelical, Catholic, Orthodox, and independent churches in over 50 nations. They created a vast interdenominational ecumenical network that was cross-racial and traversed class, gender, tribal, cultural, and national lines. While, to be sure, racism, ethnocentrism, and a colonial mindset set in over time as denominations and bureaucracies were created, to this day they still have a warm de facto interdenominational ecumenical fellowship that is growing rapidly in many parts of the world and throughout almost every major orthodox Christian tradition. This was obvious in 2006 at the Azusa Street Centennial Celebration in Los Angeles, where 42,000 participants from over 150 nations attended the celebration, praying and worshipping together across linguistic, denominational, and national lines. The growth of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement across every nation and in almost every ecclesiastical body also makes this a timely topic.

In 2016–17, the WCC Commission on Faith and Order identified seven “new” and “emerging” aspects of ecclesiology to be discussed in future consultations:³ the ecclesiology of independent churches, Pentecostal and charismatic churches, persecuted churches, churches from the global South, evangelical churches, new visible expressions of the church, and movements. As anyone familiar with the global Pentecostal/Charismatic movement can attest, Pentecostalism touches on all seven areas in countless ways. The vast majority of independent churches, global South churches, new movements, and persecuted

2. Gastón Espinosa, *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography and Documentary History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

3. World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, *Minutes of the Meeting at the eMseni Christian Centre, Benoni, near Pretoria, South Africa, 15-21 June 2017*, Faith and Order Paper No. 223 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2018), 29, 106.

Protestant churches are Pentecostal, charismatic, or independent. For this reason, an effort to engage and create constructive dialogue and valuable partnerships and cooperation with the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement could have a positive ripple effect on all seven ecclesial areas. More precisely, the Faith and Order report calls for finding points of “agreement and convergence” and “similarities and differences” between the above aspects of ecclesiology and the ecclesiology reflected in the document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*. Does this not sound like a good move for all concerned?

It would seem that the answer to this timely question is a qualified “yes.” There are not only points of agreement, convergence, and similarities between the two, but they are—with guidance by the right leadership—strong enough to overcome half a century of acrimony and division to engage in limited cooperation and partnerships in acts of service and advocacy, but not necessarily theological dialogue and spiritual unity. However, to make this cooperation a reality, both sides will have to make courageous steps of faith, as well as concessions, to bridge this troubled divide.

Possible Points of Convergence

It may help to provide the historical, theological, and ethical background, support, and resources we need to make this kind of cooperation a reality by looking first at some of the roots and origins of the global Pentecostal movement. As mentioned, in 1906, Pastor William J. Seymour and his followers laid out, in theory and practice, the basic principles and beliefs of interdenominational, ecumenical dialogue and cooperation. We begin by briefly identifying some of these principles, noting the concerns and obstacles to Pentecostal–WCC dialogue, cooperation, and unity and identifying steps where Pentecostals and the WCC can begin working for the common good.⁴

Where can we find points of convergence and agreement between Pentecostals and the WCC? First, Pastor Seymour and Pentecostals promoted interdenominational, ecumenical unity and cooperation around the world. It is critical to point out that in 1906, Seymour and other Pentecostals initiated, engaged in, and promoted interdenominational, ecumenical unity, dialogue, and cooperation with all truly repentant born-again, Spirit-filled Christians around the world through revivals, conferences, organizations, newspapers, and

4. This chapter will use the term “Pentecostals” as an umbrella term that describes not only Classical Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God, but also various other Pentecostal and/or charismatic independent churches.

fellowships. People attended the Azusa Street Revival and other Pentecostal centres around the world from over 20 denominations. These included Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Christian churches, Catholics, Orthodox, and independents, among others. Long before mainline Protestant leaders sought to do away with denominational boundaries, Seymour stated in his *Apostolic Faith* newspaper:

The Apostolic Faith Movement stands for the restoration of the faith once delivered unto the saints – revivals, missions, street and prison work, and Christian unity everywhere ... We are not fighting men or churches, but seeking to displace dead forms and creeds and wild fanaticisms, with living practical Christianity. ‘Love, Faith, and Unity’ are our watchwords and ‘Victory through the Atoning Blood’ [of Jesus] our battle cry.⁵

Seymour and other early Pentecostals—at least in the first decade or so—did not see themselves as creating new denominations but rather as fostering a renewal movement led by the Holy Spirit that sought to bring spiritual power, freshness, and expansion to the whole church, to fulfil the Great Commission, preaching the gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:19-20). He stressed the creation of a global movement and network that transcended existing denominational boundaries while still respecting the integrity of each tradition.

Seymour taught that the purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to infuse every single Christian and every Christian denomination with power from on high. He did not believe that the outpouring and baptism with the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts were only for the Pentecostal churches but were for all denominations. Only a movement of the Holy Spirit could truly unite people globally across theological lines. Indeed, Seymour could warmly affirm the WCC’s desire to promote “visible unity in one faith ... and common life in Christ” so that “the world may believe” (John 17:21). The point here is not that every denomination should become Pentecostal, but rather that some Pentecostals are already predisposed to transcend denominational boundaries and thus could work with the WCC under the right conditions and circumstances in acts such as of service and advocacy.

While denominational loyalties emerged within a few years after the fires of the Azusa Revival simmered down and institutionalization and fragmentation

5. This statement appeared in every issue of *The Apostolic Faith*, published by the Azusa Street Mission beginning in September 1906.

set in along theological, ecclesiastical, racial, and national lines, for a number of years, loyalty to a single denomination, tradition, church, race, or nation was not required. While some eventually left to form new Pentecostal denominations, others attended Azusa for weeks to years in a kind of self-imposed Pauline exile or sabbatical before bringing the fires and power of the Holy Spirit back into their own denominations, cities, regions, and nations. While it is true that this sometimes led to friction and division, more often than not, these individuals quietly brought spiritual renewal back into their prior Christian traditions, where the work of the Holy Spirit along with enthusiastic and experiential worship have been passed down in these denominations to the present day.

Thus, Pentecostals have not only engaged in interdenominational, ecumenical cooperation in and through various revivals, conferences, periodicals, missions, and Bible schools, they were among the first in the 20th century to promote global church unity, church networks, and interchurch cooperation enthusiastically. This interdenominational leadership was also evident when the Assemblies of God general superintendent, Thomas F. Zimmerman, took the lead in helping to create and promote the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America, and the American Bible Society, among other entities.

Why is it important to stress this point? It is important because many Pentecostals see any kind of ecumenical organization as inherently problematic, despite the fact that their own founders helped to give birth to the first such movement in the 20th century. Given the above account, it is clear that Pentecostals and the WCC converge on this issue of unity. They cannot only join forces on interdenominational ecumenical unity; together, they can help lead it.

Second, William J. Seymour, the Azusa Street Revival, and the Assemblies of God today promote racial unity, reconciliation, and justice as well as gender equality in the ministry. At the Azusa Street Mission, they welcomed all races and classes of people as well as women to teach and to preach the gospel. On the front page of Seymour's *Apostolic Faith* newspaper for December 1906, Seymour and his staff wrote:

This [Azusa Street Revival] meeting has been a melting time. God makes no difference in nationality, Ethiopians, Chinese, Indians, Mexicans, and other nationalities worship together⁶

6. "The Same Old Way," *The Apostolic Faith* [Los Angeles] 1.1 (September 1906), 3.2.

because

God recognized no man made creeds, doctrines, nor classes of people,
but the willing and obedient.

In 1907, Seymour wrote again in *The Apostolic Faith*: God “is melting all races and nations together ... He is baptizing by one spirit into one body.”⁷ This led observers to famously state that the racial colourline was washed away by the blood of Jesus.⁸ Over the next several years, the colourline was eventually recognized, such as in the provision that only people of colour could hold elected office. At the same time, though, and despite the racism and white supremacy of his day, Seymour forbade racial discrimination and even reverse discrimination among believers. In his 1915 *Doctrines and Discipline*, he stated that if some of the white brothers had prejudices and discrimination against Blacks, Blacks can’t discriminate against whites. Why? It is because, Seymour continued, “God calls us to follow the Bible. ... We must love all men as Christ commands.”⁹

While it is true that many Pentecostal groups formed denominations that later fragmented along racial lines, there have always been numerous exceptions and, as a whole, Pentecostal and charismatic churches throughout the 20th century have been far more racially integrated than many other denominations in most parts of the US and around the world. Today, in many countries, Pentecostals are among the most outspoken critics of racism, discrimination, and racial prejudice against people of colour, immigrants, and racial-ethnic minorities. In the US Assemblies of God, many pastors, the late executive presbyter, Jesse Miranda, and Pastor Samuel Rodriguez of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference have been outspoken critics of racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and hatred.¹⁰ For this reason, they have been sought by Presidents

7. Untitled, *The Apostolic Faith* [Los Angeles] 1.6 (February 1907), 7.4. See also “Beginning of World Wide Revival,” *The Apostolic Faith* [Los Angeles] 1.5 (January 1907), 1.2.

8. Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Frank Bartleman, c.1925, 4th ed.), 54. Bartleman is here describing the reality between 1907 and 1909.

9. W.J. Seymour, *Doctrines and Discipline of the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission of Los Angeles, Calif 1915* (Los Angeles: W.J. Seymour, 1915), 12.

10. Over the past three decades, the Assemblies of God in the US has made significant strides in electing and encouraging the leadership of ethnic minorities and women. In 2022, women accounted for 28.5 percent of ministers, and ethnic minorities accounted for about 30 percent of the total number of ministers. Statistics are available at <https://ag.org/About/Statistics>.

Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump for their advice and spiritual counsel on a broad range of issues dividing American society and the world.

Similarly, Pastor Seymour, the Pentecostal movement, and the Assemblies of God were among the first Christian movements and denominations in the world to promote the full ordination of women to the ministry and to send out female pastors, evangelists, missionaries, writers, and teachers across the US and around the world. While Edith Blumhofer and others have rightly noted the glass ceilings and limitations that women face in the Assemblies of God, and in Pentecostalism in general,¹¹ there has been from its very beginning the belief that their sons *and daughters* should prophesy, teach, and preach (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18). So, in light of this, it is clear that Pentecostals' and the WCC's views converge on this issue, and they can work together to promote racial unity, reconciliation, and justice and gender equality in the ministry around the world. Going one step further, they can point to the fact that their founders and leaders were people of colour and women from many races.

Third, Seymour, Pentecostals, and the Assemblies of God have stressed global Christian unity across national boundaries. Unlike most evangelical revivals, which have had only a citywide, state, regional, or national impact, Seymour's Azusa Street revival and Pentecostal beliefs have transcended national boundaries. Within a very few years, they reported a network of missionaries, missions, revival centres, organizations, and newspapers in over 50 countries around the world. In three years, the 405,000 copies of their *Apostolic Faith* newspaper reported revivals and interdenominational ecumenical cooperation around the world. Seymour and his followers were not iconoclasts or supernationalists, since they readily acknowledged that earlier Pentecostal and evangelical revivals often took place prior to and even helped pave the way for the Azusa revival. They were truly ecumenical in their thinking because they not only acknowledged that these revivals—which, incidentally, were led by people in other denominations (Anglican, Salvation Army, Reformed, etc.)—were genuine works of the Holy Spirit, but went so far as to praise them and cooperate with them to promote spiritual renewal through the country. This is nowhere more evident than in Minnie Abrams and Pandita Ramabai's Mukti Mission in

11. Edith L. Blumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 2 vols.

India and Willis Hoover's mission in Chile,¹² each of which was later refreshed and linked by Seymour's Azusa Street missionaries and teachings in his newspapers. Together, they crisscrossed national, denominational, and racial boundaries. The larger point here is that they were globally minded and interdenominationally ecumenically sensitive—at least in the beginning.

It is true that one of the sharpest criticisms of Pentecostals is that they did not or do not respect the national churches of the countries where they entered. There is some truth to this claim. However, as one Nigerian pastor said regarding his church in Kiev, Ukraine, most of the people converted in his church were not practising Christians, nor did they even consider themselves to be culturally Orthodox Christians. Most were atheists or agnostics, and they had no religion. In truth, Pentecostalism often attracts converts from indigenous national churches for a short time, but some of them return to their previous tradition or denomination with a genuine desire to bring spiritual renewal to it.¹³ It is not our purpose to exonerate the divisiveness that Pentecostals have sometimes brought to national churches, but it is still the case that Pentecostals have had a global mindset from the beginning. While they might be too narrow in their theology for some people, they are not provincial in their vision for a global church. Thus, in light of this, it is clear that Pentecostals and the WCC converge on this issue and can work together to promote transnational and international cooperation and unity across national borders and boundaries.

Fourth, for over a century, William J. Seymour, Pentecostals, and the Assemblies of God have promoted social justice and the transformation of

12. On these and other early revivals, see Allan Heaton Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. 18–33, 172–75.

13. The issue of proselytism was addressed quite pointedly in the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue. See *Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: The Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue 1990–1997 Between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders*, §94–96. This document was published in The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity's *Information Service* No. 97 (1998/I–II), 38–56; in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 21:1 (1999), 11–51; in Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level 1982–1998* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), 753–79; and elsewhere.

society.¹⁴ The truth is that in many parts of the world, Pentecostalism has been the church of the poor.¹⁵ While it is true that Pentecostals have been slow to use the language of “social and economic justice” with reference to the poor, this is because they often *are* the poor. In my book on William J. Seymour,¹⁶ I point out how two Swedish and Mexican immigrants used to travel to the migrant farm labour camps and go to ghettos in Los Angeles to preach the gospel and feed the poor. In my book on *Latino Pentecostals in America*,¹⁷ I note that there is a long, if quiet, tradition of Latinos in the Assemblies of God promoting social, civic, and social justice. In fact, two of the most famous and outspoken critics—the late Jesse Miranda and Samuel Rodriguez—are both ordained Assemblies of God pastors. Rodriguez argues that Christians today need to pray and struggle for righteousness and justice, by which he means the evangelistic reconciling message of Billy Graham and the social justice of Martin Luther King Jr. Harvey Cox, in his book *Fire from Heaven*,¹⁸ pointed out how Pentecostals in Brazil have been among the strongest advocates for the poor; Donald Miller, in his book *Global Pentecostalism*,¹⁹ found that 80 percent of the organizations carrying out various forms of social justice in Latin America were Pentecostal or Charismatic. If this is true, then why the hesitancy of some Pentecostals and evangelicals to promote social justice? Honestly speaking, it is because the phrase “social justice” is typically associated with the politics of liberalism. Some also find it

14. Cecil M. Robeck Jr, “The Social Concern of Early American Pentecostalism,” in *Pentecost, Mission and Ecumenism: Essays on Intercultural Theology: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Walter J. Hollenweger*, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity, ed. Jan A.B. Jongeneel (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992), 75, 97–106; translated and published as “Das soziale Anliegen der frühen amerikanischen Pfingstbewegung,” in *Pfingstbewegung und Basisgemeinden In Lateinamerika. Die Rezeption befreiungstheologischer Konzept durch die pfingstliche Theologie*, ed. Michael Bergunder, Weltmission heute 39 (Hamburg: Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, 2000), 57–66, notes 145–49; revised and published in *The Mighty Transformer: The Holy Spirit Advocates for Social Justice*, ed. Antipas L. Harris (Irving: GIELD Academic Press, 2019), 10–26.

15. John Mark Robeck, *Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Praxis: A Case Study* (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2021), focuses on Pentecostalism in El Salvador.

16. Gastón Espinosa, *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography and Documentary History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

17. Gastón Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

18. Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

19. Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

condescending. Pentecostals would rather use the phrases “social outreach” or “evangelistic social work” to describe what they do. This is because Pentecostals generally believe that to bring about genuine change in a person and society, one must first change their heart and mind, and then they must become born again and Spirit filled. Given the Pentecostals’ and the WCC’s commitment to righteousness and justice, it is clear that there is common ground for Pentecostals and the WCC to work together and cooperate on key social issues vexing the world today.

Fifth, Seymour was a strong advocate of trinitarian Nicene orthodoxy and theology. He flatly rejected as unbiblical Unitarianism, Modalism, annihilationism, British Israelitism, Mormonism, Adventism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Science, Spiritualism and Spiritism, and any kind of Christian fanaticism. While he welcomed people from these traditions to attend the Azusa Street Mission, he disagreed with their theology and admonished them to embrace the historic teachings found especially in Protestant Christianity. While many mainline Protestants view Pentecostals as pushing the boundaries of theological orthodoxy, it is important to separate orthodox from non-orthodox Pentecostals into their respective traditions and then to recognize that orthodox trinitarian Pentecostals see themselves at the vanguard of those promoting largely *historic* Protestant, and broadly Nicene, Christian beliefs around the world. Doctrine and theology are very important to them and can serve as a bridge with any organization, including the WCC.

However, one of the current problems is that most Pentecostals and evangelicals perceive the WCC as taking a least-common-denominator approach to theology and allowing into its fellowship/membership some denominations and traditions that include teachers who promote unbiblical beliefs and practices.²⁰ Others see the WCC as having lost its way and its focus on serving the global church. Instead, they believe that the WCC has become a pawn, tool, and advocacy platform for North American and Western European liberal politics. Despite these points, there is nothing in the general WCC mission statement that Seymour, most Pentecostals, or most people in the Assemblies of God could not heartily affirm—*nothing*. The deeper problem of having member traditions that affirm theological, social, and ethical views that Pentecostals deem

20. From 1964 until 2009, these accusations appeared in the Assemblies of God Bylaws, under a section titled “Doctrines and Practices Disapproved” and its subsection on “The Ecumenical Movement.” In 2009, the bylaw was changed. Where once it described the ecumenical movement solely in negative terms, today it takes a more positive interpretation and allows ministers and churches to participate ecumenically, with some conditions. See <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>.

as unbiblical is a more difficult hurdle to overcome. However, there are ways to overcome these issues, and they will be discussed shortly. First, however, it is important to identify some of the main obstacles and roadblocks to Pentecostal–WCC dialogue, cooperation, and unity.

Roadblocks to Pentecostal–WCC Christian Unity

In addition to the factors already mentioned, a number of other concerns and stereotypes (whether true or not true) make dialogue, cooperation, and *spiritual* unity between Pentecostals and the WCC difficult, if not insurmountable. The first concern or perception is that the WCC is interested in promoting only liberal Christianity and US and Western European liberal politics. Their second concern is that the WCC has compromised on historic Christian doctrine and has not placed enough stress on salvation in Jesus alone, which has opened the door to universalism and other heterodox views. Their third concern is that they don't see the WCC as placing enough emphasis on the outpouring of and baptism with the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts. Their fourth concern is that the WCC is engaged in a kind of neo-liberal colonialism in promoting its views and that it is not truly interested in welcoming, promoting, or championing what they deem to be traditional Christian values and issues ranging from traditional marriage to a response to Christian persecution. The fifth concern is that many believe that any dialogue, cooperation, and unity with the WCC would largely result in domination by the WCC. They believe that to be accepted in the WCC, Pentecostals would be forced to compromise, water down, or deny their own sincerely held beliefs and values. They do not see Christian liberals as being genuinely open to changing *their* views on a wide range of core theological, moral, and social issues and sharing power based on proportional representation. Sixth, they believe that in various ways, the WCC supports *liberal* feminism and LGBTQ issues, which they believe are not supported in the Bible or in Christian history.

In conclusion, many Pentecostals see the WCC as an adversary to the Pentecostal experience and way of life that is silent on Christian persecution, as an organization that is condescending towards Pentecostal beliefs and practices, and as a colonizing institution that is not truly ready or willing to share power based upon proportional representation.

These factors, along with their belief that WCC churches are more institutionally rigid and liturgical than they are open and Spirit led, makes many Pentecostals less interested in worshipping with them or engaging in spiritual dialogue, cooperation, and unity. While much of this is sadly based upon false

stereotypes and misperceptions, these views remain the bedrock of Pentecostal concerns and perceptions of the WCC for the many Pentecostals who do not frequent WCC circles.²¹

Overcoming Concerns: Recommendations

So how can Pentecostals and the WCC draw upon their convergences and common bonds to overcome these serious concerns and decades of animosity, bias, and indifference? Below are some recommendations that the WCC might consider.

First, the WCC could decide as a body to take bold but purposeful steps to bridge the divide between the WCC and the Pentecostal world.²² Second, it could focus on convergences. Third, it might invite Pentecostals to join the organization and demonstrate to them how it is willing to share power proportionally based on size and membership for the common good. Fourth, the WCC could focus more on building relationships and friendships in new encounter groups without any commitments.²³ Fifth, it could create a new

21. Editor's note: What the author has set forth in this chapter is a list of concerns that Pentecostals have raised historically when thinking of the WCC. Over the past 40 years, many of these issues have been addressed, and others are being addressed currently, even with the publication of these two volumes on *Towards a Global Vision of the Church*. With the advent of the Joint Consultative Group since the Harare Assembly, and the development of the Global Christian Forum, Pentecostals and representatives from WCC member churches have found ways to dialogue with one another that all partners view as useful. What Dr Espinosa reflects are the concerns of uninformed Pentecostals and perhaps uninformed members of the ecumenical movement regarding one another. This chapter demonstrates that considerable work still lies ahead, although the Pentecostal World Fellowship and the World Council of Churches have made considerable strides in finding official ways to improve their relations with one another.

22. Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report, Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 1-20 February 1991*, 107-108, includes a resolution calling on the WCC to reach out to Pentecostals. Under the leadership of Huibert van Beek, the Office for Ecumenical and Church Relations, which was established as a result of this resolution, worked tirelessly throughout the 1990s, holding regional meetings with Pentecostals. These meetings have been documented elsewhere in this volume.

23. Editor's note: In 1998, Dr Konrad Raiser brought this vision to a group of ecumenists as well as those open to working towards better relationships from Pentecostal and Evangelical ranks, the Catholic Church, and WCC representatives. The result was the formation of the Global Christian Forum, which fills this suggestion nicely. Huibert van Beek, ed., *Revisioning Christian Unity* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009). This is also the purpose of the Joint Consultative Group, a dialogue between representatives from WCC member churches and from Pentecostal churches.

hybrid organization or multiple organizations—one perhaps aimed at Christian unity and another at social justice and transformation. Sixth, it could focus on initiatives that target not dialogue but particular political issues of common concern. For example, Pentecostals and the WCC could join forces to promote racial tolerance, fight against Christian persecution, and stop human trafficking.²⁴ Seventh, the WCC should depoliticize itself (something begun in the 1990s) and remain apolitical on hot-button social, theological, moral, and political issues (disarmament, divestment, ordination of gays and lesbians) for the sake of unity. Eighth, it could change membership requirements to focus on the theological beliefs of the vast majority of Christian denominations. Finally, it could manage expectations by distinguishing between dialogue, cooperation, and spiritual unity. While dialogue and spiritual unity might be difficult to achieve, cooperation on common concerns via service and advocacy is not only possible, but also highly likely.²⁵

Common Concerns on Service and Advocacy

There are several areas of service and advocacy where the WCC and Pentecostals could join forces.

First, they could join forces to advocate for Christian unity. If changing the WCC is not realistic, then perhaps a new organization could be created that clearly represents orthodox Christianity based on the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed and that draws upon faith statements from a number of the largest Christian interdenominational ecumenical bodies.²⁶ This new organization could focus on concerns related to more traditional churches, while the WCC could continue to focus on advocacy for its current concerns.

Second, they could focus on promoting racial justice, reconciliation, and unity around the world. While quite a bit of this has been done within denominations and traditions, it would be good to promote this globally, across

24. Editor's note: In recent years, the WCC, the Catholic Church, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Pentecostal World Fellowship have cooperated on several of these issues, as well as others. The WCC and Pentecostals both have programs to combat racism and work against human trafficking, though they have not cooperated on them.

25. Editor's note: As noted above, many of these issues are already being addressed at a variety of levels. If we wish to develop greater trust to enable greater cooperation, it will require more explicit effort and ecumenical emphases in educating each other, especially clergy, about what we view as common concerns and what we view as common challenges.

26. This would require abandoning the basis for membership that the WCC currently holds, because many Pentecostals believe it is too minimalist.

traditions. Many Pentecostals would support a very carefully worded biblical statement about race riots or the treatment of immigrants and migrants. The WCC or a new organization could work with organizations like the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference to draft statements to this effect.

Third, Pentecostals and the WCC could join forces on anti-religious and anti-Christian bias and persecution in the US, Europe, and elsewhere. Given that most of the non-Catholic or Protestant Christians who are persecuted are Pentecostal/Charismatic or independent charismatic, this would be very meaningful to them, and it would find widespread support.

Fourth, they could work together on social justice issues for which there is broad consensus, such as human trafficking, the abolition of slavery, domestic violence, and child labour laws.

Fifth, they could work together on youth and generational concerns and transferring the faith from one generation to the next. They could create new church planning programs and centres that could train the next generation of pastors, teachers, and evangelists. The focus could be on how to pass on the faith more effectively both in the church and in the family from one generation to the next.

Sixth, they could work together and share resources in promoting and bringing technological innovation to the local church. They could offer seminars on how to use social media not only to lead and teach their own parishioners, but also as a way to reach new audiences.

Seventh, they could create new programs and centres that would focus on spiritual renewal and revitalization. In particular, such programs and resources should be targeted for struggling local churches and pastors. They would seek to bring fresh insights and ideas to clergy, evangelists, missionaries, and lay leaders seeking to revitalize their congregations and ministries.

Eighth, they could create new programs that focus on prayer, spiritual formation, and prayer for healing. These programs would be geared for pastors and leaders seeking to strengthen their churches and body life ministries.

Finally, they could work together on leadership development around the world, but especially for women seeking the ordained ministry. New organizations, programs, and centres could be created to promote a biblical understanding of female and male leadership and empowerment. Pentecostal and WCC leaders and teachers could co-create, organize, and teach these classes in programs around the world.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined various convergences and points of agreement and disagreement between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches. There are a surprising number of ways in which Pentecostals and the WCC already converge and agree. Despite this fact, there are also significant disagreements for which there appear to be no foreseeable solutions. There are two ways to circumvent these disagreements and concentrate on the eight points of convergence, on which work can begin immediately. The first way is to create a new hybrid organization from traditional WCC and Pentecostal churches that would focus on basic concerns to the local and national church.²⁷ This would free up the WCC and its parallel sister organizations among Pentecostals to continue the advocacy work while still allowing for a degree of cooperation and spiritual unity. The second way is to invite the WCC to bypass all the current concerns and obstacles and find Pentecostal leaders to engage with them in acts of service and advocacy. For any of this to happen and to have successful results, it will need to be a Christ-centred endeavour, bathed in prayer and guided by the Holy Spirit

While Pentecostals and the WCC may never completely agree on theology or ethics, they can converge and join forces on select issues of concern for service and advocacy. Thus, while respecting the integrity of each denomination's doctrinal and ethical beliefs, they can work together for the common good to bring about positive social change that promotes values tied to their sincerely held religious beliefs. Perhaps by doing this, it might be possible for them to create a new hybrid organization that can focus on core issues directly related to their theological convictions and belief systems and thus foster greater Christian unity.

27. Editor's note: The Global Christian Forum is a beginning to such an endeavour. With its four pillars—the World Council of Churches, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Catholic Church—the Forum has been highly successful at bringing disparate voices together for greater understanding and the positive exchange of ideas.

Evangelical Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on Foundational Statements of the Lausanne Movement

Sotirios Boukis

Introduction

Is it possible to talk about *an* evangelical¹ ecclesiology? In one sense, as evangelicalism is a movement that extends across various denominational lines, it tends to have many forms, as it is flavoured each time by the tradition in which it is found (Methodist, Reformed, Lutheran, etc.). Nevertheless, various aspects of ecclesiology can be found throughout the evangelical spectrum, and in this sense, one can talk about some distinctively evangelical elements of ecclesiology.

While evangelicalism is not a single denomination (and thus does not have a single confession of faith), there are two prominent evangelical global entities where one can find most evangelicals of the world: the World Evangelical

1. This chapter uses the term “evangelicalism” in the broader sense, defining it as a worldwide interdenominational movement, which (according to David Bebbington’s classical definition of evangelicalism) is characterized by four primary theological distinctives: *conversionism* (the belief that lives need to be changed through a “born again” experience); *activism* (the expression of the gospel in missionary and social reform effort); *biblicism* (a high regard for the Bible as the ultimate authority); and *crucicentrism* (a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross). As Bebbington observes, together these form “a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of evangelicalism.” While Bebbington’s quadrilateral is not the only definition of evangelicalism, it remains one of the most prominent ones. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1930s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2–3. See also Gino Pasquariello, “Spirituality,” in *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the United States*, Vol. 5, eds. George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 2183.

Alliance (WEA) and the Lausanne Movement. While the statement of faith of the WEA² is extremely concise, the Lausanne Movement has produced three foundational statements which offer a deep and wide theological perspective that is widely accepted by most evangelical churches throughout the world; thus the three statements constitute the closest possible equivalent to the articulation of “an” evangelical theology. These statements—*The Lausanne Covenant* (1974),³ *The Manila Manifesto* (1989),⁴ and *The Cape Town Commitment* (2010)⁵—are considered to be three of the most important interdenominational theological statements of global evangelicalism made in recent decades.⁶

While these documents are not ad hoc statements on ecclesiology, they nevertheless reflect, explicitly or implicitly, many aspects of what evangelicals believe about the nature and mission of the church. The issue of mission is especially prominent in all these texts, and thus it provides many interesting aspects of evangelical ecclesiology as well as missiology.

It is also important to acknowledge that these statements do not originate from a single denomination but from a movement. While most multilateral theological statements are signed by representatives of specific denominations and churches, these Lausanne foundational statements speak on behalf of evangelicalism as a movement rather than on behalf of some specific denominations. Nevertheless, this is useful for the purpose of our research since, in many respects, evangelicalism is also a movement, and thus it is more fitting to examine it through the lens of a worldwide interdenominational movement (like Lausanne) rather than through the lens of a specific evangelical denomination.

The structure of this chapter is divided into two parts: the first focuses on the Lausanne understanding of the nature of the church, and the second on its understanding of the mission of the church. In each section, these evangelical perspectives on ecclesiology are juxtaposed with the ecclesiology reflected in the World Council of Churches (WCC) convergence document *The Church:*

2. World Evangelical Alliance, “Statement of Faith,” <https://worldeaa.org/who-we-are/statement-of-faith>.

3. Lausanne Movement, “The Lausanne Covenant,” <https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>.

4. Lausanne Movement, “The Manila Manifesto,” <https://www.lausanne.org/content/manifesto/the-manila-manifesto>.

5. Lausanne Movement, “The Cape Town Commitment,” <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>.

6. At the time of the publication of this volume, Lausanne has announced the impending publication of a fourth such document, *The Seoul Statement*, on the occasion of the Fourth Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (Seoul, 2024).

Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV). Each section highlights some major commonalities and differences between the above, as well as some areas of possible future convergence.

While evangelical ecclesiology and the ecclesiology reflected in many WCC documents are often perceived as radically different, a closer view of both reveals many commonalities and can be mutually enriching. The thesis of this chapter is that the three Lausanne foundational statements contribute many important aspects of evangelical ecclesiology, which highlight both points of agreement with *TCTCV* (even though often using different terms to describe similar realities) and points that can be mutually complementary. Examples of such points are a higher emphasis on the spiritual and missional unity that all Christians share in Christ, the notion of the ministry of all believers, and a further emphasis on the personal aspect of conversion and commitment of each Christian. These points are not antithetical to the equivalent emphases of *TCTCV* on the sacramental unity of the church, the role of the ordained ministry, and the communal aspect of conversion but are complementary and enriching to them. Thus, this chapter is submitted in the hope of highlighting this common ground and of contributing to making the post-*TCTCV* ecclesiological discussion even more inclusive.

The Nature of the Church

Defining the church

What is the definition of the church? When it comes to ecumenical discussions, the answer to this question is quite a challenge, as different churches give different definitions, while others question the possibility of a definition altogether. Interestingly, the Lausanne statements say relatively little on this. Overall, their focus is much more on the mission of the church, rather than on its nature, as the latter seems at some points to be taken for granted, and thus only brief definitions are given.

For example, the *Cape Town Commitment (CTC)* defines the church as “God’s people, redeemed by Christ from every nation on earth and every age of history, to share God’s mission in this age and glorify him forever in the age to come” (*CTC*, Foreword, §I.9).

Similarly, the *Lausanne Covenant (LC)* states that “the church is the community of God’s people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology” (*LC*, §6).

The *Manila Manifesto* (*MM*) affirms the *Lausanne Covenant* definition of the church as the people of God and places a special focus on the local church: “Every Christian congregation is a local expression of the body of Christ and has the same responsibilities. It is both ‘a holy priesthood’ to offer God the spiritual sacrifices of worship and ‘a holy nation’ to spread abroad his excellences in witness” (*MM*, §8). When one juxtaposes the above definitions of the church with the equivalent of *TCTCV*, some interesting similarities and differences can be traced.

The most obvious similarity is the common definition of the church as “people of God” and “body of Christ” (see *TCTCV*, §17–21). Furthermore, in both cases, this definition is given in the wider context of a theocentric approach to ecclesiology: both *LC* §1 and *TCTCV* §1 begin by rooting the nature and mission of the church in the vision and mission of the triune God.

They also both share the understanding of the church as a “community of witness,” a “community of worship,” and a “community of discipleship” (see *TCTCV*, §2; *MM*, §8; *LC*, §11), and they acknowledge the church as a “creature of the Gospel” which then is called to spread the gospel further (*TCTCV*, §14; *MM*, §8). They also both affirm that the church is intended by God to be “a sign and servant of God’s design for the world” (*TCTCV*, §25), “a sign of his Kingdom, that is, an indication of what human community looks like when it comes under his rule of righteousness and peace” (*MM*, §8).

Finally, they both share the conviction that scripture is normative and that the Holy Spirit still guides the members of the church (*LC*, §2; *TCTCV*, §11–12), even though the *Lausanne Covenant* states that this happens through scripture (§2), while *TCTCV* calls this guiding of the Spirit “the living Tradition” (§11). The latter is defined as “the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church”;⁷ however, the mere inclusion of the term “Tradition” is not the usual way evangelicals would describe the gospel. They would rather speak much more about the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of the Bible, and its consideration as the only infallible rule of faith and practice (*LC*, §2), rather than use the term “Tradition,” which also carries other connotations.

The marks of the church

The three Lausanne statements do not mention anything (at least explicitly) on the marks of the church, as *TCTCV* does (§22), nor do they make any explicit

7. P.C. Roger and L. Vischer, eds., *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: Montreal 1963* (London: SCM, 1964), 50. Quoted in *TCTCV*, §11, fn. 1.

reference to the Nicene Creed (or any of the major historical creeds of Christianity). Of course, various references speak indirectly about the marks of the oneness, holiness, apostolicity, and catholicity of the church, even though they do not necessarily use these terms. All of them are affirmed, both as a fact and as a task to be fully enlivened.

For example, the oneness of the church is affirmed throughout all three Lausanne statements. Although they come from numerous denominations around the world, the signers of these statements recognize each other as members of the one Church of Jesus Christ, which transcends traditions and denominational boundaries (*LC*, Introduction; *CTC*, Foreword). Yet, deeper oneness (and unity) needs to be cultivated and achieved (*LC*, §7; *CTC*, §IIB.1).

The holiness of the church is also affirmed, as the church “is both ‘a holy priesthood’ to offer God the spiritual sacrifices of worship, and ‘a holy nation’ to spread abroad his excellences in witness” (*MM*, §8). Yet, it is also called to grow and be renewed in holiness (*LC*, §14; *CTC*, §I.10) as, according to the Lausanne statements, the reality of sin affects not just individuals but also churches (*MM*, §7).

The notion of the catholicity of the church can be seen in the frequent use of the phrase “the whole church,” which is defined as “God’s people, redeemed by Christ from every nation on earth and every age of history” (*CTC*, Foreword).⁸ The term “the whole church” is also meant to include men and women, pastors and people (*laos*),⁹ young and old (*MM*, §6). The Lausanne statements make clear that “the reference to ‘the whole church’ is not a presumptuous claim that the universal church and the evangelical community are synonymous” (*MM*, §9).

Finally, the apostolicity of the church is also affirmed, especially in terms of faithfulness to the apostolic teaching (*LC*, §3; *CTC*, §I.5) and of obedience to the apostolic commission to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth (*MM*, §3). Nevertheless, no reference is made to apostolic succession (a stark contrast with *TCTCV*, §22).

Ministry and sacraments

Similarly, no reference is made to episcopacy or bishops overall, and the only reference to “clergy” is a negative one (*MM*, §6). This is not surprising, as

8. Similarly, later in this document, “the worldwide Church of Christ” is identified with “those who have been reconciled to God” (*CTC*, §IIB.1).

9. The Lausanne statements intentionally use these terms and not “clergy” and “laity” (see also later in this section on the use of the term “clergy” in the *MM*).

evangelical ecclesiology does not make a distinction between clergy and laity, as it holds the doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers.” The *Manila Manifesto* (§6) goes even further, stating that “the domination of the laity by the clergy has been a great evil in the history of the church ... [This] is fundamentally unbiblical.”

Of course, this perspective on ministry is radically different from the one assumed by the ecclesiology of *TCTCV*, which focuses heavily on ordained ministry (§45–57) and even asks whether the threefold ministry could be considered as part of God’s will for every church (§47).¹⁰ Interestingly, the above sections of *TCTCV* are silent on the issue of the ministry of the laity, a fact which is striking from an evangelical viewpoint, as evangelicals not only believe in “the priesthood of all believers” but also in “the ministry of all believers” (*MM*, §6).

Here lies a major difference between *TCTCV* and evangelical ecclesiology: the view of the church not from a top-down perspective that focuses mainly on the ordained ministry but from a bottom-up view where the focus is on all the people of God participating in the ministry and in the life of the church. From this perspective, a convergence text on ecclesiology would be expected to focus significantly more on what the ministry of the laity is and how each single member is expected to be an active part of the body of Christ.

The above observation, of course, does not mean that evangelicals do not believe in (or that they deny altogether) the need for oversight or even ordained ministry. All evangelical churches do have persons who exercise some sort of oversight, and many have ordained ministers, even if they may have a different theology of ordination than that of Orthodox, Catholic, or mainline Protestant churches. Similarly, evangelicals are not the only ones who have a high view of the role and ministry of the laity. The heart of the difference lies in the proportion of emphasis that is given to the top-down view of the church as well as to the emphasis on the participation of all the people in the ministry and life of the church.

Another major difference between *TCTCV* and evangelical ecclesiology is sacramental ecclesiology (and terminology). While *TCTCV* has numerous

10. Generally speaking, evangelicals *do* have elders, deacons, and deaconesses in their churches; however, these are not considered to be a sort of “twofold ministry,” as they are not ordained and are not considered “clergy.” Interestingly, none of the Lausanne statements makes any use of the terms “elders,” “presbyters,” “deacons,” or “deaconesses” but mention only “pastors” and “church leaders.” The absence of the above terms from the Lausanne statements demonstrates that, from an evangelical perspective, the church is not defined by the existence of elders and deacons but by the participation of all the people of God (“the whole church”) in the life and mission of the church.

references to the sacraments (as well as to a possible understanding of the church itself as a sacrament: see §27), the Lausanne statements are notably silent on these issues. The very word “sacrament” (or its derivatives) does not appear even once in all three Lausanne statements. To some extent, this is expected, since evangelicals usually do not talk about “sacraments” but about “ordinances.” Nevertheless, the word “ordinances” is also absent from the three texts.

There is also complete silence on the eucharist: the terms “eucharist,” “the Lord’s supper,” and “breaking of bread” are absent from the three Lausanne statements. Again, this does not mean that the eucharist is not important to evangelicals. It does, however, imply that the eucharist is not understood as being constitutive of the church: it is not the eucharist that makes the church, but it is the church (all the people of God gathered to worship) that makes (celebrates) the eucharist.

References to baptism do exist, but only in the two later statements, and to a very limited extent (*MM*, §11; *CTC*, §I.10, IIF.4). They mainly speak of baptism with the focus on personal conversion, and they do not unpack its ecclesiological implications (initiation to the body of Christ, etc.). Of course, in other parts of the Lausanne statements, conversion is clearly related to incorporation into the church (*LC*, §4) but not through an explicit reference to baptism.

The unity of the church

At this point, of course, one could raise a crucial question: if the unity of the church is founded neither on the ministers nor on the sacraments, then where can it be founded? This is a key question. For many Christian traditions, all efforts towards unity must include a mutual recognition of ministry and sacraments. However, for evangelicals, unity is understood as a result of the fact that all those who have been saved (“born again”) are now united with Jesus Christ, and thus they are also united with the other members of the body of Christ. According to this position, unity is based on the common identity of Christians as children of God and on the common salvation offered by Jesus Christ to all who believe in him (*CTC*, §I.8).

Here again, the difference between the top-down and bottom-up approach to ecclesiology is obvious: the basis of unity does not begin with the leadership (ministers) of the church but with the common salvation and identity that all believers share. To put it differently, the emphasis is on the spiritual (invisible) unity that all Christians share, rather than on the visible unity expressed in the mutual recognition of ministers and the sharing of sacraments.

This does not mean that visible unity is not important to the Lausanne

Movement. In fact, the *Lausanne Covenant* affirms that “the Church’s visible unity in truth is God’s purpose ... We recognize, however, that organizational unity may take many forms and does not necessarily forward evangelism. Yet we who share the same biblical faith should be closely united in fellowship, work and witness” (*LC*, §7).

This quote is significant for many reasons. First, it demonstrates a different notion of “visible unity”—not in sacramental terms but in terms of cooperation in evangelism and witness. Indeed, collaboration in world evangelization and mission is the most prominent theme throughout all three Lausanne statements (*LC*, Conclusion; *MM*, §9; *CTC*, Conclusion) and is the primary aim of the Lausanne Movement itself.¹¹ Similarly, the *Cape Town Commitment* affirms that “while we recognize that our deepest unity is spiritual, we long for greater recognition of the missional power of visible, practical, earthly unity” (*CTC*, §IIF.1); thus, “visible unity” is again defined in terms of missional cooperation.

Second, the above quote demonstrates the close link between soteriology and missiology among evangelicals. Just as the common salvation in Christ is the basis of unity, the need to proclaim this salvation to the whole world becomes the basis of mission. Thus, unity and mission are closely related (*MM*, §9), and effective mission requires deeper unity (*LC*, Conclusion). The lack of such unity has not only ecclesiological implications but also missiological ones: “A divided Church has no message for a divided world. Our failure to live in reconciled unity is a major obstacle to authenticity and effectiveness in mission” (*CTC*, §IIF.1).

The Mission of the Church

Having examined the way in which evangelicals typically approach the nature of the church, it is now time to examine how they approach its mission as well.

Mission and evangelism

According to the Lausanne statements, the mission of the church is founded in its calling to be the people that God calls out of the world and then sends into the world as God’s servants and witnesses (*LC*, §1). The church is at the very

11. According to its website, the Lausanne Movement “connects influencers and ideas for global mission, with a vision of the gospel for every person, disciple-making churches for every people and place, Christ-like leaders for every church and sector, and kingdom impact in every sphere of society” (“The Lausanne Movement’s Unique Calling,” <https://www.lausanne.org/about-the-movement>).

centre of God's cosmic purpose and is the means to achieve the mission of spreading the gospel (*LC*, §6). World mission is central to the evangelical understanding of God, the Bible, the church, human history, and the ultimate future (*CTC*, §I.10). Failure to participate in God's mission is failure to be the church: according to the *Lausanne Covenant*, "a church that is not a missionary church is contradicting itself and quenching the Spirit" (*LC*, §14). The Lausanne statements even express deep regret for the fact that many churches are "inward-looking" instead of missional (*MM*, §8).

In the Lausanne statements, the mission of God is closely related to (but not identical with) evangelism: namely, the calling of people to personal repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (*LC*, §4). According to the *CTC*, evangelism includes "persuasive rational argument following the example of the Apostle Paul ... 'to make an honest and open statement of the gospel which leaves the hearers entirely free to make up their own minds about it. We wish to be sensitive to those of other faiths, and we reject any approach that seeks to force conversion on them'" (*CTC*, §IIC.1). This statement is in agreement with that of *TCTCV* that "evangelization should always be respectful of those who hold other beliefs" (§60).

Both *CTC* and *TCTCV* also distinguish evangelism from proselytism. Proselytism is defined as "the attempt to compel others to become 'one of us', to 'accept our religion', or indeed to 'join our denomination'" (*CTC*, §IIC.1). *TCTCV* makes a similar distinction between evangelism and proselytism, defining the latter as the attitude which "wrongly considers other Christian communities as a legitimate field for conversion" (*TCTCV*, §6). The overlap between these two statements is significant, and it demonstrates the progress made over the previous years on this topic.

The above, however, do not mean that the Lausanne understanding of evangelism is identified with that of *TCTCV*. The Lausanne statements themselves acknowledge the differences that their understanding of evangelism has with that of the World Council of Churches as well as with that of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches (*MM*, §9). While such differences do not preclude the possibility of cooperation with these churches in various areas (Bible translation, social work, etc.), they do make cooperation in evangelism difficult (if not impossible) without a common understanding of it. There are three major differences in the understanding of evangelism between Lausanne evangelicals and that of *TCTCV*.

The first difference has to do with the strong Lausanne emphasis on personal conversion. While it does not deny the cosmic realities of the proclamation that Jesus is the Saviour of the world, the *Lausanne Covenant* defines evangelism as

the invitation to everyone “to respond to him [Jesus] as Savior and Lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith” (*LC*, §3). This emphasis on personal conversion is valuable and certainly biblical; yet, it must be complemented by an articulation of the communal and ecclesiological implications of salvation.

The Lausanne statements are well aware (and repentant) of the evangelical tendency to speak of evangelism and salvation in a primarily individualistic way (*LC*, §7; *CTC*, §II.A.1). *TCTCV* offers an interesting insight here: while it acknowledges that “the message of the Gospel extends to both the personal and the communal aspects of human existence” (*TCTCV*, §62), it eventually focuses on the latter, placing particular emphasis on the notion of the church as the communion (*koinonia*) whose members partake together in the life and mission of God (*TCTCV*, §23). Of course, the two viewpoints are not mutually exclusive but are mutually enriching and complementary.

The second difference between the Lausanne approach and the *TCTCV* approach to evangelism has to do with the way in which each one perceives the people who “make a Christian profession (they have been baptized, attend church occasionally, and even call themselves Christians), but the notion of a personal commitment to Christ is foreign to them” (*MM*, §11). The *Manila Manifesto* calls this category of people “the uncommitted”; it notes that they are found in all churches throughout the world (including evangelical churches), and “they urgently need to be re-evangelized” (*MM*, §11). *TCTCV* also mentions the need for re-evangelization as a result of the growing secularism of our era (§7); however, it also makes clear that each church can “re-evangelize” only the people who already belong to its own Christian community—not people of other communities or denominations (§6).¹² The truth is that many evangelicals

12. See the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue where Catholics and Pentecostals concluded together that “all Christians have the right to bear witness to the Gospel before all people, including other Christians. Such witness may legitimately involve the persuasive proclamation of the Gospel in such a way as to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ or to commit themselves more deeply to Him within the context of their own church. The legitimate proclamation of the Gospel will bear the marks of Christian love (cf. 1 Cor. 13). It will never seek its own selfish ends by using the opportunity to speak against or in any way denigrate another Christian community, or to suggest or encourage a change in someone’s Christian affiliation” (§94). The following paragraphs (§95–97) provide further information. See “Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal churches and leaders (1990–1997),” <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese.html>.

would not make the latter distinction. This, then, provides a double challenge: it is a reminder of how important it is to show respect to other churches by trusting them to take care of “the uncommitted” who once were in their own flock; yet, at the same time, it challenges all churches to reflect on whether they are really doing their best towards this task and if they could work further on it.

The third major difference between the two approaches to evangelism lies with the question of the possibility of salvation for those who do not explicitly believe in Christ. *TCTCV* (§60) leaves the question open, acknowledging that this has become a topic of discussion among Christians. While a minority of evangelicals would be comfortable with such an approach of religious inclusivism, for the majority of them, it would be theologically impossible.

The Lausanne statements, while recognizing that God can be (and is) working beyond the visible boundaries of the church, nevertheless also condemn any position which “implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions” (*LC*, §3) or says that other religions can be alternative paths to God. The *Manila Manifesto* states that “human spirituality, if unredeemed by Christ, leads not to God but to judgment, for Christ is the only way” (*MM*, “Twenty-one affirmations”). For this reason, the evangelization of “the unevangelized” is considered an urgent priority for evangelical missiology (*MM*, §11).

Integral mission

While the above differences are important, it is worth noting here a major point of convergence between the two sides. One of the key points of all three Lausanne statements is that “world evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world” (*LC*, §6) and to do this “with all necessary urgency, unity, and sacrifice” (*MM*, Conclusion).

Interestingly, what is often unknown is that this phrase, “the whole church bringing the whole gospel to the whole world”, which has become a key motto of the Lausanne Movement, actually originates from the WCC: it is found both in one of its foundational definitions of the term “ecumenical,” in the meeting of the WCC Central Committee on 1951 at Rolle,¹³ as well as in the final Message

13. There it was underlined that the word “ecumenical”, originating “from the Greek word for the whole inhabited earth [*oikoumene*], is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole church to bring the gospel to the whole world.” *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rolle (Switzerland), August 4-11, 1951* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1951), 65. Special thanks to Odair Pedroso Mateus for pointing out the history of the phrase during the Faith and Order Commission meeting in Pasadena, CA, on June, 2018.

from the 1963 CWME Conference at Mexico City.¹⁴

Even more interestingly, both the WCC and Lausanne use this phrase to highlight the need for a holistic approach to mission, including both proclamation of the gospel and social justice. For example, Lausanne states that the phrase “the whole gospel” refers to “God’s glorious good news in Christ, for every dimension of his creation” (*CTC*, Foreword). It includes not just the call to repentance, faith, baptism, and discipleship; it also extends to social responsibility and action (*MM*, §1–4). This is what the Lausanne statements call “integral mission”: namely, an approach to mission that integrates both proclamation evangelism and social action for the promotion of justice and peace (*CTC*, §I.10). Thus, instead of focusing on the one as contrary to the other, they are clearly portrayed as complementary.

All three Lausanne statements place heavy emphasis on the need to work on both parts of “integral mission.” The same emphasis is also given by *TCTCV*, even though the latter does not use the specific term. In this way, all documents emphasize the need to proclaim to all people, in word and deed, the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ (*TCTCV*, §59; *LC*, §4; *MM*, §3; *CTC*, §I.8). But all of them also invite the church to take social responsibility and fight for justice, as the gospel brings holistic transformation to every sphere of society (*TCTCV*, §59; *LC*, §5; *MM*, §4; *CTC*, §I.7, IIB.3).

Special emphasis is placed on the need to proclaim the gospel as good news to the majority of the world’s population who are poor, destitute, suffering, and oppressed (*TCTCV*, §64; *MM*, §2). The church is called to fight for justice and peace on issues such as slavery, human trafficking, poverty, pandemics like HIV/AIDS, creation care, and migration (*TCTCV*, §64–66; *CTC*, §IIB.3–6, IIC.5).¹⁵ Finally, it is called earnestly to desire religious freedom for all people, especially for those who are persecuted for their faith (*TCTCV*, §60; *MM*, §12; *CTC*,

14. Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *Witness in Six Continents. Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches held in Mexico City December 8th to 19th, 1963* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964), 175. The phrase was also used in later CWME work, such as in Edinburgh 2010 (Dana L. Robert, “Plenary 1: Mission in Long Perspective. Thursday, 3 June 2010,” in *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow*, eds. Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 61) as well as in the key CWME document, Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), §65.

15. The Lausanne statements underline that this fight is not just ideological but also spiritual (*CTC*, §IIB.2), as they affirm that all struggle against evil (as well as the struggle for world evangelization) must also be seen from a perspective of “spiritual warfare, that can only be waged through the victory of the cross and resurrection, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and with constant prayer” (*CTC*, §I.7; Cf. *LC*, §3; *MM*, §5).

§IIB.2). The overlap in the above descriptions of the “integral mission” of the church is, of course, significant, and one cannot but note it as a key point of convergence in ecumenical missiology.

Conclusion

After having explored and compared the three Lausanne foundational statements with *TCTCV*, it becomes clear that some important commonalities exist in their approaches to the nature and mission of the church.

Among the most notable commonalities, one can include the view of the church as “people of God,” “body of Christ,” and a “creature of the Gospel.” They both also describe it as a “community of witness,” a “community of worship,” a “community of discipleship,” and “a sign of the Kingdom.” They both affirm the oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the church, even though they describe it using different terms. Finally, they both understand the mission of the church to be central to its identity and to include not only evangelism (the proclamation of the good news) but also social action for the promotion of justice and peace.

Still, some notable differences are observed. Lausanne evangelicalism does not approach ecclesiology from a top-down perspective that focuses mainly on the ordained ministry but from a bottom-up view where the focus is on all the people of God participating in the ministry and life of the church. Similarly, it does not emphasize the sacramental aspect of the church, but rather the missional one; as a result, it seeks a kind of “visible unity” that has more to do with cooperation in mission than in eucharistic fellowship. There are also some important differences in the way that Lausanne missiology approaches topics like the balance between personal and communal aspects of conversion, the re-evangelization of “the uncommitted,” and the possibility of salvation of “the unevangelized.”

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated some ways in which future dialogues could be enriched through a more thorough integration of aspects of evangelical ecclesiology. The most important such aspects would include a better balance between top-down and bottom-up views of ecclesiology (especially on the topic of the ministry of all believers), a further emphasis on the spiritual and missional unity that all Christians share by virtue of their common identity in Christ, and a further emphasis on the personal aspect of the conversion and commitment of each Christian.

This chapter has also revealed various areas in which evangelical ecclesiology can both give and receive gifts from the perspective of *TCTCV* on the nature and

mission of the church. Even though evangelical and WCC perspectives often seem significantly different from each other, it is encouraging to see the significant level of convergence that can be achieved between the two on many points. This becomes a hopeful observation for the future of the ecumenical conversation on ecclesiology.

An Evangelical Perspective on Church and Mission*

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr

Setting forth an evangelical perspective on church and mission is not as easy as it may sound. Three factors make this assignment difficult for me. The first is that for the past 30 years, I have spent much of my ecumenical energy developing closer relationships between Catholics and Pentecostals.¹ This has obvious implications because Catholics and Pentecostals have confronted one another in Latin America for a century, often competing with and condemning one another, and in the process undermining the message that they both seek to proclaim regarding the saving and reconciling power of Jesus Christ through the cross.²

At the same time, I have worked with Orthodox theologians as a member of the commissions on Faith and Order in the National Council of Churches in the USA (1984–2002) and the World Council of Churches (1989–2023), as a

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1. I have served on the steering committee of the International Roman Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue since 1985 (Round 3) and have served as the Pentecostal co-chair since 1992 (Rounds 4–6). Our reports during my tenure have included “Perspectives on Koinonia” (1989); “Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness” (1998); “On Becoming a Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings with Some Contemporary Reflections” (2008), and “‘Do not quench the Spirit’: Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church” (2015).

2. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, “Roman Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue: Challenges and Lessons for Living Together,” in *Pentecostal Power: Expressions, Faith and Politics of Latin American Pentecostalism*, ed. Calvin Smith, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies Series 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 249–76.

member of the North American Academy of Ecumenists (1989–2005), and as a member of the steering committee of the Global Christian Forum (1998–present). I was also part of the first conversation held between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Pentecostals beginning in 2010.

The second difficulty is that I am a Pentecostal by faith, conviction, and experience. While my good friend Dr Geoff Tunnicliffe, general secretary of the World Evangelical Alliance, likes to think that he speaks for all Pentecostals because they are simply a subset of evangelicalism,³ I differ with him on this point. I am not alone.⁴ While Evangelicals and Pentecostals share a number of what may be described as core evangelical concerns and values, there are also some significant differences between us that sometimes get swept under the carpet when Evangelicals represent Pentecostals: the full working of the Holy Spirit, the place of experience in the Christian life, various worldview questions, the role of women, and the importance of Enlightenment rationalism, to name just a few. However, I am not here to set forth a Pentecostal ecclesiology. I will try faithfully to present an honest Evangelical position on “church and mission” that I hope Dr Tunnicliffe would affirm.

The third and probably the most significant difficulty lies in the fact that evangelicalism is neither a church nor a denomination; it is a movement. It crosses many denominational lines. Orthodox Christians understand themselves as belonging to or perhaps constituting the one true Church, with clear lines of apostolic succession, albeit in two families (Eastern and Oriental). At another level and quite useful for some comparisons, it is tempting to describe the Orthodox as a movement comprised of approximately 29 denominations, most

3. When Pope Francis apologized specifically to the Pentecostals who make up 70% of the non-Catholic population in Italy, Dr Tunnicliffe spun the apology by accepting it on behalf of “evangelicals.” See “Evangelicals Hail Pope’s Caserta Visit and Apologize to Catholics,” released by Vatican Radio on 29 July 2014.

4. Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 1–3; Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, JPT Supplement 38 (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2011), 4–6, acknowledges evangelical roots but clearly sees Pentecostalism as something else; Cephas N. Omenyo, “Pentecostal-Type Renewal and Disharmony in Ghanaian Christianity, in *Global Pentecostalism: Encounters with Other Religious Traditions*, ed. David Westerlund (London: I.B. Taurus, 2009), notes the deep divide between Pentecostals and Evangelicals in Ghana; Douglas Jacobsen, *The World’s Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are, and How They Got There* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 235–37, notes fuzzy boundaries between these two movements but clearly distinguishes them from one another.

of which seem to have a unique national character.⁵ I am fully aware that such a description does not do justice to the Orthodox self-understanding of ecclesiology, so I will not mention it again.

Unlike Orthodox Christianity, it is difficult to categorize Evangelicals in a truly unified and coherent way.⁶ Evangelicalism is a broad Christian movement that tends to defy simple definition. It is made up of Anglican, Reformed, Anabaptist, Pietist, Quaker, Wesleyan, Adventist, Holiness, Pentecostal, and other denominations and parachurch organizations, and evangelicals who maintain membership within historic and mainline denominations, as well as a plethora of congregations including independent house churches, storefront churches, megachurches, non-denominational churches, and emerging and post-denominational churches such as may be found in China. The designation “evangelical” does not fit all of these groups equally well, but generally these groups do share some important core beliefs and values that make it possible for them to recognize their relative compatibility and, at some levels, engage in close fellowship and common witness. I will even dare to say that it is possible to find Orthodox believers who have great sympathy for evangelicalism, Orthodox believers who might even accept the evangelical label as it is used regarding some of the individuals and groups represented within both the Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Alliance.

5. **Africa:** African Orthodox Church [Patriarch of Alexandria]; Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (Addis Ababa); **Asia and the Pacific:** Malankara [Jacobite] Syrian Orthodox Church [Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch]; Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Kerala); Orthodox Church in Japan (Tokyo) [Moscow]; Russian mission in Korea (New York); Greek Archdiocese of North America [Ecumenical Patriarchate]; Russian Orthodox mission in China; **Europe:** Armenian Apostolic Church (Etchmiadzin, Armenia); Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Poland (Warsaw); Bulgarian Orthodox Church (Sophia); Church of Crete [Constantinople]; Church of Greece (Athens); Church of Georgia or Georgian Orthodox-Apostolic Church (Tbilisi); Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople; Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania; Orthodox Church in the Slovak Republic; Orthodox Church of Finland (Kaupio) [Constantinople]; Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia (Prague); Romanian Orthodox Church (Bucharest); Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow); Serbian Orthodox Church (Belgrade); **Middle East:** Armenian Apostolic Church (Antelias, Lebanon); Church of Cyprus (Nicosia); Coptic Orthodox Church (Cairo); Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa (Alexandria); Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (Beirut, Lebanon); Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem (Jerusalem); Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (Damascus); **The Americas:** Orthodox Church of America (Syosset, NY).

6. See, for instance, Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds, *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 2–4, 245–72. In the end, the editors found it impossible to agree on a definition.

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century and the subsequent Enlightenment have had profound effects upon evangelicalism. Among the classic core beliefs that most evangelicals hold is their commitment to scripture. It is the inspired—sometimes further delineated as inerrant and on other occasions as the trustworthy or infallible—word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In most cases, its role within evangelicalism is described in statements like the “all sufficient rule for faith and practice.”⁷ Indeed, the Reformation commitment to *sola scriptura*, scripture alone, essentially rejected any role for Tradition, and this commitment to scripture as “all-sufficient” continues to mark the vast majority of evangelicals.⁸

In turn, scripture, the inspired revelation that God has given to humankind, reveals the sinful state of all humankind (Rom. 3:23) and thus the need for our salvation. By means of grace alone, *sola gratia* (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 6:23), God acted on our behalf to restore the relationship between God and the human race that had been broken by our sin. God chose to send his only begotten Son (John 3:16-17), Jesus, to die in our stead. It was a voluntary act on the part of the Son (Phil. 2:6-8) to follow the will of the Father (John 5:30-38; Matt. 26:42), an act that is typically described by most evangelicals in terms of a substitutionary atonement.⁹ At the same time, while God is the one who extends that grace, many evangelicals, especially those with Wesleyan and Holiness leanings, have adopted a more synergistic position here, recognizing a cooperative effort between the Giver and the recipient based upon free choice. The justification that we receive through this substitutionary work comes only through faith, *sola*

7. The World Evangelical Alliance uses the phrase “the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.” The National Association of Evangelicals in the US stops short of such language, calling the Bible “the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.” Fuller Theological Seminary’s Statement of Faith (Article 3) describes it as “the only infallible rule of faith and practice.” The Assemblies of God describes it as “the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct.”

8. There are exceptions, of course, even in newer denominations such as the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal denomination with 68 million adherents. See Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, “An Emerging Magisterium? The Case of the Assemblies of God,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 25:2 (2003), 164–215, and in *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler*, eds. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, JPT Supplement 24 (London: T & T Clark International/Continuum, 2004), 212–52; translated and published as “Die Entstehung eines kirchlichen Lehramts? Der Fall der Assemblies of God,” in *Handbuch pingstliche und charismatische Theologie*, eds. Jörg Haustein and Giovanni Maltese (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 160–208.

9. Thomas R. Schreiner, “Penal Substitution View,” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, eds. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 67–98.

fide (Rom. 1:16-17; Eph. 2:8-9), not aided by any human effort, restoring us to full and eternal life in God. Our salvation, then, comes only through Jesus Christ, *solus Christo*, who is “the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8) and continues to be the one mediator between God and humankind (1 Tim. 2:5).¹⁰

While these have been the primary boundary markers¹¹ for evangelicals since the time of the Protestant Reformation, there are other commitments that most evangelicals share. Their statements of faith often itemize the various actions that take place in salvation, including repentance, forgiveness, the new birth, conversion, justification, regeneration, adoption, sanctification, and so on. Evangelical statements of faith often recognize the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to form the church. They recognize the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all Christians (Rom. 8:9) and the work of the Holy Spirit who enables believers to live lives marked by holiness that provide credible witness to the transformative power of the gospel. There has been a slow but growing admission of various charisms within evangelical congregations, though often with limits on more spectacular manifestations (such as speaking in tongues and

10. Interestingly, while these commitments of the 16th-century Protestant Reformers are still embraced by Evangelicals, the World Evangelical Alliance does not include this language in its Statement of Faith. See W. Harold Fuller, *People of the Mandate: The Story of the World Evangelical Fellowship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 181. The Fellowship has now changed its name to the World Evangelical Alliance, but the Statement is the same: <http://www.worldea.org/howeare/statementoffaith>. These four commitments, however, are spelled out in *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church: A Report by the Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals (ACUTE)* (London: ACUTE [Paternoster Press], 2001), 10–11, as representing the commitment of many evangelicals.

11. All creedal affirmations result in boundaries. Either one is in or one is out. These particular boundary markers by Reformation-era Reformers, as in previous creedal assertions, stood over against prior practice, just as Nicaea stood over and against Arius. With the coming of the Enlightenment, lines were often hardened, and in many respects, Protestants demanded conformity to these markers and faith became a rational element so that reason defined truth. Protestants, and subsequently Evangelicals, have forced their followers to accept scripture while rejecting Tradition, that is, the magisterium, and in a sense, they have done the same with institutions, favouring the concept of movement. It must be admitted that Evangelicals, as inheritors of the Reformation boundaries, can at times be highly rationalistic with respect to such rigid doctrinal borders. It is this same commitment to the rationalism extending from the Enlightenment that has often led to suspicion and rejection of the mystical and mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit by many evangelicals. Thankfully, some of that has begun to change.

miracles).¹² Evangelicals also speak often of the blessed hope (Titus 2:3), that is, the physical return of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of the dead to face judgment (2 Cor. 5:10), either to life or to death, at the time of his return.

What is most frequently missing from such statements is any clear explication given to ecclesiology. The World Evangelical Alliance, for instance, states only that “We believe in the Unity of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ.”¹³ Nothing in these three affirmations—“true believers,” “Church,” and “Body of Christ”—is defined, though the adjective “true” certainly raises questions about the nature of believers. While not all evangelicals would be willing to express their faith in such creedal form, their understanding of the church would still be expressed in similar terms. It seems clear, therefore, that the observation made by the Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among evangelicals in England that “evangelicalism has been notoriously weak in ecclesiology” is an accurate one, perhaps even an understatement.¹⁴

To understand the evangelical reticence to develop a strong and comprehensive ecclesiology, it is important to acknowledge the role of Pietism in the formation of evangelical concerns. In 1675, the German Lutheran Pietist Philipp Jakob Spener published *Pia Desideria*. Spener was concerned with the lack of spiritual vitality that he observed in the lives of most Christians around him, lay and clergy alike. He began his critique by calling both civil authorities and pastors to account. Changes in their thinking would require significant reform in university and seminary curricula and expectations of personal piety among faculty and students.¹⁵ Spener maintained that while most lay people were little more than “nominal Christians,”¹⁶ this fact could be overcome should

12. I would mark the changes in evangelical attitudes here with the appearance of the Charismatic Renewal during the 1960s and '70s and especially with the so-called Third Wave beginning in the 1980s. There are still many evangelicals who reject the exercise of certain charisms; see John A. MacArthur, Jr, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics: A Concerned Voice Responds to Dangerous New Trends* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); John MacArthur, *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville: Nelson, 2013).

13. World Evangelical Alliance, Statement of Faith, <https://worldea.org/who-we-are/statement-of-faith/>.

14. *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church*, 32.

15. Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 43–56, 103–14.

16. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 37.

they be taught to develop their knowledge of scripture.¹⁷ They should be able to bear witness to having had an experience of personal conversion that is lived out in daily life through love.¹⁸ Every Christian should live a life of personal holiness, consistent with biblical norms.¹⁹ Every Christian needs to participate in a community of Christian fellowship, that is, a local congregation of like-minded believers. And every Christian should pass along the gospel message in word and deed to others.²⁰

There is no question that Spener's ideas regarding the individual have had a deep impact on evangelical Christianity. As a result, evangelicalism has emphasized the individual's relationship to God as its primary focus, although the individual's relationship to neighbour (Christian and non-Christian alike) has not been forgotten. Yet, for many years, the relationship of the individual to the church has placed a distant second in evangelical thought.²¹ That is why the late David Watson, an evangelical Anglican pastor, wrote in his book *I Believe in the Church* that "Christ came to establish a new society on earth. It was not enough for him to call individual sinners to God. He promised that he would build his church."²²

The evangelical failure to pay closer attention to the nature of the church has yielded a number of inconsistencies in evangelical claims regarding the church. They can be seen, for instance, in the different ways that evangelicals govern their church bodies. One can find Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational forms practised throughout the evangelical movement, with biblical and theological arguments generated to support each of them.²³ Such ecclesiological diversity was unknown until the post-Reformation era.

When it comes to how one is incorporated into the church, similar differences pertain.²⁴ While most evangelicals would insist on repentance and a personal confession of faith in Christ Jesus as sufficient to declare a person "born again" and thus part of the church (just think of the Billy Graham crusades, for instance), most would also expect baptism to be undertaken shortly thereafter in

17. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 87–92.

18. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 95–97.

19. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 66–67, 80–86.

20. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 80, 89–95.

21. Basil Meeking and John Stott, *The Evangelical–Roman Catholic Dialogue in Mission, 1977–1984: A Report* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 65.

22. David Watson, *I Believe in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 39.

23. Peter Toon, ed., *Who Runs the Church? 4 Views on Church Government* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

24. David F. Wright, ed., *Baptism: Three Views* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009).

obedience to Jesus' command, followed by membership in a local congregation. In this way of thinking, baptism, which is viewed primarily as an ordinance, may not be taken seriously enough, for it symbolizes little more than an exclamation point on a public decision already taken to follow Jesus. Baptism is viewed as having little or no inherent power to bring about transformation or provide the entry point into the church.

Other evangelicals (Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, etc.) view baptism as a sacrament. As a sacrament, baptism is far more than a mere symbol. Baptism is a symbol with power: not something magical but something through which the grace of God is made manifest to the individual as he or she enters the community of faith, the church. More often than not, such evangelicals allow for the baptism of confessing believers, but most of them reverse the order in the conversion process by embracing infant baptism as a vital, valid, and ancient tradition supported by the household baptismal passages in Acts (16:15, 33-34) and 1 Corinthians (1:16) and as a covenantal theology while anticipating a later, personal confession of faith at the time of confirmation.²⁵

Similarly, while most evangelicals immerse baptismal candidates following repentance and a confession of faith, in keeping with the earliest Christian practice (Acts 2:38) and Anabaptist insistence, others practice affusion, that is, pouring water over candidates,²⁶ and still others practise aspersion or sprinkling.²⁷ Some, such as Friends (Quakers) and the Salvation Army, do not use water at all, understanding baptism possibly in a sacramental way but only in a spiritual sense.²⁸ So, how can such disparate practices be acknowledged and yet those who practise their faith in these very different ways be classed together? And what do Evangelicals actually mean when they confess their belief in "the church"?

There are several important markers that evangelicals share when it comes to the doctrine of the church. First among them is the recognition, one shared with Orthodox Christians, that *there is only one church*. As David Allan Hubbard, former president of Fuller Theological Seminary, observed,

25. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Children of Promise: The Case for Baptizing Infants* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).

26. This practice may be found in the first half of the 2nd century in the church's practice, as evidenced in the *Didache* 7.1-4.

27. This mode of baptism is practised by some Methodists and Reformed evangelicals.

28. John D. Waldron, *The Quakers and the Salvationists* (Atlanta: The Salvation Army Supplies, 1990), 37-38; R. David Rightmire, *Sacraments and the Salvation Army: Pneumatological Foundations*, Studies in Evangelicalism 10 (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1990).

The church is stamped with God's own character. It is one, because he is one. He has only one mission, only one unified purpose, only one redemptive program, only one human family, and only one society to minister to that family – the one church of the living God “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone...” (Eph. 2:20).²⁹

Such a confession by evangelicals, however, does not privilege any specific institution, nor does it refer to any single denomination, nor does it necessarily even refer to anything that might be described as a “historical, spatio-temporal community.”³⁰ Evangelicals do not claim that *they are the church*, and since evangelicalism is a movement of individuals, congregations, organizations, and denominations, all of which embrace a trinitarian faith and the Lordship of Jesus, it would seem to be inappropriate to claim that Evangelicals have separated from the church. Evangelicals would certainly not make that claim. To make that claim would suggest that Orthodox Christians could not also be evangelical.

Would it not be fair to affirm that Evangelicals can be part of the Orthodox Church or that the Orthodox Church might be able to affirm many of the core beliefs and values that Evangelicals affirm and claim that they themselves are, in some genuine sense, evangelicals? If that is the case, might it not be possible for Evangelicals rightly to claim that they are part of the church rather than being portrayed as those who have broken from the church? For this claim to be recognized, it is clear that Evangelicals and Orthodox Christians must continue to engage in frank and honest discussion, seeking clarification from one another, addressing forthrightly the issues between them, and learning together what it is that brings them together and what each must shed for their relationship to grow.

Clearly, in evangelical understanding, there is no church apart from God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Most evangelicals embrace a classical trinitarian position, and the church is understood to be a gift of God. As John R. Stott

29. David Allan Hubbard, *What We Evangelicals Believe: Expositions of Christian Doctrine Based on “The Statement of Faith” of Fuller Theological Seminary* (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979), 134.

30. So, for example, in Anna Marie Aagaard and Peter Bouteneff, eds., *Beyond the East–West Divide: The World Council of Churches and “the Orthodox Problem,”* Risk Book Series (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 23, Peter Bouteneff writes that “For the Orthodox, the total, organic link between Christ and the Church pervades into the institution, the historical, spatio-temporal community.”

noted nearly half a century ago, “The Church is a people, a community of people, who owe their existence, their solidarity and their corporate distinctness from other communities to one thing only – the call of God.”³¹ Indeed, it is the Father who has summoned or called the Church into existence (Eph. 1:3-4, 4:1-6; 1 Thess. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:2). At the same time, the Church cannot be understood apart from the Son, Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:3). He is the one who has redeemed the Church (Gal. 4:4-5; Titus 2:14). He is the acknowledged head of the Church (Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 1:18), the one who speaks to the Church through the written word of God (e.g., Rev. 2:1–3:22), the one who provides ongoing direction to the Church through his Spirit (John 14:26; 16:12-14), the one who continually intercedes for his Church (Heb. 7:25), the one who will return for his Church—a Church without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:27). At the same time, it is God’s Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who baptizes believers into Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13), seals them to the day of their redemption (Eph. 1:13-14), and enables them to live the lives to which they have been called (Gal. 5:16-26). But more than that, the church is holy precisely because God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). The Church is made holy because the Holy Spirit dwells in God’s temple (1 Cor. 3:16). The Church, therefore, is a product of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Although Evangelicals tend to emphasize the individual, it can be safely affirmed that the Church is not simply the sum of its billions of members. It is something new, a new creation. It is composed of a people who have been called out from the world, made new (2 Cor. 5:17), and placed into this new thing, the Church, resulting in a new relationship with God, a new relationship with one another (*koinōnia*), and a new relationship to the world, all of which are based upon love (John 14:15; 1 John 2:3, 9-11; 3:1-2a, 18; 4:12). To separate the Church from God or to separate God from the Church is to produce nothing more than a human society that shares some common ideals or a common ideology. Such a society *is not* the Church.

Like Orthodox Christians, Evangelicals would understand the whole people of God as including all those, living and dead, who have placed their faith and hope in the promise of God to provide a way of salvation, which is now fulfilled exclusively in Christ Jesus (Heb. 11:1-2, 39-40; 12:1-2), “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). It might also be reasoned in a prophetic or eschatological sense that the communion of saints includes all those who are yet to be called into that fellowship which is the church. As a result, each member of this “community of saints” is in some sense part of the “body of Christ,” all those

31. John R.W. Stott, *One People: Laymen and Clergy in God’s Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 15.

who are “in Christ” (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27) and acknowledge him as the head of that body (Eph. 4:11-16; 5:23). But here again, there is a difference in understanding between the Orthodox Church and Evangelicals. Instead of thinking of the resulting *communio sanctorum* as in some way currently present with us, Evangelicals think of it more as all of whom are in communion with God through Jesus Christ; in that shared communion with God, they are also brought into mystical communion with one another, though for the moment at least, many of them have been separated from one another by the dividing line of death. The full gathering of the communion of saints awaits the eschaton. As a result, evangelicals do not typically offer prayers to the saints.

The emphasis that evangelicals have placed upon individuals at this point is critical for their understanding of the church and ultimately for their participation in God’s mission (*missio Dei*). The two actions—(1) repentance with a confession of faith in Jesus Christ, and (2) baptism—which typically mark one’s conversion and/or entry into the Church, should be congruent with one another. Yet, for evangelicals, genuine conversion is acknowledged only as “the means of entry into the *invisible church* and baptism is typically viewed as the appropriate means of entry into the *visible church*.”³² Genuine conversion for most evangelicals frequently requires specific doctrinal commitments such as “the centrality of the Cross of Christ . . . the need . . . of personal conversion, and the place of Scripture as authority.”³³ Without these shared commitments, evangelicals are unwilling to consider others to be evangelicals of like precious faith (and, in some cases, even Christians), and thus they are frequently unwilling to join hands with other Christians or other Christian groups (churches). Once again, it is important to recognize that in making these doctrinal demands, evangelicals

do not believe the church to be co-terminus with the visible structure but rather with the community of all those born by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, ultimately known only to God, there is a God-sourced spiritual unity between believers that cannot be achieved by creating structures and organizations.³⁴

Such expectations should not be read as though evangelicals embrace two

32. Basil Meeking and John Stott, eds., *The Evangelical–Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission*, 59. Italics mine.

33. Rose Dowsett, “Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity: An Evangelical Perspective,” in *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, eds. David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross, Regnum Studies in Mission (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), 257.

34. Dowsett, “Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity,” 257.

entirely different churches—one genuine, the other not. It would be fairer to say that it is more an acknowledgement of two perspectives on the one church. The whole church is understood not to be visible to us, in that it includes all the faithful who have died, all who are yet alive, and all who are yet to be born (again). In addition, only God can look upon the heart of all and comprehend the integrity of their confession and subsequent actions. As 1 Sam. 16:7 reminds us, “the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” And Evangelicals would remind us that the human heart remains duplicitous, or, in the words of Jeremiah, “deceitful above all things” (Jer. 17:9), and as such, only God can truly know those who constitute the one true Church.

At the same time, the church is clearly visible, since those who have made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and been baptized are identifiable by human beings as members of the church. So, here, we may have some difference between evangelical and Orthodox understandings of the church. Even so, their understandings may not be so different that they must be viewed as rivals. As Professor Peter Bouteneff has pointed out, there is some merit even in Orthodoxy to speak of the church in both ahistorical and historical terms.³⁵ In stating this opinion, Bouteneff’s concern is to make clear that within Orthodoxy, both the ahistorical [invisible] and historical [visible] manifestations of the church point only to the one church. He goes on to note, for instance, that in Orthodoxy, “One would never say that the heavenly Church does not sin and the earthly Church does.”³⁶ The question to be addressed between Evangelicals and the Orthodox is the extent to which this claim may be made by each party.

It seems clear that the church has a role as a *means* in God’s plan. It is the primary means through which God has chosen to bring those whom he has called to himself. Those who follow Jesus might still be called “fishers of men” and women (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17). Evangelicals recognize that God’s own work in sending Christ was itself a missionary act. As David Watson asserted, “God is a missionary. His redemptive work in the world is missionary work.”³⁷ Thus, from an evangelical perspective, God’s missionary work began with God, and its end will also be in God. Christ’s mission was and remains the reconciliation of all things (Col. 1:20), the salvation of humankind (John 3:17), the

35. Peter Bouteneff, “Orthodox Ecclesiology and the Ecumenical Movement,” in *Beyond the East–West Divide: The World Council of Churches and “the Orthodox Problem,”* eds. Anna Marie Aagaard and Peter Bouteneff, Risk Book Series (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 27.

36. Bouteneff, “Orthodox Ecclesiology and the Ecumenical Movement,” 28.

37. David Watson, *The Church*, 298.

incorporation of those who have been raised with Christ, those who follow him, into the very life of God (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 3:1-3): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe this fact parallels the understanding of Orthodox believers when, for instance, the late Professor Fr. Ion Bria noted nearly three decades ago that “Trinitarian theology points to the fact that God is in God’s own self a life of communion and that God’s involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and creation in general into this communion with God’s very life.”³⁸

Evangelicals believe in mission because God sent his Son. And Jesus became incarnate ultimately to draw all men and women to himself (John 12:32), thereby inviting them and incorporating them into God’s own life. He did this through the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:14) in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18-19) and by giving his will over to the will of the Father through his incarnation, death (for our sins), and resurrection, affirmations which according to Paul are of first importance (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Those who have responded to his gracious invitation have, in turn, been instructed to follow him and to engage others with the message that he brought. It is the message of a God who desires to give life. It is the message of a God who wishes to make all things new. It is the message of a God who longs to extend his kingdom throughout all of creation and who has invited us to join with him by serving as ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:18-20) on behalf of that kingdom. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20, which is essentially reaffirmed in Acts 1:8, makes it clear that Jesus’ disciples, including all of us, are to “Go ... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

In the church’s role as the primary means that God has chosen to communicate his message of good news, the emphasis that Evangelicals have placed upon the individual once again comes into play. This emphasis on the individual may be considered its greatest strength, for in some sense, it involves every Christian in the missionary task. But this emphasis is also its greatest potential weakness, in that any individual can detach himself or herself from the church, proclaiming Christ for whatever reason but failing to understand the

38. Ion Bria, *Go Forth in Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, WCC Mission Series (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986), 3.

crucial role that the church plays in God's plan.³⁹ The church, as the faithful body of Christ who is its head, remains critically important to the tasks of evangelization and mission because they are the will of God. These are not simply individual tasks to be undertaken as private entrepreneurial tasks. Still, the evangelical emphasis upon the individual, supported by Spener's call to bear witness to the gospel through word and action, has been a major source of encouragement to the development of the modern missionary movement. The first Protestant foreign missionaries, for instance, were deeply influenced by Spener and Pietism.⁴⁰

Missionary activity was not very high on the agenda of most Protestants at the time of the Reformation. Neither Martin Luther, nor John Calvin, nor Ulrich Zwingli, nor any other leading Reformer showed any clear signs that missionary activity was a concern. There were several reasons for this apparent lack of interest in missions. First, their attention was almost exclusively focused on the western European context, a context that had been presumed to be "Christian" for centuries. Second, they were concerned with making the case for Protestantism before their Roman Catholic neighbours, with whom they saw themselves locked into a life-or-death struggle in which it was not at all clear that their protest would survive. Third, many Reformed Christians of the period believed that the gospel had already been preached to the whole world, and much of the world had rejected it. There was no need to offer it to them a second time.⁴¹ Finally, most Calvinists of the day presumed that those who were meant to be saved would ultimately be saved without further human intervention. While as early as 1630 Abraham Rogerius and, later, in 1656 Phillipus Baldaeus went as "missionaries" to India, their primary intent was to serve Dutch businessmen of the Dutch East India Company more like chaplains, and as a result they worked almost exclusively with Dutch traders and did not reach out

39. This reminds me of Paul's concern that there were many proclaiming Christ, but for the wrong reasons. See Philippians 1:15-18: "Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice."

40. Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement, Vol. II: Modern Christianity from 1454–1800* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2012), 411–12.

41. Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin, 1964; revised by Owen Chadwick 1986, reprinted 1990), 187–90.

effectively to Indigenous Indians.⁴² The lack of missionary interests by most Protestant leaders would remain high well into the 19th century.⁴³

In a real sense, Protestant missions received its first major impetus when two young German Pietists, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heirich Plütschau, were recruited and commissioned by King Fredrick IV of Denmark and sent as Lutheran missionaries by the Halle Mission to India in July 1706. They befriended a young Indian named Mudalyippan, who taught Portuguese and Tamil to them, while they taught him German. He opened doors to them, providing many personal contacts. As a result, their ministry among the Indian people, particularly among the Brahmans, prospered,⁴⁴ and ultimately the Pietist version of evangelical Christianity, including independent and self-supporting missionaries, spread.⁴⁵

Evangelicalism has always been a conversionist movement: that is, its proponents share the message of the gospel with all those with whom they come into contact. They assume that those who hear the good news must respond to it, and they look for some evidence that it has been believed. This may sound like an arrogant position to take, but in the end, I do not believe that it is so. First of all, Jesus commanded that his followers go throughout the world making disciples. Second, the earliest followers of Jesus did just that. C.H. Dodd's analysis of early Christian preaching suggests quite strongly that the apostolic preaching almost always involved the proclamation of the gospel, which was typically followed by the invitation to repent or by an explanation telling why the gospel was so important to those who heard the message.⁴⁶ Clearly, such preaching was always evangelistic.

Unfortunately, the World Evangelical Alliance recognizes this activity with a minimalist statement that seems to mention its commitment to mission and evangelism only in passing when it points to the Holy Spirit, by whom the believer is enabled "to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ."⁴⁷ Yet, even a quick scan of evangelical preaching, evangelization and mission programs, or

42. D. Dennis Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India: Tamil Evangelical Christians, 1706–1835* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 5.

43. Dowsett, "Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity," 253.

44. Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India*, 1–4, 13–29.

45. Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India*, 30–51.

46. C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). See, for example, the passages he analyzed: Acts 2:14-59; 3:13-26; 4:10-12; 5:30-32; 10:36-43; 13:17-41.

47. We believe in ... the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the believer is enable to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ"

evangelical discipleship programs will demonstrate almost immediately that this statement regarding “witness” and “work” is massively understated when compared with the facts.

While the apostolic and evangelical preaching may be quite similar, they still beg the question about the salvation of those who, through no fault of their own, have never heard the gospel. I am well aware of such discussions among Evangelicals (as well as Catholics) related to those who die without the opportunity to enjoy a full knowledge of what God has done for them in Christ Jesus. I believe that it is possible for Evangelicals to affirm the claim made by the bishops of the Catholic Church that “in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6).⁴⁸ But such a possibility, while generous on our part, does not assume that mission is no longer necessary. The church “still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelize.”⁴⁹ Such a position, it seems to me, supports evangelicals who trust in God’s infinite mercy and grace, but they have no ability to see into the hearts of others, and they do not wish to presume on that mercy and grace by simply assuming that all will be saved whether or not they have heard the message of the gospel. As a result, they continue, in obedience to Jesus’ command, to evangelize, making disciples and baptizing them in keeping with Matthew 28:19-20 and engaging in all forms of missionary work throughout the entire world. In the end, salvation is a mystery, and God surely retains the freedom to apply the work of Christ to anyone on whom he wishes to apply it in whatever mysterious way he chooses to do so. In the meantime, evangelicals carry the message of the gospel forward.

It is the concern that evangelicals hold—to be obedient to the missionary mandate and not to presume upon God’s grace—that they continue to engage in mission and evangelization. The typical evangelical understanding of apostolicity does not require the apostolic succession of bishops, but it does require the church, for it is in the church that the people of God hear the words of the apostolic faith recorded in scripture, including the mandate to go into the whole world and make disciples. These concerns surely stand behind the commitments that the Lausanne Committee made in its 1974 Covenant when it stated:

We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that this calls for a similar deep and costly

48. *Ad gentes* 7.

49. *Ad gentes* 7.

penetration of the world. We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society. In the Church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary. World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. The Church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the gospel.⁵⁰

It seems to me that the call for evangelicals to "break out" of their "ecclesiastical ghettos" is a call to recognize the reality of the one Church as much as it is a call to end the kind of sectarianism that at times tends to separate evangelicals from the world around them. If evangelism is primary, then the recognition that "it requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world" is extremely important.

Just as important, if not more so, is the claim that "The Church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the gospel." The church has a role in God's cosmic purpose from beginning to end in God's plan. It is the place towards which God moves his people. It is the church that has been given the missionary mandate. There is, thus, an eschatological reality about the church. The calling and gathering of the "saints" from throughout the entire world in every century and from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Rev. 5:9; 14:6) supports a type of catholicity to the evangelical understanding of the church. The church is truly a universal reality in keeping with the claim made by Bishop Ignatius to the congregation at Smyrna. "Wherever the bishop shall appear," he wrote, "there let the multitude also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is (*hē catholicē ekklesiā*) the catholic church" (*To the Smyrnaeans* 8). Its meaning within the early Christian context clearly refers to the universal character of the Church, though evangelicals would view that catholicity far more in light of the presence of Jesus Christ and far less in light of the presence of the bishop,⁵¹ as would be spelled out later by Bishop

50. Lausanne Covenant, Article 6, <https://lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>.

51. Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1973), 310–12, n. 2.

Cyprian in the heat of conflict.⁵² But to recognize that the Church is catholic in such universal terms—through the ages and including people from every tribe, language, people, and nation—evangelicals may be affirming, without fully realizing it, that the catholicity of the whole Church that recognizes all who have been made spiritually one with the people of God in all ages and in every place is in some way present in each local congregation. Furthermore, every local congregation or manifestation of the Church is present in all congregations. It is only in light of this notion that Paul’s remark that “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor. 12:26) makes sense. One needs to think only of Christians who are suffering for one reason or another throughout the world to recognize that their suffering is/must be our suffering as well.

The eschatological realization that the church is part of the “last days” has also introduced a sense of compulsion or urgency among many evangelicals to participate more fully in the evangelization of the world, in light of the imminence of the second coming. It should come as no surprise, then, that Evangelicals follow the lead of the apostle Paul when he wrote, “I have become all things to all people that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel...” (1 Cor. 9:22b-23a). Such a mindset has contributed substantially to the diversity of evangelistic and missionary approaches that Evangelicals have taken throughout the world, especially among those evangelicals who live daily in light of a possible imminent return of Jesus Christ.

In summary, there are many places where the interests of Orthodox Christians and the interests of Evangelical Christians come together, especially in their mutual concern to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the world around them, that is, in the mission of the church. Yet, when it comes to their understandings of the church, while there is some agreement on the nature of the church, there are still some substantial places where they differ. These issues

52. “Speaking there is Peter, upon whom the Church had been built, and in the name of the Church he is teaching and revealing that even when a whole host of proud and presumptuous people may refuse to listen and go away, the Church herself does not go away from Christ, and that in his view the Church consists of the people who remain united with their bishop, it is the flock that stays by its shepherd. By that you ought to realize that *the bishop is in the Church and the Church is in the bishop, and whoever is not with the bishop is not in the Church*. You must understand that it is to no avail that people may beguile themselves with the illusion that while they are not at peace with the bishops of God they may still worm their way in and surreptitiously hold communion with certain people. Whereas, in truth, the Church forms one single whole; it is neither rent nor broken apart but is everywhere linked and bonded tightly together by the glue of *the bishops sticking firmly to each other*.” Cyprian, *Letter 66* (68). 8.3.

will continue to be places where ecumenical contact between these two vital parts of the church are essential for the health of the whole church and, ultimately, for the *missio Dei*.

To Jesus Christ “belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”⁵³

Appendix

Statement of Faith World Evangelical Alliance

We believe

... in the **Holy Scriptures** as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct...

One **God**, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...

Our **Lord Jesus Christ**, God manifest in the flesh, His virgin birth, His sinless human life, His divine miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His mediatorial work, and His personal return in power and glory...

The **Salvation** of lost and sinful man through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith apart from works, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit...

The **Holy Spirit**, by whose indwelling the believer is enabled to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ...

The **Unity** of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ...

The **Resurrection** of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

53. 1 Pet. 4:11.

Do Emerging Churches Have an Ecumenical Contribution to Make?*

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr

One of the tasks that historians have is to look at past data and interpret its meaning so that it sheds light upon the future. This is a difficult task because virtually no historian can predict with any level of certainty what the future may hold. The lessons they learn from the past may help with the present, but they may or may not apply to the future that is yet to be revealed or may apply in ways that cannot be anticipated. Historians may be able to speak of the future in general terms, but it is rare that they can speak in specific terms and anticipate that what they describe will actually take place. Even if the historian posits a future based upon seemingly established trajectories set into place by events of the past, the future is yet to be revealed and is always open to surprises.¹

As we look to the past, for instance, we see that the church was once strong, though divided, in the Middle East and in northern Africa.² If you had asked the Christians of that region in the 5th century how they viewed the future, you might have received an optimistic response. Today, however, the church has shrunk tremendously in that region of the world. Where it is still present, it is rapidly disappearing—a casualty of war, economics, politics, and the relentless expansion of Islam. In Iraq, for instance, prior to the beginning of the 2003 US

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1. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

2. Irfan Shahid, “Arab Christianity before the Rise of Islam,” in *Christianity: A History in the Middle East*, ed. Habib Badr (Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches Studies and Research Program, 2001), 435–51.

invasion, Christians comprised about 3 percent of the population: over 800,000 people. But within just five years, by early 2008, over half of the Christian population of Iraq had left the country, dropping this figure below 350,000, and their decline in the region has only become more rapid with the emergence of the country's new government, dominated by Muslims.³ Similarly, between 1990 and 1999, a single decade, the Christian presence in Israel and Palestine shrank from 20 percent to 2 percent of the population. In the city of Bethlehem, the number of Christians has dropped from 65 percent to 12 percent of the population since 1965.⁴ Historians can tell us how Christianity first came to these regions and why it grew. They can identify various factors that led to its overthrow and now to its disappearance. But it is nearly impossible to predict the future of the region: whether Christianity will ever be restored there and, if it is, when that will be or under what circumstances it will take place.

The church is not static. While in some sense it remains the same—that is, we can recognize the contemporary church today as standing in continuity with the church in earlier ages, and we can suggest that this will be the case in the future—in other ways, the church is in constant motion. It is ever-changing to meet new contexts, new realities, new circumstances. The church must provide its people with stability, on the one hand, while remaining ever-adaptable to future needs. The church must change if it is to stay relevant. It needs to search for ways to apply its ancient texts and wisdom to every new challenge without losing the essence of the gospel. If it cannot meet its latest challenges for whatever reason, or if dramatic historical events take place, it loses its voice or even disappears.

There also seems to be a timeless ebb and flow in the church, a kind of pulsating but, at least until now, an expanding reality. Sometimes, it seems to retreat in one place only to break out in another. Sometimes it does so in old and recognizable forms, and at other times as something that appears to be quite new. It settles down and may seem to lose its vitality in one region of the world while it waits for the next quickening impulse to arrive. At the same time, its seed is planted or experiences exuberant renewal and growth in yet another region. In a global sense, however, the church has historically continued to grow and

3. Suha Rassam, *Christianity in Iraq* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2005), 184; "Another Assassination of a Christian Priest," *Middle East Council of Churches Newsbrief* (April 2008), 3; William Dalrymple, "The Final Place of Refuge for Christians in the Middle East Is Under Threat," *The Guardian Unlimited* (2 Sept. 2006).

4. "Bethlehem's Outlook Bleak, Says Mayor" (15 Dec. 2006), ZENIT 06121507. The ZENIT website originates in Rome and provides daily bulletins on issues of interest especially to Catholics.

expand, in some places more dramatically than in others.

What is clear from these general observations is that while the core of the church remains much the same—that is, its nature and mission provide a recognizable thread over time—changes in the format and structure of the church emerge almost daily. Thus, in one sense, the church that existed yesterday is no longer the church of today. The church that will be tomorrow is not the church we experience today. The future church will be different, and, inasmuch as it lies within our power, it is our job to discern and understand the shape of some of those differences.

The Commission on Faith and Order has worked on ecclesiological issues for decades, leading to the significant publication *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*.⁵ Since it was published in 2013, Faith and Order has received further input not only from the member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC), but also from churches around the world that are not members of the WCC—most notably, from Pentecostals throughout the global South.⁶ While *TCTCV* paints a clear picture regarding the nature of much of the church to the present, we are finding that the future of ecclesiological studies in the Commission on Faith and Order must remain open to the recent insights gained from these groups. We might say the same regarding some of the ecclesial experiments taking place among younger groups in recent years. While they may go by different names, many of them are still emerging, and Faith and Order will benefit from studying them to aid the whole church to embrace a truly global understanding of the church.

Ebb and Flow in the Christian World

Prognosticators intent upon discerning the future typically have an abysmal record when it comes to matching their predictions to the events that subsequently unfold. We can look at the current situation and realize that the global church today presents us with an array of ecclesial realities that historians and theologians at the beginning of the 20th century simply did not anticipate. First, we see massive changes in what was then described as “Christendom.” The concept of “Christendom,” at least as it was understood for centuries, is pretty

5. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

6. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, eds, *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022).

much gone. Second, the centre of gravity in the global church has shifted dramatically from the northern hemisphere to the southern hemisphere.⁷ As colonialism came to an end in many places, this shift seemed to most analysts highly unlikely. Third, the kind of Christianity that has come to dominate in this new ecclesial landscape today is not that of the earliest churches that dominated the ecclesial landscape for centuries. It is the newer, often more innovative, Pentecostal and Charismatic type churches that now dominate.⁸ These are but three of the many realities that seemed to have eluded historians and theologians just a century ago. Let me illustrate these points briefly.

At the beginning of the 20th century, historic Christianity was typically described in terms of Christendom, with so-called Christian nations aligned against “non-Christian” nations. This was certainly the language in vogue at the historic 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference.⁹ The church had a dominant role in the various cultures where it had a home. Yet, today, many point out that we are living at the end of Christendom, or at the beginning of a new Christendom, or even in a post-Christian age.¹⁰ Clearly, in those countries historically numbered as “Christian,” enormous changes have taken place that have since led to such conclusions. The decline in church attendance in Europe over the past century has been enormous. And it appears to be more or less directly related to the process of secularization. Nearly 25 years ago, René Rémond described this process as a “total separation between the values revered by religions and those of civil society, between the moral principles taught by the churches and personal codes of conduct.”¹¹ It can also be described as the separation of civil society from religion as a whole or even as the marginalization of religion into the private sphere.

Beginning in the 19th century and continuing well into the 20th, some countries, such as Russia and France, seemed to embrace secularism with great speed. When the Russian Revolution of 1918 was followed by 70 years of an atheistic regime, there were times when it appeared that the church would not survive. Yet, following the dissolution of the USSR, the church within many

7. See, for example, Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 3–9.

8. See, for example, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals* (October 2006).

9. See, for example, W.H.T. Gardiner, *“Edinburgh 1910”: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), 68–92.

10. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 10.

11. René Rémond, *Religion and Society in Modern Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 198.

Orthodox countries was confronted with a resurgence that few had anticipated. Other European nations, such as Italy, Germany, England, and the countries of Scandinavia, seemed to resist the initial appeal of secularism. In recent years, however, they have gradually come to be secularized—some more rapidly than others. The balance of power between denominations in the United States, many of them founded as the offspring of European denominations, has also begun to shift as older Protestant denominations decline in numbers while grasping wildly to maintain the power they once held.¹²

Second, if we turn our attention to Africa, Asia, or Latin America, we will quickly conclude that the centre of gravity of the global church has shifted to the southern hemisphere. David Barrett reported that in 1900, Christian adherents constituted only 9.2 percent of the African population, but by 2000, that number had grown to 45.9 percent.¹³ There are now more Christians in the global South than there are in the global North. While this may have been the *hope* of the past, it was by no means a certainty. Many were those who presumed that with the withdrawal of the colonial powers, Africa, for instance, would throw off the religion of its former oppressors. The church would quickly die. Yet, clearly, this is not the case. The majority of Christianity in the region may no longer be Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, or Reformed, but that the church is present is not up for debate. Instead, what we see is the dramatic development and growth of newer denominations and the appearance of new constellations of churches, such as those now designated as African Instituted Churches or African

12. In under four decades in the United States of America, for instance, the Episcopal Church has lost over 1 million members, the Lutherans have lost some 800,000, the Presbyterians have lost nearly 800,000, the United Churches of Christ have lost over 730,000, and the United Methodists have lost over 2.7 million members. These figures are all self-reported by the denominations in question in *Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches*, published by the National Council of Churches between 1971 and 2006.

13. David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, rev. 2001), Table 1-4, "Adherents of All Religions on 6 Continents, AD 1900-2000," 1:13.

Independent Churches.¹⁴

In Asia, the story is similar. South Korea, essentially a Buddhist country at the beginning of the 20th century, boasted more Christians, 29 percent, than Buddhists, 23 percent, by 2014.¹⁵ Similarly, the growth of Christianity within China during the past 75 years, while still a matter of considerable debate and speculation, has been nothing less than spectacular.¹⁶ Third, while historians at the beginning of the 20th century might have held some optimism regarding the growth of Christianity, none of them predicted the rapid growth of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches that now seem to overshadow the rest of Christianity.¹⁷ In Latin America, where no Pentecostal denomination even existed in 1900, the Catholic Church has been joined by multiple thousands of Pentecostal, Charismatic, and neo-Pentecostal congregations, which must now be viewed as constituting “a religious movement of undeniable importance.”¹⁸ Indeed, Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations now make up the majority of African churches and many Asian churches as well.

This overview suggests that change continues to take place in the global church. Some of it holds great promise for the future. Other aspects of these changes do not. They raise new questions that Faith and Order will need to address. But when we turn our attention to these issues, we must, of necessity, watch as the church continues to change.

14. Among the major books that have been published on this topic are Inus Daneel, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches*, Mambo Occasional Papers-Missio-Pastoral Series No. 17 (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987). In addition, much can be gained from Marie-Louise Martin, *Kimbangu: An African Prophet and His Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976). A smaller but useful volume by an AIC bishop is Paul Makhubu, *Who Are the Independent Churches?* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1988); John S. Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu II, *African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches – A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 3.

15. See Phillip Connor, “6 Facts about South Korea’s Growing Christian Population,” Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2014/08/12/6-facts-about-christianity-in-south-korea/>.

16. Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 168–69.

17. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 7–8.

18. Patricia Birman, “Conversion from Afro-Brazilian Religions to Neo-Pentecostalism: Opening New Horizons of the Possible,” in *Conversion of a Continent: Contemporary Religious Change in Latin America*, ed. Timothy J Steigenga and Edward L. Cleary (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 115; see also R. Andrew Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America’s New Religious Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17–63.

Recent Changes in the Emerging Church

Within the past half-century, we have watched an explosion of Pentecostal churches, charismatic churches, Jesus People churches, Third Wave churches, Neo-Pentecostal churches, Word of Faith churches, Prosperity churches, New Apostolic churches, and what some have called emerging and emergent churches. Each of these groups has contributed to the global church—some more profoundly than others—and the newest of these, like all previous movements, has many supporters who would point to their work as the most representative of the future of the church.

One of the questions today has to do with those churches that are part of the “emerging church” movement. Some of these emerging congregations may hold loose denominational affiliation. Others are completely independent congregations. The very fact that there are churches that appear to be “emerging” from something into something new points to the fact that their metamorphosis or evolution may not yet be complete. They are still in process. So, for me to ask what role such churches might play in the future ecumenical world is akin to Don Quixote duelling with windmills.

When I began to explore such churches, I asked my colleague Dr Ryan Bolger, co-author of a leading book on the emerging churches,¹⁹ whether he could think of any ecumenical contribution they might make to the church. His immediate response was “None that I can see.” In the next chapter, Dr Bolger describes a number of changes that continue to take place. I have concluded that while such churches may not have a major contribution to make to any contemporary ecumenical institution, they do possess several characteristics that might prove to be ecumenically valuable. These characteristics include:

1. their interest in cooperating with God in places where they see God at work
2. their willingness to put up with a certain amount of messiness in the process of emerging
3. their desire to move beyond the current situation that defines the church in terms of competing camps (e.g., liberal and conservative; Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox)
4. their desire to experience genuine community with all other Christians

19. Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

even if it means suppressing or contextualizing individual “rights.”²⁰

1. Cooperating with God Where They See God at Work²¹

If God is at work in the world, then there must be some evidence of God’s hand. But many are the claims that God is working here or working there, and this raises significant questions about how one might discern whether a specific claim is true. How can we tell where God is working in the world? Is it where change is taking place? Is it where claims of Christ’s presence are being made (Matt. 24:23-24)? Is it where claims arise that new orthodoxies are being revealed and adopted? Or is it more? Whatever the position one ultimately embraces, it is clear that recognizing the work of God in the world requires discernment.²²

Discernment is intended to be a community project, and when the church is a global reality, the result of any discerning activity that speaks on behalf of the church should represent something of the global breadth of the church. Any community-based conversation that is less than that runs a huge risk of not getting to the truth. Far too often, the “truth” is nothing more than a mere reflection of the community that claims to be discerning the work of God in the world. The recent splits of the past few years within some global traditions such as Anglicanism and Methodism over the issue of homosexuality are sad reminders of this. The fact that what was being discerned as truth among many voices from the global North was not what was being discerned as truth among most voices from the global South was the primary reason that these splits occurred.

What this suggests is that truth is not always easily recognized, especially when we are isolated from one another. Only a global discernment can be a holistic discernment, difficult as it may be. When it is properly discerned, however, it should be readily embraced by all. That the triune God is at work in the world is an important affirmation of scripture. God has created the world, and all that dwells in it (Gen. 1:1). Through the Logos, his Son, God continues to provide coherence to the world (Col. 1:17). Likewise, God’s Spirit is at work in the world, teaching and reminding Christ’s followers of what Jesus said (John 14:25), guiding into all truth (John 16:13), bearing witness to Christ (John

20. Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 91; Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 81, notes, “Emergents find the biblical call to community more compelling than the democratic call to individual rights. The challenge lies in being faithful to both ideals.”

21. Jones, *The New Christians*, 202.

22. See chapter 39 in this volume.

15:26), glorifying Christ (John 16:14), and convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11).

At its core, the gospel is about reconciliation. It is in Christ Jesus that “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell,” and it was through him that “God was pleased ... to reconcile to himself all things” (Col. 1:19-20). Jesus himself brought this same “good news” when he announced, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19). Similarly, the apostle John proclaimed that Jesus came to save those who put their faith in him and to grant them eternal life (John 3:16-17), while the apostle Paul claimed that through his death on the cross, he reconciled us to God (Rom. 5:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:18). Thus, the gospel is about reconciliation, and ultimately, reconciliation is about unity.

Emerging churches of all kinds are still quite young. Gibbs and Bolger suggested that this movement may have begun as late as 1995.²³ Today, it demonstrates enormous diversity. While this movement seems to call for greater unity through such characteristics as shared leadership, life in community in which an open conversation can take place, and transparent forms of welcome and hospitality to those who are unlike them, it does not yet embody that for which it strives. The change that took place in the so-called Emergent Village nearly 25 years ago involving its leadership is but one example. The reason for the change was allegedly a concern over the beginning of institutionalization within the movement.²⁴

In some ways, institutionalization is a normal part of social theory and ongoing church life, even when it is questioned by social theorists. Margaret Poloma has repeatedly called attention to the struggle over institutionalization within the classical Pentecostal Movement.²⁵ On the other hand, the Assemblies of God theologian Russell P. Spittler cautioned, “Say what you will about

23. Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 34–35.

24. Derek Keefe, “Tony Jones out as Emergent Village Head,” *Christianity Today* (3 Nov. 2008), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2008/november/tony-jones-out-as-emergent-village-head.html>.

25. Margaret M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Margaret M. Poloma, “The Symbolic Dilemma and Future of Pentecostalism: Mysticism, Ritual and Revival,” in *The Future of Pentecostalism in the United States*, ed. Eric Patterson and Edmund Rybarczyk (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 105–21; Margaret M. Poloma and Ralph W. Hood, Jr, *Blood and Fire: Godly Love in a Pentecostal Emerging Church* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

institutionalization and ecclesiastical structures, they clarify doctrine and stand guard against heretical teaching.”²⁶

The emerging church movement has made it clear that it wants to participate where God is working. Another way that this has been said is that they wish to join “the mission of God’s people to meet the world’s needs,”²⁷ though one needs to take note that the mission of God’s people must be tested to see whether it comports with the mission of God (*missio Dei*). Once again, we are called to discerning judgments. If it is the case that such churches wish to participate where God is working, then they will include the work of reconciliation at many different levels. It will begin with the reconciliation of individuals with God through the work of Jesus Christ—that is, at the vertical level—but it must also extend to the horizontal level, and this is often very difficult to accomplish. Even within Pentecostal churches, the transformation of one’s heart does not always immediately translate into the transformation of one’s life. In fact, unless the people of God are continually confronted with the need to allow the transformation of God’s Spirit to take place in an ongoing manner, it may never happen.²⁸

How the vast array of emerging churches of all types will ultimately relate to one another is still a significant question. How they ultimately come to view other Christians around them, how willing they are to view them as true sisters and brothers, how they will interact with their congregations and denominations are questions that will need to be answered. For now, they need to be asking such questions as “Where is reconciliation taking place in such a way that it leads to unity?” “What does it look like?” “Is it God’s will for human beings to work towards the reconciliation of denominations, or is this really a work that needs to be left to God?” This will be a difficult task until they come to terms with their own diversity, but it is fully consistent with God’s reconciling work and their desire to be where God is working.

26. Russell P. Spittler, “Maintaining Distinctives: The Future of Pentecostalism,” in *Pentecostals from the Inside Out*, ed. Harold B. Smith (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990), 124.

27. Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 120.

28. An incredibly vivid example of this is in Frank Chikane’s book *No Life of My Own* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989). A summary of that example, in which a white deacon within the Apostolic Faith Mission headed up the torture of a black pastor within the Apostolic Faith Mission during the apartheid period, may also be found in Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Rebuilding a Broken Society: An Interview with Frank Chikane: Director-general of South Africa under President Mbeki,” *Theology News and Notes* 48:1 (Spring 2001), 22–24.

2. Living with Messiness as the Church Emerges

Human beings live in a variety of social relationships. Whether it is in the family, in our schools, at our jobs, in the larger society, or in our churches, we value these social relationships. We are social beings who like order in the way that these relationships are developed and maintained. Order and chaos seem to run counter to one another. But order often comes as a result of the implementation of various kinds of power. It may be constitutional, official, or personal. But sometimes, we confuse order with power.

Jesus told Nicodemus that the Spirit was like the wind. She blows where she wants (John 3:8). As human beings, we are called to watch the signs and signals that the Spirit is at work. But sometimes, these signs and signals go in directions that we do not anticipate. The Holy Spirit is free to act in ways that are unique to her own understanding. Our job is to tap into the flow or wind of the Spirit and allow our sails to be filled in such a way that we can go wherever the Spirit goes. Saying this, however, is much easier than doing this. If the Holy Spirit is in control, then we are not. And it is not always easy to turn ourselves over to another, even to the Holy Spirit.²⁹

Some may complain that the Holy Spirit is too volatile: that is, for us to join in the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit expects us to be open and vulnerable. This is not so easy to do when we favour human control, our own control. But it must be remembered that the Holy Spirit is not simply blowing wherever she wants to blow and accomplishing what she wants to accomplish. It is the Spirit of God who hovered over that creative soup that brought forth order resulting in the separation of light from darkness, the water from dry land, and ultimately the creation of the human race to inhabit the earth (Gen. 1:3). It is the Holy Spirit who is present in us and with us, whom we also know as the Spirit that brings unity between us, “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13), and we have been reminded by Paul that our task is to make “every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

Leaders among new and emerging churches often acknowledge their willingness to live with messiness, at least for the moment, but messiness comes

29. Jones writes, “It means that emergent churches – including those profiled herein – look quite different from one another. They share little in the way of leadership structures or church architecture or forms of worship. What they share is an ethos, a vibe, a sensibility. And that’s squishy.” Jones, *The New Christians*, 39; see also 190–91.

with different parameters.³⁰ The lives of individual congregations can be quite messy as they allow the Holy Spirit to lead them. Emerging churches have found this to be the case while exploring new ways of being church. The very act of exploration as they seek the mind of the Spirit is a messy one. It comes from being, as professors Oscar Cullmann and George Eldon Ladd described it many years ago, between the “already” and the “not yet,” between this age and the age to come.³¹ One does not know where the congregation will go, from beginning to end. Classical liturgy seems to be out, in most cases; new liturgical forms seem to be coming in. The role of preaching is being re-examined, with some choosing to continue with more or less traditional three-point sermons prepared by an individual, others developing sermons in conversation with members of the congregation, and still others choosing to have the “sermon” time become a time for discussion.³²

All of this sounds very much like the way that the Azusa Street revival went forward. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were no books that told William J. Seymour how a Pentecostal church should be formed or how a Pentecostal service should proceed. Seating was placed in a circular fashion to encourage conversation. The Bible became the book on which Seymour and those who came to the mission drew when they had questions of faith (doctrine) and order (practice). There were no books on which those involved in this new worship experiment could draw, no mentors to help them, and no seminars that they could attend. They were on their own.³³

In one sense, new and emerging churches find themselves in a similar place. Because they have questioned everything, from the validity of ordination to the need for a seminary education, both in its traditional form and with respect to the content that it has traditionally offered, because they have chosen to take more seriously than do many congregations the charisms that every participant might bring, and because they have chosen to deconstruct some of the historic interpretations, teachings, and doctrines of the church as they have been delivered

30. Jones, *The New Christians*, 152–69, contends that this messiness includes how emergents do church but extends the messiness imagery to such things as doctrine: specifically, the doctrines associated with the incarnation and the Trinity.

31. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, trans. Floyd A. Filson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964) and *Salvation in History*, trans. Sidney G. Sowers (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

32. Jones, *The New Christians*, and Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 156–66. Both speak of “open mics” and community discussions.

33. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2006), 73–74, 135–66.

to us, they have found themselves in a messy situation.³⁴ One might suggest that it is a messy situation of their own making, but that probably is not a fair criticism. They are learning in this process, owning some of what has gone before, but it may also be the case that they are learning some lessons taught by the Holy Spirit that will be useful for the church of the future. It may be that they will be able to teach the larger church something about the nature of Spirit-led messiness that will be useful in building greater unity within the church.

3. Moving Beyond Our Current State of Competition

It is extremely difficult for most people to imagine what the church might look like if all parts of the church were visibly one.³⁵ Part of that difficulty derives from the fact that we live two thousand years after the church was founded. From its beginning, however, the temptation to separate has resurfaced many times. Whether we think of the initial division between the Hebrew and Hellenistic widows that the apostles resolved with the appointment of deacons (Acts 6:1-7), or the distinctions that kept intruding between Jewish and Gentile Christians that were more or less resolved at the first Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:4-21), or the various schisms that emerged within the early church, or the historic split between East and West in 1054, or the multiple schisms that have separated Christians from the time of the Protestant Reformation, the story is

34. Jones, *The New Christians*, 104–22; it is interesting that Gibbs and Bolger mention “doctrine” only once and theology only in the context of creativity. In one sense, these seem no longer to be important concepts as everything flows from the individual experience rather than groupthink.

35. Jones, *The New Christians*, 8, notes that “Emergents find little importance in the discreet differences between the various flavors of Christianity. Instead, they practice a generous orthodoxy that appreciates the contributions of all Christian movements.” On page 22, he writes, “But more and more people are checking out, becoming savvy to the moral bankruptcy of both sides of the [liberal/conservative] debate. They’re looking for a new, third way, both in the church and in society at large.”

clear.³⁶ Maintaining unity has proven to be an extremely difficult undertaking for the church.

In a sense, the council in Jerusalem set a precedent for maintaining unity that could be followed over the centuries to come. The early church attempted to follow that precedent. Through the 8th century, seven ecumenical councils in which the bishops of the church came together were convened.³⁷ The appeal to apostolic succession among the bishops, the identification of the canonical books (our scriptures) for use in the churches, the adoption of widely held creedal affirmations (such as Nicaea), and the convening of ecumenical councils were all intended to preserve the unity of the church. They were mostly successful, though there were those who disagreed, and the concerns of those who disagreed typically became the seeds of the next major schism. Any objective reading of the history of the church quickly demonstrates that if we think of the church only in institutional terms, there have always been congregations, theologians, and people who were neither in complete agreement nor in complete fellowship with one another. And these divisions were not always the result of theology. Some came as the result of cultural differences, differences in practices, linguistic differences, political and ideological differences, and even differences between dominant personalities.

All of us have been born during an era of denominationalism. The seemingly endless splitting that has gone on in the church for the past 500 years has produced a plethora of denominations. In many cases, we have come to view “the other” not as brothers and sisters but as competitors or, in some cases, as

36. On the division between the widows, see Acts 6:1-7. On the division between Jews and Gentiles, see Acts 15:19-20 and 27-29; Galatians 1:6–2:21; and Ephesians 4:1-6. Many were the divisions and schisms that appeared in the early church. Clement, *Epistle to the Corinthians* 1:2; 3:7; and Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 6–7; *To the Philadelphians* 2:7; and *To the Smyrnaeans* 8–9, warned several congregations that they needed to stay close to the bishop in order to guarantee unity. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3.2, contended that all bishops must agree with the bishop in Rome. Cyprian went further by insisting that membership in the church was completely dependent upon one’s relationship with the bishop: *Letter* 66(68) 5:1; 8:3; 10:1. The primary heresies were various forms of Gnosticism (including Marcionism) and Arianism. The primary sources of schism during this period included Montanism, Donatism, and Monophysitism. Other divisions would quickly emerge based upon language (Greek and Latin) and worldview (East and West).

37. Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1983, 1990).

heretics or enemies that need to be overcome.³⁸ Others seem to welcome church splits as though they were merely signs of new life, of greater purity, of greater diversity, or of renewed vitality.³⁹ For such people, the concept of a church that manifests some form of visible unity, especially in institutional terms, is difficult, if not entirely impossible, to conceive. For them, it is much easier to think of the church as composed of a multiplicity of groups, many with whom we may even have vast disagreements, connected only by some invisible link that is made possible by the Holy Spirit. Sadly, in our ahistorical times, many people seem to believe that this is the way things have always been. Division, competition, and arguments are seen as the *normal* ways that the church has always existed. As a result, they have come to believe that when Jesus prayed that his followers might be one (John 17:21), he merely had spiritual unity in mind. For them, Jesus' prayer for unity has already been answered.⁴⁰

Even so, there are many within the church—from those who are committed to formal ecumenical endeavours to new converts who have not yet been traditioned—who do not see things in this way. When I began my own seminary

38. Luisa Jeter Walker, *Peruvian Gold* (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God, Division of Foreign Mission, 1985), 19–20, calls crosses and pictures of saints, when blessed by the priest, “objects of worship to which the people prayed in homes, churches, and chapels or before wayside shrines. Theoretically, the images merely represented the saint, Virgin, or Lord to whom the prayer was directed. But in practice the vast majority of the people actually worshiped the images.” In addition, she claims that Catholics in Peru are a “mixture of paganism and Christianity” that stems from the time of Constantine. See also Luisa Jeter de Walker, *Siembra y Cosecha: Las Asambleas de Dios de Argentina, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay y Paraguay* (Deerfield: Editorial Vida, 1992), 2:163–64, where she speaks of syncretism and idolatry in Bolivia. The internal regulations (“Reglamento Interno”) of the Igreja Pentecostal Deus É Amor classifies Catholic baptism under the category of “paganism” and considers it as “sacrifice to the idols” (Batismo – pagão, Item B 6). This is found in “Reglamento Interno: Igreja Pentecostal Deus É Amor,” appended to *A Bíblia Sagrada* (São Paulo: Sociedade Bíblica do Brasil, 1969), 4.

39. Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 25; C. Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 32–33; and C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1976), 127–43. Lindsell opens the door for the sake of purity, while Wagner opens it for racial, cultural, and class differences.

40. “A Declaration on Ecumenical Councils and Christian Unity by the National Association of Evangelicals,” *Church of God Evangel* 52:39 (3 Dec. 1962), 12; Ray H. Hughes, “Pentecost and Ecumenism,” *Church of God Evangel* 56:45 (16 Jan. 1967), 12–13, 15; Thomas F. Zimmerman, “The Holy Spirit: Unifying the Church,” *Church of God Evangel* 57:35 (13 Nov. 1967), 12–14, 17; Opal L. Reddin, “Church Unity,” *Enrichment* 1.2 (Spring 1996), 68; Francesco Toppi, *E Mi Sarete Testimoni: Il Movimento Pentecostale e le Assemblee di Dio in Italia* (Rome: ADI-Media, 1999), 199.

training in 1970, it was rare to find classmates who did not belong to a particular denomination; at the same time, it was likely that they had been part of that denomination from the time they had come to faith. It is not so anymore. The vast majority of my students know nothing of denominational loyalty. They have already been participants or even members of three to five different denominations.

What those from new and emerging churches suggest is that none of the current structures are really necessary. They would find that claim difficult to sell among denominational leaders and professional ecumenists alike, but they may be onto something when they affirm that the current state of affairs is not normal for the church and they are attempting to find something that is closer to what they believe God had in mind when God gave us the church. This insight is a significant gift to the ecumenical nature of the church. It may be a painful one to acknowledge because we feel safe within the current situation. It is comfortably familiar, what we have always known. We may not love it, but we understand it. We have been able to find our way around and among these differences. Some of us take our identities by lifting up these differences and distinctions. We can also dismiss those that we don't like, those that make us feel uncomfortable, those that critique us, by labelling "the other" as different, as sectarian, as schismatic, as fanatical, or even as heretical.

Emergents say that they are unwilling to allow such things to continue to separate them from one another. Thus, they are willing to experiment, to try new ways of thinking and new ways of being in order to see something new come into existence. They may resist certain doctrinal or traditional lines, but they may adopt others. They may resist certain liturgical practices but embrace a wide spectrum of others. In the end, what emerges will not look like everything that has come before it, but their sense is that it will include what they consider to be the more valuable aspects of those things.⁴¹

4. A Desire to Move towards Genuine Community⁴²

In my search of the literature studying these churches, I have not found many references to Jesus' comment in Matthew 16:18: "I will build my church." That there is only one church and that it is linked in some way to the kingdom of God seems to be the more common approach to this discussion within such churches. The church and the kingdom are not the same, but they are clearly

41. Jones, *The New Christians*, 1–22; 223–24; Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 217–34.

42. Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 89–115.

linked in the minds of these believers, who see the kingdom of God as a canon of sorts by which they attempt to assess the practices of the church.⁴³ Interestingly, however, is the sense I get that the one Church of Jesus Christ is not something called out of the world to be separated from the world, thereby reinforcing long-standing distinctions that have been made between what is sacred and what is profane, or what is holy and what is secular, but a church that discerningly, yet in a genuinely open manner, seeks to live *within* the world.⁴⁴

With such a view of church, the lines that classical churches draw, lines that often result in division, become smudged or blurred. Emerging churches tend to de-emphasize those things that traditionally separate us—doctrines, theological distinctives, ethical decisions, mores, and the like—and embrace the things that they believe unite us: common experiences, dialogue, and so on. They claim to offer a generous approach to orthodoxy and a genuine openness to new ways of interpreting ancient texts.⁴⁵

As I have thought about their approach to the nature of church, I have been reminded of the words of Emil Brunner when he contended that

The Body of Christ is nothing other than a fellowship of persons ... The faithful are bound to each other through their common sharing in Christ and in the Holy Ghost, but that which they have in common is precisely no “thing,” no “it,” but a “he,” Christ and His Holy Spirit.⁴⁶

It is that personal aspect of *koinonia* that enables all to begin the quest for deeper communion. As the English Pentecostal Donald Gee noted nearly 70 years ago, when Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples, he prayed for “individual disciples—not denominations and churches.”⁴⁷ The way Gee saw it, this meant that we need not “‘make’ unity” since it was a gift or grace that has already been bestowed by God.

Still, Gee and many of these newer churches recognize the contradiction in any idea that *koinonia*, genuine community, can be experienced in isolation. It is impossible. One needs others if one is to have community, and what binds us together is our love for one another. Such an approach to the question, first of

43. Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 46.

44. Jones, *The New Christians*, 75, states boldly that “Emergents see all of God’s activity in all aspects of culture and reject the sacred-secular divide.”

45. Jones, *The New Christians*, 8, 139–61.

46. Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 10–11.

47. Donald Gee, “Possible Pentecostal Unity,” *Pentecost* 13 (Sept. 1950), 17.

genuine community and then of greater unity that is inclusive of an ever-growing number of people, congregations, and ultimately denominations, is open-ended. In a sense, it is centred yet unbounded: centred on Jesus Christ but free to expand or grow provided that the centre remains intact. The call to the Christian life as well as to the life of the Christian is a call that steers us away from isolation and into relationship: the close, intimate, vulnerable type of relationship that is uniquely described by the term *koinonia*.

The question remains, however, whether this notion of community that seems to lie at the heart of much thinking in these newer expressions of church is ultimately capable of engaging the larger Christian community in the same way. If I read Paul correctly, never is a local congregation understood to be an isolated manifestation of what he has in mind when he thinks of *koinonia*, a term that is descriptive of the church. Each local congregation is always in relationship to all others. And together, they manifest what it means to be the church. Paul is unwavering in Ephesians 4:1-6, where he notes that there is only one God, one Lord, one Spirit, and there is only one call through the one gospel. There is one faith, one hope, one baptism, one Lord's supper, and one body. That one body is an entity that exists as a creation of God, to be sure, and we as parts of that body have, through the action of God, already been made one. Our *koinonia*, our community, therefore, is to be made manifest precisely because we are one in Christ, because we have one faith, because we participate in one baptism, because we are indwelt by the same Holy Spirit. As such, we are called to live together as one people.

The newer and emergent churches offer hard criticism of more traditional forms of church.⁴⁸ Traditional churches are equally critical of the experimentation that is taking place within these newer churches. As I have reviewed this relatively new socio-ecclesial reality called "emerging church," I have concluded that they have an opportunity to impact all of Christianity on the issue of Christian unity. The four characteristics of such churches that I outlined above certainly provide them with some tools that could prove to be useful within the larger ecumenical conversation.

Perhaps some exposure of these newer church leaders to the Global Christian Forum would help them to see beyond the walls to which they have contributed in ways that could help them build transformative relationships with historic churches as well. Like this movement, the Global Christian Forum is an

48. Jones, *The New Christians*, 11-13, 18-22.

important initiative that is built first around relationships.⁴⁹ Participants speak out of their experience, drawing from the ways that God has called and led them into faith and/or from the ways that God has called and integrated them into ministry. This simple form of sharing from the heart of one's Christian life has begun to open even previously sceptical Christian leaders to see Christ in "the other." Once a relationship has been established, trust can be built upon that relationship, and ultimately even the most intractable issues can be addressed in new ways, precisely because a foundational relationship, without judgment, has been laid. My hope is that these newer expressions of church will be able to rise to that kind of potential, thereby making a significant contribution to the call for greater unity within the Church of Jesus Christ around the world.

49. On the method used by the Global Christian Forum, see particularly Sarah Rowland Jones, "The Global Christian Forum Renewing Our Global Ecumenical Method," in Richard Howell, *Global Christian Forum: Transforming Ecumenism* (New Delhi: Evangelical Fellowship of India, 2007), 159–81.

Ways Forward for Western Evangelicals*

Ryan Bolger

Do Western Evangelicals have a role to play in the highly spiritual yet post-religious cultures of post-Christendom? In this brief chapter, I assert that because of their tireless ability to prosper outside of institutions within the individualized culture of the West, evangelicals are well suited to serve in post-Christendom, a religious and cultural epoch where spirituality without religion is the primary form of faith expression. However, to make that journey, evangelicalism must itself morph if it is to remain true to its roots (as change-agent) while making a significant impact in the newly arising cultures of spirituality of the West.

Reformed Evangelicals in Modernity

Western Evangelicals look to the early “evangelical” reformers for their roots. Luther’s posting of his 95 theses serves as a model for an activism that moves away from institutional faith and focuses on the life of the believer before their God. Generations after Luther, the Reformed movements institutionalized and their spiritual vitality waned; evangelicals emerged to call the faithful—through tracts, Bible studies, and open-air preaching—to a vital relationship with

* Portions of this chapter were presented during the Faith and Order consultation held in Pasadena, California, in June 2018. It was previously published in Tony Jones, ed., *Phyllis Tickle: Evangelist of the Future* (Orleans: Paraclete Press, 2014), and in *FULLER Studio 2* (2015), 60–62. It is used here by permission of both publishers. While this chapter does not directly discuss *TCTCV*, its insights on evangelical ecclesiology are important contributions that help better understand the way in which many elements of the evangelical movement evolved through the years, both in terms of theology (highlighting ways in which many evangelical churches came to understand the church) and in terms of practice (how these theological principles practically affect their way of being church).

Christ. Both the Pietist and Puritan movements stressed the need for repentance and personal conversion. Beginning a century later, the Wesleys, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and eventually Charles Finney continued this evangelical pattern of calling out to the nominally religious to recommit their lives to Christ.

The Reformation coincided with the birth of modernity; a culture made possible by the invention of the printing press. Modernity represented a larger shift in Western culture, from a mercantile to a capitalist economy, from fiefdoms to nation-states, from an illiterate to a literate populace, resulting in an educated middle class. Traditional commitments gave way to societal commitments: from the villager to the citizen, from the artisan to the industrial worker, and from the clansman to the soldier. Modernity needed a religion to make sense of its world, and the Reformation answered the call.

Over time, within modernity, societal commitments yielded to Cartesian, Enlightenment, psychological, and more atomic understandings of the individual. Societal controls gave way to the heightened responsibility of the late modern or postmodern individual. Evangelicals thrived in the culture of the individual and the values of the Enlightenment.

As personal agency increased in the modern period, so did evangelical practice. Religious affiliation might be beneficial, but it could never substitute for personal repentance: each person needed to convert to an entirely new way of life. Evangelicals felt the call to share their understanding individually with others, outside the religious institution, in the home or in the workplace. More than the homily or sermon, it was individual Bible reading that became the primary referent for evangelical life, be it through study or devotional reading. Finally, one's family, community, ethnicity, gender, age, or economic status did not save; for the evangelical, each one came to Calvary alone.

Moving into the 20th century, the producer culture that dominated modernity until World War II waned in the 1960s, moving towards a more individualized, and hence consumer-oriented, paradigm in the 1970s. Religion in the West adopted this logic as well, and ascriptive ties to religion—such as a set of activities one inherited from one's parents, like language or culture—ceased in the West. Instead, all religions shared a level playing field, and churches competed as one of many spiritual options for the seeker to choose. In addition, a plethora of new spiritualities filled the religious marketplace. Freed from denominational ties, Christian individuals in a consumer society flocked to the evangelical megachurches of the 1980s. Much more responsive to the seeker than their traditional forebears, these evangelical institutions created spiritual products and activities designed for individual consumption.

Throughout their history, evangelicals initiated a broad range of practices, intentionally outside institutional controls. Late modern culture provided a space for the widespread practice of individual Bible reading, prayer groups, preaching and revival meetings, accountability groups, mission societies, media ministries such as radio and TV evangelism, and worship music. Eventually, evangelicals created colleges, seminaries, college ministries, and magazines, not to mention new churches and movements. Most of these efforts were created outside the jurisdiction of existing power structures.

Evangelical movements, with their clarion call for individual action, invariably evolved into larger institutions, which eventually impeded on the freedoms of the individual members of the organization a generation or two later. These institutions would then be characterized as less vibrant than their origins and thus would themselves become candidates for renewal. Once again, the evangelical call for a removal of constraints to individual action and enablement of gospel action would be sounded.

The Birth of Emergence Culture

With the birth of the network society and the rise of interactive web practices in the 21st century, Western culture shifted once again, this time from a consumer paradigm into a culture of participation. Participatory culture transforms consumption activities into production activities as former consumers become cultural producers, remixing consumed media products into new configurations and products.

Participatory culture is not a post-individual culture: the individual is still a choosing creature free of ascriptive ties. But these individuals are choosing to immerse themselves into a deeply communal and participatory world. It is not an isolated, lonely “me” but the deeply “connected me”¹ that dwells in this new world of connectedness and participation.

One way to characterize the culture of participation is as part of a larger rubric, one that spans science, systems theory, and philosophy—that is, within the rubric of emergence. Through this paradigm, one sees new forms of cultural life emerge. Emergent religion is characterized by a focus on deinstitutionalization, community, plurality, social justice, the embrace of material reality, the sacralization of all of life, an embrace of science, and innovative appropriations

1. Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, *Networked: The New Operating System* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 19.

of tradition.² Emergence Christianity, a subset of both emergence culture and religion respectively, began with Azusa Street in 1906 Los Angeles, according to Phyllis Tickle.³ Led by uneducated preachers, many barriers were crossed, including racial, economic, age, gender, cultural, and denominational. Just a few years later, when Walter Rauschenbusch introduced the social gospel, a social justice component was added to the other early characteristics of emergence. With the birth of the Taizé movement in 1943, all the components of an emergent Christianity were displayed: a deeply communal, hospitable, and ecumenical movement dedicated to global peace and justice, all expressed within an incarnational, neo-monastic aesthetic. Before the mid-point of the 20th century, Tickle writes, Emergence Christianity had revealed its form.⁴

With the increased agency of the Western individual, combined with a deep suspicion of institution, these organic movements at the margins of Christianity may become the primary Western expression of faith in the 21st century. It is most clear in the West that Christian institutions will cease to dominate as they did in Christendom. A deinstitutionalized church, beyond the denomination *and* the congregation, seems to be the future of the Western church.

Towards an Evangelical Emergence

In early modernity, societal commitments governed how people formed their way of life. Evangelicals internalized the modern innovations of the Reformation and contextualized those forms into the late modern culture of individualism. In participatory culture, where all citizens are individualized (people are choosers, free of all ascriptive ties and anti-institutional in disposition), what is the role for evangelical faith? How might evangelicals continue their work in yet another culture where high levels of personal agency abound?

Evangelical megachurches, designed for the individual spectator, no longer serve as compelling options for participatory individuals in emerging cultures. A participatory individual desires to produce, interact with, reveal, and upload their creations for others to experience. An evangelicalism that focuses on producer or consumer paradigms will not thrive in a participatory culture.

Evangelicals would do well to bring their highly participatory entrepreneurial

2. Ryan K. Bolger and J. Shawn Landres, "Emergent Religion," in *Encyclopedia of Global Religion*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer and Wade Clark Roof (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2011).

3. Phyllis Tickle, *Emergence Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012). See Part 2: "A Long Time Coming: *How did we get here?*" 47–104.

4. Tickle, *Emergence Christianity*, 47–104.

skills and inclinations to bear on emergence culture. The evangelical has always destabilized church practice: the inner call trumped those activities that seemed to perpetuate the institution rather than personal spirituality. Through their own initiative, evangelicals take responsibility for their own spiritual life before God, reach out to neighbours, and start new ministries. Evangelicals cultivate a spiritual network of friends without regard to institutional religion. If emergence is the time for a DIY (do-it-yourself) spirituality—where one cobbles together a spiritual life from many sources across one’s many networks, outside typical church structures—then evangelicals are ideally suited to serve in this context.

In regard to mission in emergence culture, I suggest that evangelicals remember their four marks⁵ and offer them with open hands, knowing that they will significantly morph as they remix with the receiving culture. The emergent religious practices of de-institutionalization, pluralization, social progressivism, and innovation (within tradition) will merge with the evangelical marks of conversion, activism, the Bible, and the cross. The new synthesis will look different from either evangelicalism or emergence as the two traditions meet, embrace, and challenge one another.⁶ In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore some of the possibilities for evangelicalism within a culture of emergence.

Conversion

Evangelicals are a people who believe in conversion. Small improvements will not do: one needs to completely redirect his or her life to God. In late modernity, the revival meeting served to facilitate the conversion of a nominally religious person into a spiritual person. Evangelicals encouraged both adult or believers’ baptism and personal testimony, and they downplayed religious affiliation. After conversion, the evangelical convert was to continue in a vibrant faith; if not, they would be considered lukewarm or backslidden, and they would again

5. Recall that evangelicals are characterized by a commitment to an individually converted way of life, the Bible as an individual’s primary source of authority, a personal activism that seeks to share their way of life with the world, and the cross where each individual receives the life of Christ as mediated through his life and work. Although many definitions might be given, the most widely accepted view of evangelicalism continues to be David Bebbington’s. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2–17.

6. This is not new. “Evangelical” has been used as a modifier to other traditions: one might be an evangelical Orthodox, evangelical Catholic, evangelical Anglican, or evangelical Reformed. Richard Mouw describes himself as an evangelical Calvinist. Richard J. Mouw, *The Smell of Sawdust: What Evangelicals Can Learn from Their Fundamentalist Heritage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 71–76.

be candidates for an altar call. For the evangelical in participatory culture, ongoing sanctification would be expressed through a dynamic and unceasing practice of spiritual encounter with God, often expressed in an everyday rule of life.

Evangelicals in these new contexts would practise a material spirituality. A material spirituality embraces science and its findings in physics and biology, letting go of the long battle against science in regard to cosmic origins and evolution. A material spirituality integrates these findings into a spirituality that sees the connectedness of all things. It welcomes mystery and paradox. A material spirituality has no hatred of the body. Exercise such as yoga, rest, and a healthy diet, all function as spiritual activities. While living in an evolutionary universe, a material spirituality remains conversionist: all of reality must continue to yield to God and pursue growth to find its full expression.

Activism

Evangelicals would do well to bring their activism forward into emergence culture. Evangelicals understand that what they receive in the gospel must not be kept to themselves; they have a responsibility to communicate this message to the whole world. Just as in modernity, evangelicals in participatory culture will be apostolic and start new ministries; however, unlike in modernity, large numbers and longevity will not be a litmus test of success.

New evangelical affiliations would be guided by missional action, not membership. Evangelicals in participatory culture would identify with other Christians by sharing in their mission, be it serving, creation care, peacemaking, proclaiming, or justice work. Moreover, they are more likely to identify with their own group by adopting its rule of life rather than by attending church services or membership classes.

Evangelicals in emergent culture would engage public culture with a deep sense of equality and mutuality. They would dialogue with other traditions, be it within Christianity (ecumenism) or with other faiths or non-faiths. They would recognize pluralism and mystery as realities, and so they would understand that they see only partially as well—that ambiguity is a facet of our current reality. As such, evangelicals in emergent culture would approach others in a state of “prophetic dialogue.”⁷

7. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis), 2011.

The Bible

Evangelicals see the Bible as the basis for their faith and practice in everyday life. Correspondingly, evangelicals in participatory culture would see scripture as the overarching narrative of their lives, a story that includes the cosmos, the emergence of life, the peoples of the earth, and the Hebrew and Christian traditions.

These new evangelicals would recognize the deeply contextual aspect of the Bible itself and the many ways groups and cultures have appropriated scripture throughout history. Evangelicals would receive the different liturgies, creeds, symbols, rituals, and practices, often taken directly from the Bible, or deeply inspired by it, as their worship. Evangelicals in emergent culture might eclectically appropriate Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal liturgies as biblical practices immersed in the cultures of their time and place.

Evangelicals in emergence will bring forward master narratives from the Bible—stories of liberation and redemption. The world beyond the church might be given over to slavery or patriarchy or any number of fallen structures, but the community of God must live into the coming kingdom, where differences are celebrated and overcome, all are equally valued, and all have a voice and something to give. This was a characteristic of the early Christian communities, and it serves as a challenge to evangelicals today.

The Cross

By taking up one's cross, an evangelical adopts a life of social non-conformity in situations where the powers need to be called to account (when these self-same powers do not conform to the world God is bringing into being). Taking up one's cross puts the cross of Christ right at the centre of the evangelical's life.

The cross invites individuals into a new life of rich abundance, but first, they must die. Each one must let go of all that does not coincide with God's ways, must receive forgiveness, and must align themselves with God's inbreaking kingdom. It is a personal dying to all the fallen systems of the world and a living into the new reality of Christ. It is a "no" to oppression, marginalization, isolation, exclusiveness. It is a "yes" to the reign of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in the world.

Leadership

The tasks of a spiritual leader morph in a participatory context as well, but again, they resonate with historic evangelical dispositions. The spiritual leader is first and foremost a seasoned spiritual practitioner (a disciple) before they are a leader. They must lead from the place of spiritual mastery, regardless of the level of formal education attained. Their authority comes from serving an exemplary life, one that inspires others; the leader will not prescribe a life for others as much as serve as an example to them. The leaders in these spiritual communities function as spiritual directors more than they do as managers. These leaders may not have had any formal training—in fact, education may become a liability, as formal training may lead to more religious expressions of faith, not to spiritual practices outside of institution. Beyond the spiritual director role, the new evangelical leader may work as a facilitator, creating a space for volunteers to create ministry activities such as worship, small groups, or mission outreach.

Because of evangelicalism's long history as a contextualized faith in an individualized culture, evangelicals possess a gift to offer 21st-century communities that share many of the same characteristics. I suggest that evangelicals come with a posture of openness, offering their vibrant tradition to an emerging context of connection, holism, and participation. Through integrated practices of a converted spirituality, a holistic engagement with the world, a wide sense of God's story, and a fresh engagement with the cross, evangelicals may demonstrate a way forward in the highly spiritual but post-religious culture of post-Christendom.

SECTION THREE

**Common Threads:
Key Themes from Global
Consultations on *The Church:*
*Towards a Common Vision***

Sources of Theology

Pablo R. Andiñach

Theological Discourse and Doctrinal Statements

We need to distinguish between theological discourse and doctrinal statements. Both are “theological documents,” but they are discourses in a different way and with a different role in the life of the church. First, we can affirm that every church has its own doctrinal statements, which are based upon theological affirmations, most of them formulated centuries ago. These statements are the product of a long process of elaboration, thinking, and rethinking on theological issues, discussions and consultations, synods, and official documents. Depending on the structure of each denomination, the process of defining these foundations of faith will obviously be adapted to their form of being a church. We can characterize this process as a long way of building definitions until arriving at a doctrinal or dogmatic statement. To put it simply, there is no church without theological statements, doctrine, or dogmatic affirmations.

Furthermore, when we speak of theological discourse, we refer to a slightly different realm. Theological discourse is produced by theologians and is the position of a particular person. Sometimes we can identify a “theological school” or “stream of theological thought,” but always this kind of theology is something more contextual, produced in a particular social or intellectual context. As usual, theology, in this sense, does not pretend to be the official voice of a particular church—nor, of course, does it establish doctrine for the church. Theologians are observers of the society and have as their main task the need to offer tentative responses to the challenges which come from their society. From this perspective, theological discourse is crucial for the life of the church because theologians must keep in mind the doctrinal statements of the church while at the same time responding to the questions and situations coming from the world. For them, the question is how to respond to this particular (social, personal, political,

cultural, etc.) situation, having among their tools the tradition of their denomination and the tools coming from the time and situation where their discourse will apply. So, in this kind of theological discourse, the context certainly has an impact upon or defines the wording in the particular situation that calls for a theological voice.

A sensitive question is how to connect both theological areas. In my opinion, when a church faces a particular situation, which calls for a definition of the church, it needs to produce a voice which combines both discourses. Because the solid traditional foundation has not always addressed 21st-century issues clearly, and because contextual theology cannot build its discourse on personal opinions alone, each theologian must take into account his or her own tradition to offer a relevant or effective answer to the new challenge or situation. This is true even if the theologian pretends to be free of any historical tradition (that is, when a theologian claims to be “purely biblical” or “attached only to the old tradition of the church”). Nobody thinks theologically from nowhere or from a vacuum; we are all persons who are situated in various aspects: our present social context is one such aspect, but our past context (our denominational tradition, our preferred theologians, etc.) is another. At the same time, most theologians will accept the fact that tradition and dogmatic statements are also definitions, which can change with the passage of the years, and that they, too, need revising and updating.

To add another ingredient to the discussion of an already complicated issue, I would ask, “What is theology?” Latin American theology used to give a particular answer to this question. I would say that while most theologians would answer it following an etymological analysis, “theology is a *discourse on God*,” in Latin American theology over the past 50 years, it has been defined as “a *reflection on the praxis of the church*.” In our Latin American way of doing theology, the emphasis is on the praxis of the Christians or on the praxis of the church. The main question is not “Who is God?” or “How should we present God to a secular society?” or “How do we speak of God in our day?” but “How do we transform our reality (social, personal, cultural, political) in order to bring our society closer to evangelical values?” From this point of view, theology becomes a tool for the Christian community that helps them to clarify the goals, the challenges, and the path they have to follow to transform the reality. In the words of many Latin American theologians, “theology is a second act; the first is the praxis.”

The Epistemological Question

Depending on the denomination, this relationship between these two aspects of the theological discourse could be relatively simple, or it could be very complicated. The question becomes, “Where, or from what source(s) does the church or the theologian draw the raw material for building statements, theologies, or documents that will guide the church?”¹ This is an epistemological question.

It is clear that in most denominations, the role of the Bible, tradition, liturgy, and spiritual experience—even, for some churches, the social sciences or the sciences—provide different grades of sources from which they look for insights to generate their theological discourse. In doing so, they try to offer light to their communities or the society. At the same time, with this discourse, they claim to bring direction and guidance to their understanding of the Christian life, mission, and testimony. They look to these sources for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to develop its theology and statements. For some churches, all and any of these items can be sources for theological discourse, but they function on a different scale. For others, the combination of two or three of these sources (for example, the Bible and spiritual experience) are the key to ensuring a solid theology rooted in a biblical or traditional truth—or both.

I understand that this is a question that continues to need to be addressed ecumenically. Each tradition or denomination will not have too much trouble dealing with this issue in its own sphere of influence, but my feeling is that we are far from finding common ground or some agreement on this topic. Ironically, one of the problems that confronts us is that all of the principal answers that the churches give to this question are valuable and solid. Let me give an example.

The role of the *magisterium* in the Roman Catholic Church is crucial in defining its theology (for dogmatic statements or for theological answers to contextual problems) and in arriving at a particular position on any particular social issue (the death penalty, domestic violence, social justice, etc.). The arguments for why a *magisterium* is necessary are good and solid. Nevertheless, when addressing these same issues, most Protestant denominations will probably arrive at a similar or close statement, but in a different way. They do not have a

1. The Commission on Faith and Order has done some significant work on this topic. See Tamara Grdzeldze, ed., *Sources of Authority, Vol. 1: The Early Church*, Faith and Order Paper No. 217 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014); Tamara Grdzeldze, ed., *Sources of Authority, Volume 2: Contemporary Churches*, Faith and Order Paper No. 218 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014).

magisterium, but they often rely upon synodal structures, internal commissions, and their definitions used to be labelled “suggestions” or “recommendations” to the people in the church. They do not issue documents that must be read and received as *the position* by every member. Protestant theologians have solid and clear arguments to sustain their positions as well. Pietists, Pentecostals, even rationalists all have arguments to support their positions and theological approaches to the reality and society that they face.

At this point, I am suggesting that the epistemological question is not merely the question about where we look for the raw material, the sources from which we construct our theology; it also includes such questions as “What does it mean to do theology?” and “What is the best way to construct a theological discourse?” and “What is the place of theology in the life of the church?”

On TCTCV and Sources of Theology

The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV) does not address this issue of sources directly. In my opinion, it is a theological document constructed on the grounds of consensus and common ground. *TCTCV* also does not contain any discussion on which sources each denomination might choose—sources that it believes are the appropriate, correct, or acceptable ones for the whole church to use. I think that is good.

I find that its deep value on our topic of “sources of authority” shows the possibility of creating a document between different traditions and experiences where they can arrive at an agreement on such difficult issues, especially considering that some of the issues have centuries of controversy behind them, and some are still unsolved.

Nevertheless, there are two paragraphs that can help in the process of discernment regarding the sources of authority.

First, in *TCTCV* §11, we read, “All Christians share the conviction that Scripture is normative, therefore, the biblical witness provides an irreplaceable source for acquiring greater agreement about the Church.” This point is important, because the document establishes the Bible as a commonly held source of authority. Of course, this is not the only source of authority for many of the churches, but it does express the conviction of “all Christians” related to the scriptures.

Second, in *TCTCV* §50, we read of another set of sources:

Thus, authority in the Church in its various forms and levels, must be distinguished from mere power. This authority comes from God the

Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit; as such it reflects the holiness of God. The sources of authority recognized in varying degrees by the churches such as Scripture, Tradition, worship, councils and synods, also reflect the holiness of the Triune God.

What makes this paragraph particularly valuable is that it presents a list of authoritative sources, even if it says, “recognized in varying degrees by the churches, such as Scripture, Tradition, worship, councils, and synods.” Many churches would add other sources, but most of them accept this list of five elements as valid actors or partakers in the definition of an authoritative theological statement.

Finally, I think that *TCTCV* can be an instrument to show the churches and the world that Christians from different traditions can arrive at a common vision of the mission of the church. The question is whether we can be sufficiently open to share our experience and our understanding of Christian faith in a way that can be received by the other with respect and gratitude (and vice versa). *TCTCV* is a good instrument to explore the possibility that it is not necessary to be in total agreement in all the theological statements in order to create a communion of churches where each one can learn from the other.

Evangelism and Proselytism*

Jack Khalil

Preaching the Gospel is essential at all times and in all places. The commandment of our Lord and God could not be clearer: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). The apostle Paul, whom God entrusted with preaching the gospel, strongly felt the need to do so and uttered these famous words: “Woe betide me if I do not proclaim the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16).

We may ask ourselves at this point: Are there any principles or constraints to which genuine missionaries should be held? Are we to consider many missionary activities—as they occur today in and among Christians who have lived and witnessed to the gospel of Jesus Christ for centuries—a favourable observance of Christ’s “great commission” to preach to all nations?¹ Or does evangelizing in the interest of certain denominations contradict the law of the Spirit and especially the commandment of brotherly love? Does it interfere with or, at worst, prevent evangelization in those areas where God’s word has not yet been disseminated?

The aim of this chapter is to help elucidate the difference between evangelism and proselytism by attempting to compare the characteristics of each.² St Paul,

* This chapter was initially published under the title “St Paul’s Case Against Proselytism,” in *Making Mission from the Model of Christ: Internal and External Mission of the Church*, eds. Aurel Pavel, Daniel Buda, and Ciprian Iulian Toroczka (Sibiu: Astra Museum, 2013). Republished by permission of the author. A recent and very helpful collection of papers that speak to the issue of proselytism is available in John Baxter-Brown, *Call to Mission and Perceptions of Proselytism: A Reader for a Global Conversation* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2022).

1. See Gedeon Freire de Alencar, “A Brazilian Pentecostal Perspective on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church*, Vol. 1, Faith and Order Paper No. 234, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 148.

2. See Baxter-Brown, *Call to Mission and Perceptions of Proselytism*, which provides a range of treatments of these important terms.

who is second to none as a missionary of God's gospel in all nations, provides us with basic guidelines in this respect, starting with Romans 15:18-21. These verses emphasize St Paul's enduring principle of not preaching where others have laboured to preach before and not meddling in or exploiting the work of others. St Paul reiterates this doctrine elsewhere in his epistles (2 Cor. 10:15).

Examining the difference between evangelizing and proselytizing comes at a critical moment in intra-Christian dialogue and thus merits our full attention. This intra-Christian dialogue initially stemmed from a point of mutual respect among the churches, whereby churches sought to exhibit restraint in their prospects for potential adherents within the flocks of other churches. This practice of scouting for "converts" is commonly known as "sheep stealing." Today, however, the negative connotation of proselytism is being reconsidered on the basis of some verses from the New Testament that call on Christians to evangelize the world. It appears, then, that there is some confusion as to the distinctions between evangelizing and proselytizing.³ Indeed, the issue is to be examined and clarified exegetically.

Undoubtedly, fair-minded missionary work stems from the sole priority of glorifying Christ through proclaiming his name everywhere. The aim of authentic missionary work is for the good news to reach everyone since we all need forgiveness, reconciliation, and the hope of glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. The apostle Paul is a prime example of genuine evangelization, as he did not rest despite the success that God accomplished through him in various cities. Nor did the apostle seek or desire the comfort and earthly goods of those to whom he preached. He did not pride himself on any form of earthly success, nor did he strive for stability or indulge in gratification or contentment among the faithful with whom he laboured in preaching, teaching, and providing pastoral care. He was satisfied with the power of Christ, a power that accompanied him (Rom. 15:18) and was evident to all "by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God" (Rom. 15:19). St Paul would experience no relief or gratification as long as he had not fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ (Rom. 15:19). In fact, he reveals his aspirations in life by stating: "Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named" (Rom. 15:20a).

I would like to add an exegetical note within this context. St Paul introduces

3. I believe that such confusion may be found in Rufus Okikiola Olubiyi Ositelu, "Discipleship and Ordained Ministry in the Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide," in Robeck, Boukis, and Ghazaryan Drissi, *Towards a Global Vision of the Church*, Vol. 1, 208-10.

his thought in Romans 15:20 with the expression *οὕτως δὲ*. The adverb *οὕτως* refers to the previous description of St Paul's missionary activity in verses 18 and 19, and the adversative *δὲ* stresses a principle that restricts it. St Paul assigns limits to his own missionary zeal when he says that he intends to proclaim the gospel only in those places where the good news has not yet been heard or accepted. The Greek expression behind the phrase "not where Christ has already been named" has the implication or meaning of "not where Christ is already known." St Paul's intent to act within this constraint is unequivocally explained in verse 15:20b: "so that I do not build on someone else's foundation" (Rom. 15:20). The verb "to build," in this instance, refers to laying the groundwork and foundation of God's building and to the hardships endured during its edification (1 Cor. 3:9). This verb is part of the terminology of missionary work.

In Romans 15:20, the apostle Paul holds on to a fundamental principle, which he alludes to in 1 Corinthians 3. More precisely, he intimates that an authentic missionary is one who struggles to lay down a foundation while facing all kinds of difficulties and obstacles and who never intrudes in other people's labour to spoil and steal. St Paul delivers similar ideology in his second letter to the Corinthians: "We do not boast beyond limits, that is, in the labours of others" (2 Cor. 10:15).

It is noteworthy that in 1 Corinthians 3, St Paul insists that his function as first builder, as one who has laid the foundation, is irreplaceable and accordingly cannot be claimed by any of the builders after him. Similarly, he considers that his status as the father of the believers is unique, for he has begotten the congregation in Jesus Christ through proclaiming the gospel among them (1 Cor. 4:15). In Romans 15:20, he applies the same rule, but now he refers to himself. He refuses to meddle with other communities, especially because "the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few" (Matt. 9:37), and many places around the world are still awaiting the word of Christ. Hence, rivalry is harmful. Rivalry is inappropriate in those whom Christ our Lord has made "competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit" (2 Cor. 3:6). Rivalry and selfish ambition were at no point a "spiritual fruit" that is to say, a form of spiritual conduct; on the contrary, St Paul mentions these vices among the "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-20) and forewarns that "those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). How can such people then preach the kingdom's gospel to others and promise them salvation?

To clarify his rule regarding preaching the gospel as well as his godly "ambition" in his missionary activity, St Paul quotes Isaiah 52:15: "Those who have never been told about him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand" (Rom. 15:21). St Paul realized that he was invited to preach to

those who neither knew Christ, nor called on his name, nor worshipped him yet. More specifically, he aimed to reach those who needed Christ's salvation, not people that he himself needed for boasting and aggrandizing. He was not labouring for the sort of success that would increase his influence and power in society. It is highly improbable that the apostle Paul would boast of human achievements or of anything that is according to human standards; on the contrary, in the context we are examining, he declares: "In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God" (Rom. 15:17).

In his letter to the Romans, St Paul writes:

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how can they hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom. 10:13-15)

If we follow this rationale and look at it from a different angle, we can perhaps assume that carrying the good news is a privilege endowed to those whom God has sent to preach among unbelievers who have not yet heard of the Lord's name. Thus, Romans 10:13-15 indirectly provides another endorsement of St Paul's rule concerning preaching the gospel "not where Christ has already been named" nor where we would "build on someone else's foundation" (Rom. 15:20).

In compliance with his regulation on preaching the good news, St Paul planned to go to Spain after finishing his work in the East. His sole ambition for this journey was to preach the good news to those who needed to hear it. He chose the "narrow gate," a way filled with affliction, and proceeded into the unpredictable future, as opposed to taking the easier way, which "leads to destruction." His choices were well justified, as he never sought after his own benefit but rather strove for the good of those nations who still ignored God's gospel.

St Paul's rules concerning the parameters of proper evangelization and his ideology in describing his apostleship and missionary activity lead us to conclude that the real missionary is the one who rejoices in the completion of preaching the gospel and spreading Christ's name in the entire world. Furthermore, the missionary serves God's word of reconciliation and justification by proclaiming the gospel without any selfish or sectarian perspective, as frequently happens today. In other words, the genuine missionary does not rejoice in achievements

with sectarian interest, nor does he or she take pride in an overflow of increasing add-ons in one's sect or church group. He or she does not boast of or hope for wider privileges. When missionary work is performed under the direction of human calculations and interests, it ceases to be the work of God. A mission can only be God's work when human boasting is excluded and when its sole ambition is to please God, not the self or mortals.

In certain cases today, preaching Christ as Lord and God has become so distorted with selfish endeavours that it has become foreign to the Bible's ideals. This is evident as we notice the systematic proselytizing activity being programmed for encouraging breakaways from local churches in both the northern and southern hemispheres. Many countries where, over the ages, Christ was known and served now witness invasive "missionary" activity that lacks innocence and transparency. The sorrowful fact is that the ambition of many missionary groups is to establish a stronger ecclesial entity, with impressive numbers of adherents, and then use this to aggrandize whenever possible and claim more respective privileges.⁴ Consequently, preaching the gospel has warped into a disgraceful practice of proselytism. This wrong practice is explicitly censured in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*.⁵

In its "Revised Report on 'Christian Witness, Proselytism, and Religious Liberty in the Setting of the World Council of Churches,'" the WCC has plainly warned against the vices of proselytism:

Proselytism is not something absolutely different from witness: it is the corruption of witness. Witness is corrupted when cajolery, bribery, undue pressure or intimidation is used—subtly or openly—to bring about seeming conversion; when we put the success of our church before the honour of Christ; when we commit the dishonesty of comparing the ideal of our own church with the actual achievement of another; when we seek to advance our own cause by bearing false witness against another church; when personal or corporate self-seeking replaces love for every individual soul with whom we are concerned.⁶

4. Freire de Alencar, "A Brazilian Pentecostal Perspective," 148–49.

5. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013) §6, note 4, and §60, note 3.

6. World Council of Churches, "Revised Report on 'Christian Witness, Proselytism, and Religious Liberty in the Setting of the World Council of Churches'" (Appendix XXVII), in *Minutes and Reports of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Central Committee, St. Andrews, Scotland, August 16-24, 1960* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1960), 214.

Since the starting point of these activities is “according to the flesh” and not “according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5), they greatly diverge from St Paul’s principles concerning preaching the gospel. In fact, they are more linked to the principles of the false apostles, who were contesting the work of St Paul and whose aim was to boast about human achievements. These false brothers were not engaging in struggles to proclaim the gospel of God but to appropriate those churches that St Paul strove to establish. The false brothers of the 1st century and the current proselytizers of Christians in apostolic countries (countries in which the apostles ministered) and elsewhere exhibit some significant similarities in their mission’s purpose, namely to boast about the flesh (see Gal. 6:13), as St Paul so accurately admonishes (2 Cor. 10:12–11:15).

Whatever the case may be, proselytism is contrary to the biblical principle that St Paul greatly emphasized and includes forbidding building “on someone else’s foundation.” This rejected form of proselytism becomes a stumbling block to intra-Christian dialogue, as it replaces light with darkness and schism.

In the 19th century, when the well-known phrase “preaching the gospel to the world in this generation” became the motto of enthusiastic missionaries, Christians represented a third of the world’s population. Today, this percentage remains the same. How are we to assess this fact? Where does our responsibility lie in relation to this truth? Isn’t it regretful and wasteful to expand efforts and resources to proselytize some Christians from a certain confession to another when we could be more effective by cooperating with respect and trust to evangelize “not where Christ has already been named”? Are we that estranged from Christ’s exhortation to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19) and “proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15)? The act of proclaiming the Bible is of utmost holiness. God the Father sent us his only Son for our salvation in the same way that Christ sent forth his disciples to spread the word of God (John 17:18; 20:21). Therefore, mission should not be tainted by the blasphemy of using it for earthly gains.

Proselytism is the corruption of evangelism because proselytism is moved by self-seeking love and egoism. It looks for the “wide gate” by prospecting among Christians who belong to other churches and uses methods that are foreign to Christian ethics and to Christ’s example of preaching as well as that of the apostles. On the other hand, evangelism aims at preaching to those who neither know Christ nor call on his name nor worship him yet. Evangelism occurs when God entrusts the proclamation of the gospel to those whom he sent; this proclamation is directed by God’s love to the world, a love that became manifest when God sent his beloved Son so that people may have eternal life (John 3:16). A mission can only be God’s work when human

boasting is excluded and when its sole ambition and motivation is to please God and not humans.

Denominational Exclusivism

Pablo R. Andiñach

The Situation in Latin America

The experience of the church in Latin America can offer its own perspective on the issue of denominationalism. From the beginning, the problems caused by denominational exclusivism have been present in Latin America as well as in other parts of the Christian world. The description of the situation and examples will not sound unfamiliar to most readers. Still, I will mention something that is local, even though it can be found in other places.

The idea of being the only true church is not new in our context; it is part of a long tradition in Christian history. As an example, one of the discussions during the early Lutheran Reformation was whether the Roman Catholic Church was a true church or a distortion of the original church of Jesus Christ. Of course, the Roman Catholics were thinking the same way about the Lutherans. Were those who followed Luther's teachings a true church?

In Latin America, some extreme evangelical denominations still use the same language and ideas regarding the Roman Catholic Church. At the same time, some churches continue to base their opinion of other churches on the fact that they hold different theological positions than those making the judgment. Some consider baptism (for example, baptism by immersion) as the deciding factor for whether to consider a person to be a true Christian (in the sense of having been rightly incorporated into the church of Jesus Christ) or to determine whether their church is a true church and has the right to baptize in the name of Jesus Christ. Others consider apostolic succession as playing a definitive role, understanding it as a succession of people, while still others understand apostolic succession as the succession of the bearers of the apostolic faith.

Some churches see the Bible as the criterion for defining how true a particular church is or how true its members are as Christians: if the church has the Bible as the only source for its faith and practice, they conclude that this means it is a

Christian church. If they use “other sources,” these sources become a stain on that church or ecclesial community. If they appeal to these “other sources,” these churches are considered to have added to the gospel other issues to achieve salvation. Anything that might be said to have added to the gospel is not acceptable to those churches making these judgments.

On the other hand, some churches understand that the acceptance of the Tradition extending from the fathers of the first few centuries of the church is crucial for whoever wants to be in communion with the whole Christian church. From this perspective, the role of the ecumenical councils and the works of the fathers (documents, creeds, theological definitions) are valid criteria along with scripture that indicate whether a community of faith is fully integrated into the true Christian church. In other words, while they begin with scripture, they emphasize the role of the apostolic Tradition as continuing commentary on biblical teaching. As a result, some churches view this emphasis on Tradition as adding to scripture, concluding that such churches are not fully Christian or a true church. We can say that in Latin America, the situation is more or less similar to the experiences described above.

If we exclude the examples in which one position denies the right to the other to be truly Christian, then, in my opinion, all of the above theological positions are correct and constitute an acceptable and deep theological discourse. It is also likely that all of these aspects (and, of course, others not mentioned in this short chapter) are present in different churches, even if they, as denominations, do not see these aspects working in their own communities. From my perspective, there are, however, some cross-boundary activities—that is, some activities that are shared by all the churches.

One can find a number of interesting examples of these cross-boundary experiences in Latin American churches. The three main ecclesial groups that are present in South America are the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox churches, and Protestant/Evangelical churches. Most Protestant churches can be viewed as evangelical churches, though some Evangelical churches might not view them as such. It is also the case that quite frequently throughout Latin America, Pentecostal churches are viewed as a subset of evangelicalism. But when we identify these bodies with their specific theological statements, we begin to see that these are not always unique in expressing the religious life of the communities. For example, the charismatic movement is well known as an extension of the “Pentecostal Movement,” though some might use the term “Evangelical Movement.” Upon further observation, however, throughout Latin America are strong charismatic groups of Catholic congregations, priests, and bishops. I know at least one Orthodox congregation in Argentina that defines itself as

charismatic, and this is evident in their liturgy and spirituality. Nor is it surprising to find a Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian community where charismatic theology is evident; they live together with “classical” or more traditional sisters and brothers, sometimes under the same denominational umbrella. At times, they may be living together with some level of difficulty and even theological conflicts. And, yes, unfortunately, sometimes these churches undergo schism and separation.

Along with these examples, however, I want to mention that there are strong Pentecostal communities where it is very rare to find charismatic expressions, regular healing in their services, and speaking in tongues. They look more like “classical” Baptist or Methodist communities, even though their theology is clearly Pentecostal, and they defend this description and identity for themselves.

In these few lines, I have presented a panorama of the “denominational exclusivism” that is active in Latin America. Let me establish two principles. First is the idea of some churches being the “true church” in opposition to other communities. This is a perception that exists in Latin America. Second, the boundaries blur when we analyze particular local experiences and try to put them in boxes.

The Theological Perspective

We are immersed in the ecclesiological realm. As Latin American churches, we share much common local context, but still, each denomination belongs to the larger, global body of its denomination. They inherit both light and shadow through this denominational connection, and this inheritance colours their views of other Christians within their regional shared context. The questions, the responses that each church or tradition gives to the questions, and the practices of the communities all involve the idea of the essence of the church. We can observe that in most cases, there is a “peaceful” relationship between churches and a friendly comprehension of the origin of our divisions. Disregarding the extreme positions, the Christian churches in Latin America respect each other and even appreciate the values of their neighbour denominations. This is good; it could be worse. Our task, however, is to find ways towards a visible unity of the church, not just to be good friends. In my Latin American view and experience, this is more a theological task than a practical one. When our theologies can find the common ground that unites all of us, the path to our practical and material unity will be paved and will be much more easily achieved.

Let me make three theological points here. First, the Latin American

experience described above should lead us to rethink whether a particular emphasis in our theology can support the whole body of the church. The church needs a theology which gives support to its life and mission. The question is this: Can we construct a solid theology on only one or two emphases, even if they are absolutely true?

Second, the classical way to describe a denominational identity is to enlist the main doctrinal issues that sustain that church or tradition. We can create a chart with columns, putting the denominations at the top, and we can describe their doctrinal identities and main issues in the columns. But what happens when a Christian of one denomination feels closer to one in another column because both of them are charismatics, or both of them consider the same social issues crucial for the testimony of the church, or both of them consider the pietist experience as the centre of their faith? So, the practice of the church seems to create horizontal rows of “being church” beyond the boundaries of each denomination and tradition.¹

Third, is it time to rethink the exclusiveness of the claims made by our denominational theology when we look for a global (ecumenical!) Christian theology? Is it possible? It may be a dream, but the Latin American experience shows us that the criteria to discover “How Christian is my sister or my brother from another tradition?” and “How much can we learn from the other’s experience and theology?” seem not to come from old and beautiful theological buildings. These criteria come from the encounter between people who consider themselves to have been saved by Christ and to have a mission in the world, which is nothing other than the *missio Dei*.

How can TCTCV help the churches in this mission?

The entire *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)* document is very rich in ideas and theological insights. It is, without a doubt, a document to be studied and shared in communities of theologians as well as among informed laity—even though, in my opinion, paragraphs 22 and 23 give the churches the opportunity to rethink their self-comprehension and self-understanding of being the church of Christ in this time. I want to highlight the following two

1. For example, if Pentecostal experience is considered as a form of spirituality, it is easy to see how it can become a cross-border experience shared by all. But if someone says that those who practise this spirituality need to be classed solely as belonging to a Pentecostal denomination, this is both inaccurate and unhelpful in describing the reality. See Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, “Can We Imagine an Ecumenical Future Together? A Pentecostal Perspective,” *Gregorianum* 100 (2019), 67.

issues presented in these paragraphs.

In *TCTCV* §22.3, we read,

Through the life-giving power of God, the Church's mission transcends all barriers and proclaims the Gospel to all peoples. Where the whole mystery of Christ is present, there too is the Church catholic (cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrneans*, 6), as in the celebration of the eucharist. The essential catholicity of the Church is undermined when cultural and other differences are allowed to develop into division. Christians are called to remove all obstacles to the embodiment of this fullness of truth and life bestowed upon the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this paragraph, *TCTCV* calls the churches not merely to sign this document but also to think about the consequences of paragraphs like this. This must be considered on a multilateral basis and be studied in light of the community experiences. According to this text, the first issue is "to remove all obstacles," which create barriers to achieving the "fullness of truth," which is Christ. To sign a document like this puts a strong commitment on the shoulders of each of the churches that choose to participate.

In *TCTCV* §23, we read,

it is clear that the Church is not merely the sum of individual believers among themselves. The Church is fundamentally a communion in the Triune God and, at the same time, a communion whose members partake together in the life and mission of God (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4), who, as Trinity, is the source and focus of all communion. Thus the Church is both a divine and a human reality.

When *TCTCV* says this, maybe it is not offering a new discovery in the theological discourse, nor a light that did not shine before in our libraries. But, through these words, the churches are called to consider this expression at another level. The church "is not merely the sum of individuals." At the same time, it is not the sum of a mosaic of different denominations. In Latin America, as in other parts of the world, the churches currently seem to feel comfortable with the ecumenical status quo, which means that we respect each other without asking any questions either of them or of ourselves. Even if the mosaic is beautiful (and it surely is!), it should be called upon to allow itself to be melted into one piece by the action of the Holy Spirit.

Authoritative Teaching in the Church

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr

Introduction

Most discussions on authority and authoritative teaching in the church have bogged down when the earliest churches, Catholic and Orthodox, meet many of the churches that have come into being from the time of the Protestant Reformation onward. The issue often falters not over whether bishops have authority but over the authority that those who are not bishops have and the extent to which they may exercise that authority within the church. In the end, this discussion regarding “authoritative teaching” may be an intractable one, though we have learned a few things from one another as we have discussed this topic ecumenically in recent years.

We can say together that the church has boundaries outside of which one is not considered to be part of the church. More importantly, we can also say together that the church has a centre, located in the person and message of Jesus Christ.¹ Surrounding that centre, all Christian churches hold the word of God to be normative within all of our churches, though some expand the meaning of “word of God” beyond scripture [the Bible] (*TCTCV*, §11). We have Tradition and the creeds, both ancient and modern, by which we intend to point to Jesus Christ, to the trinitarian nature and character of God, and to other important Christian affirmations. We intend scripture and the creeds not merely to set external boundaries but, more importantly, to focus our attention on Jesus Christ and his message, the gospel, for it is this message that Jesus authorized his followers to teach to those they disciple (Matt. 28:19-20). All authority in the church ultimately rests in Jesus Christ. He is the head of the church and, as such,

1. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), §14.

the One who continues to provide direction to the church (Eph. 4:15-16) by means of both word and Spirit (*TCTCV*, §48).

It is impossible to argue against the fact that bishops were the obvious successors to the apostles. Even by the end of the New Testament, while certain apostles yet lived, there were already bishops that the apostles and their designated associates appointed (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:17).² There were also deacons, elders, presbyters, widows, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, each group of which had specific functions to fulfil in and on behalf of the church. All of them were engaged in ministry of one sort or another. The apostles expected all of them to cooperate with one another for the good of the whole body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7).

All of those mentioned, along with all other believers, participate in *a hierarchy of service* that is present in the church from the beginning. This hierarchy began with Jesus, the suffering servant, who willingly gave his life for our salvation (Is. 53:1-12; Mark 10:45) and who appointed and passed along to his apostles a ministry of service (Mark 10:43-44). The apostles, in turn, appointed bishops, and the bishops have continued to appoint others to various positions through the centuries. In this way, we had the development of ancient church order and, ultimately, the development of the church as institution. This list does not necessarily spell out ranks, as in a hierarchy of power,³ but of service, just as the various lists of charisms found in the New Testament suggest what each member brings forward for the edification of the whole body of Christ (1 Cor. 14:28; 1 Pet. 4:8-11). The list of charisms is not exhaustive in naming those who have specific tasks to perform. As such, the whole church might be involved, edified and fruitful in accomplishing its mission of making disciples (*TCTCV*, §49).

As the church spread throughout the Roman empire, the fellowship or *koinōnia* shared between the various bishops became the thread that held together their growing web of relationships. The presence of the bishop—indeed,

2. Eusebius (*Church History* 5.20.5), quoting Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3.3.4), tells us that Polycarp knew John the Apostle, that he had been part of the Johannine community when John was quite old, and that it was John who had appointed him to serve as the bishop of Smyrna. Papias (70–155 CE) served as bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 5.33.4) tells us that he had heard the apostle John preach. Although we have no evidence that the apostle appointed him as a bishop, it is possible that he did.

3. Clement of Rome, *Epistle to the Corinthians* 37, suggests that the church is like an army, with Christ as the general, and succeeding ranks are set with authority (power?) over others.

this network of relationships between bishops—pointed to the catholicity of the church.⁴ As a result, Cyprian could eventually argue that the bishops formed the church: that is, apart from the bishops, there was no church.⁵ Yet, *koinōnía* does not exist solely between bishops. It exists between all those who are “centred and grounded in the Gospel” (*TCTCV*, §14). Cyprian meant that all people who shared *koinōnía* with their bishop also shared *koinōnía* with all other bishops with whom their bishop shared *koinōnía*, and hence, with all other Christians who shared *koinōnía* with their respective bishops. All of this was possible precisely because each bishop was in *koinōnía* with all other bishops.

Bishops and their councils have played a formative role in developing those teachings that mark the external boundaries of the church. They have also played a unique and formative role in developing those teachings—the *regula fidei*, creeds, and doctrines—that point us towards the centre of the church, namely to Jesus Christ, only begotten Son of the Father (John 3:16), into whom we are incorporated by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).

Because of competing claims of authority from those who refused to accept the authority of the bishops,⁶ or those who disputed the authority of their bishops,⁷ lists of succession between the bishops were important to these bishops. The bishops and, hence, the church held that through this line of succession, a tightly knit sequence of successive bishops was trusted and empowered to pass along the apostolic tradition, “to serve the apostolic continuity of the Church” (*TCTCV*, §46). Just as various apostles issued letters to the followers of Jesus that provided them with instruction, so, too, the bishops have continued in that same way. They issue letters of teaching and instruction to various congregations as well as encyclicals and other documents intended to teach multiple congregations—indeed, the whole church. They have continued to challenge the voices of younger or newer churches to show how their teaching is consistent with the apostolic faith as it is held by these older churches or how it may be traced directly back to the apostles: that is, to demonstrate their line of succession

4. Ignatius, *To the Smyrneans* 8.

5. Cyprian, *Letter* 66 (68).8.3.

6. I would view leaders of various Gnostic sects here. Justin Martyr, *Apology* 1.26, 51; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.1.1-2; 1.27.2; 1.37.1; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.1.1-2.

7. I would place the various Montanist leaders here. See, for instance, Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.16.9-10, which outlines how various bishops met in councils that condemned the Montanists, while the Montanists condemned the bishops. Additionally, critics of Cyprian could be placed here; see Cyprian, *Epistle* 66.1.2; 66.8.1.

from the apostles to the present.⁸ All of this points to the legitimate authoritative teaching role that bishops hold, though it poses problems for churches that do not embrace apostolic succession through a specific line of bishops.

The issue regarding the authority that bishops have held through the centuries is based upon the argument made by the earliest churches that their authority is “willed and instituted by Christ himself for all time; therefore, in faithfulness to the Gospel, Christians would have no authority fundamentally to alter this divinely instituted structure” (*TCTCV*, §24; see also §27). This point is reiterated in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (*TCTCV*). While, admittedly, the New Testament dictates “no single pattern of ministry” (*TCTCV*, §46, 11), current understandings of authority appear to reside as much in the church fathers as they do in a particular interpretation of scripture. That is not to say that they are necessarily wrong, but such a position may needlessly close off any other option, even other valid interpretations understood to be present in scripture.

Obviously, the early church fathers, relying upon their understanding of the apostles, the apostolic faith, and scripture, played a very important role in establishing the order, clarifying the doctrinal centre, and setting the boundaries of the church in the way that much of the church continues to understand it.⁹ Still, many Christians question the ongoing authority of these fathers (in the sense of their role in the Tradition embraced by the earliest churches) for the churches that exist today, in part because the fathers did not experience all that the churches face today. *TCTCV* points out that newer and “emerging churches” are attempting to point out “a new way of being the Church” (*TCTCV*, §7). Is any attempt to introduce a “new way of being the Church” doomed to failure from the start, simply because the early fathers of the church receive such a prominent and seemingly unquestioned position among the earliest churches, Catholic and Orthodox?

What Pentecostals of all kinds bring to this discussion rests on an eschatological self-understanding that by their very existence, they are themselves a sign of “last days,” a sign that the kingdom will soon appear in its fullness. They

8. Clement, *Epistle to the Corinthians* 37, 42, 44; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.37.1; 3.3.2-3; 4.33.8; Tertullian, *Prescription against Heretics* 32.1-2.

9. “On Becoming a Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings with Some Contemporary Reflections: Report of the Fifth Phase of the International Dialogue between Some Pentecostal Churches and Leaders and the Catholic Church (1998–2006),” §10–11, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-del-documento-in-inglese1.html>.

view themselves as part of a larger Restoration Movement. Such a position, of course, implies judgment upon what they have observed in looking back at the church through the centuries.¹⁰ While Pentecostals willingly acknowledge the important role that the fathers played during the Patristic era, they also point to times of apathy, compromise, and even apostasy among some bishops who followed, noting that succession does not in itself guarantee faithfulness either to their vocation or to the apostolic faith.¹¹

Vatican Council II demonstrated how a universal and collegial gathering of bishops was able to reshape Catholic teaching. The churches that came into existence at or since the time of the Protestant Reformation have made similar claims about their own ecclesial leaders, who meet together to formulate or modify their understanding(s) of the apostolic faith. Many such councils incorporate laity as full participants in ecclesial decision-making, including both women and men. Along with their vocationally valid leaders, lay people study, discuss, debate, and render doctrinal decisions on behalf of their churches.

Of what does their authority consist? Is the discernment process limited only to bishops, or is it available to all Christians, including women and men of the laity? Is the decision-making process that the bishops exercise merely an institutional process? How is it related to charismatic processes of decision making or rational processes rooted in scripture, Tradition, logic, and reason? If churches focus too much on the latter, does this favour word over Spirit? In what way might the decision-making discernment process that bishops exercise be related to the charism of “the discernment of spirits”? Does the Holy Spirit give this charism only to bishops, or does the Spirit grant this charism to others in accordance with the Spirit’s will (1 Cor. 12:11)? By allowing the Holy Spirit such a role, as is done within Pentecostal churches, does this favour Spirit over word? The answer to these questions points to the need for greater ecclesial discernment by the whole church in order to find the proper balance that both word and Spirit (as well as the balance of both institutional and charismatic processes) should play in authoritative teaching.

The apostle John seems to suggest that all of his readers, that is, *all believers*, are to “test the spirits [*dokimázete tà pneúmata*] to see whether they are from God” (1 John 4:1-3). John understood the doctrinal claims, such as whether Jesus came in the flesh, as emanating either from the Spirit of God or from other spirits. It is the place of all believers to discern the difference. Experience tells us that this is best done in the midst of the believing community, which includes all

10. “On Becoming a Christian,” §169, 246.

11. “On Becoming a Christian,” §10–13, 247, 269–70.

who confess that “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor. 12:3).

Discussions between Catholics and Pentecostals on discernment and the discerning of spirits may have something to offer here. Their findings appear primarily in the report “Do not quench the Spirit’: Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church.”¹² The report from the Reformed–Pentecostal dialogue, “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” also addresses the subject at some length.¹³ In the case of the Catholics, the authority and role of the bishop is clearly in mind.¹⁴ The Reformed–Pentecostal report points more generally to the role of both leaders and laity and to “the decision-making process of a denominational Assembly” or council.¹⁵

The Need for Discernment

Discernment may be the single most important gift or process needed in the church today. As long as the church faces questions and challenges while it goes about its work, it needs discernment. The apostle Paul instructed the Thessalonians to “test [*dokimásete*] everything” allegedly ascribed to the Spirit, holding on to the good and avoiding the evil (1 Thess. 5:21-22). The apostle John’s instruction to “test the spirits [*dokimásete tà pneúmata*] to see whether they are from God” (1 John 4:1-3) is similar. Both these mandates hold implications for church teaching. Both appear also to have implications for

12. “Do not quench the Spirit’: Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church: Report of the Sixth Phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (2011–2015)” is available from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity’s *Information Service* No. 147 (2016/I), 47–62. The document is also available in English at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-del-documento-in-inglese.html> and in French at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-del-documento-in-inglese/testo-del-documento-in-francese.html>.

13. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community, and Justice: The Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, (2001–2011),” is available in *Reformed World* 63:1 (2013), 2–44; in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostal and Christian Unity, Volume Two: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 217–67; in Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA, John Gibaut, Jeffrey Gros, FSC, and Despina Prassas, eds., *Growth in Agreement IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 2004–2014* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2017), 2:111–40, and at http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj21/WARC_2011d.html.

14. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §73–90, 93–98.

15. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §85.

authority in the church. Do these passages point solely to the bishops, or is it the task of bishops *and* all other believers? Given that both apostles addressed their letters to congregations and not specifically to bishops, it seems that all believers fall under the mandate to engage in discernment, even when it involves teaching. As long as fallible human beings, including bishops and councils, lead and give instructions to the people of God, their words and actions need to be discerned and, when appropriate, received by the whole people of God.¹⁶ This is necessary because of sin, corruption, and subjectivity.¹⁷ This is the case even for those who claim the charism of discerning of spirits. The words and actions of those who “discern” on behalf of the church also need to be discerned.¹⁸ If we can affirm these points together, what can we say with respect to questions of “legitimate and illegitimate diversity” raised by *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*?¹⁹

Two Forms of Discernment

The initial question might be to ask whether we agree on what discernment is. We cannot agree upon a common discernment if we do not agree on its definition. In the dialogues in which Pentecostals have participated with Catholics and with representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), two ways of engaging in discernment or two forms of discernment have emerged. The first is the most common form. It finds its primary method in *prayerful reasoning*.

When the early church faced the question of what to do with Gentile converts, it called a council, which met in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29). The apostle James chaired the council. The members of the council included both apostles and elders. All of them heard the case regarding the inclusion of Gentile believers. What brought the question before the council for consideration was the fact that some men had gone from Judaea to Antioch, where they taught that any Gentile

16. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §90. “Pentecostals and Catholics often need instruction in distinguishing real words of the Lord from their own pious wishes.”

17. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §87.

18. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §86.

19. The relevant paragraph in italics appears in *TCTCV* between §30 and 31. It reads, in part, “Though all churches have their own procedures for distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate, it is clear that two things are lacking: (a) common criteria or means of discernment, and (b) such mutually recognized structures as are needed to use these effectively ... We invite the churches to consider: what positive steps can be taken to make common discernment possible?”

wishing to be recognized as a Christian must undergo circumcision, according to the law of Moses (Acts 15:2, 5). Others wondered whether these men had the right to argue that point without checking with the apostles and elders first.

At the council, Paul and Barnabas, coming from their recent ministry experience among Gentiles, made their case. Once Paul and Barnabas had made their case, those favouring the need for circumcision spoke, stating their position and rebutting the position that Paul and Barnabas espoused (Acts 15:5). Following this debate, James accepted the testimony of Paul and Barnabas that the church should accept all who had confessed their faith in Jesus, who had received baptism, and upon whom the Spirit had been poured out with the evidence of various signs, and announced that nothing further be added, though the Gentiles should be advised to observe a few exceptions (Acts 15:19-20, 28-29). Given that this issue recurred even after a decision was rendered (Gal. 1:6; 2:11-21), it is very likely that the discussion between these parties was a heated one.

As the group debated the question, the apostle Peter joined Paul and Barnabas, testifying of what he had seen God do among the Gentiles in pouring out his Spirit upon them. The Gentiles had received the Spirit the same way that the apostles had, he noted (Acts 2:1-4, 16, 38-39). He reminded them that it was only grace that brought any of them to salvation (Acts 15:6-11). The apostle James then gave Paul and Barnabas the floor (Acts 15:12), and while they spoke, the assembly listened in silence.

At the conclusion of these presentations, the apostle James, the council chair, summarized the arguments, reminding the council of Peter's testimony and noting that this testimony was consistent with what the prophet Amos had written centuries before (Amos 9:11-12). His judgment was to accept the Gentiles into the church with a minimum of requests being made to Gentile converts, requests intended not to alienate Jewish sensibilities (Acts 15:13-21). Obviously, James rendered the decision or judgment alone. In keeping with James' judgment, "the apostles and elders" must have agreed to the decision, and "*with the consent of the whole church*" (Acts 15:22), chose and sent Judas and Silas with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, with the "unanimous" news of the decision. Everyone—that is, "the whole church"—agreed that this was the appropriate judgment, and the apostles and elders wrote, "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" that "no further burden" than a few "essentials" be added to new Gentile Christians (Acts 15:28).

This is a classic rational model for proper discernment, even when we consider episcopal councils. James called the council to order and chaired the decision-making process. The two sides presented their arguments. The entire

body discussed the issue. James, surely discerning not only the weight of Peter's argument, the sense of the body, and what he understood to be the will of God in light of Joel's prophecy, made a ruling that was unanimously accepted, and the whole body agreed and acted upon that ruling! Unfortunately, Luke does not tell how they knew that it "seemed good to the Holy Spirit." Was it simply because they had reached a unanimous consensus? Did Luke record this because they voted on James' ruling and the vote was unanimous? Did the Holy Spirit make known his satisfaction through a word of prophecy? Or were the arguments of Paul, Barnabas, and Peter so compelling that even those who had argued for circumcision finally agreed? The text is silent on these points. Pentecostals, along with Catholic and Reformed theologians, accept this rational model as a valid and valued model of making ecclesial decisions.²⁰ But is it the only biblical model? Is it even the privileged biblical model?

The second form of discernment finds its source in more immediate *spiritual revelation*. Pentecostals contend that there are other ways of discerning than by even a prayerful rational process. Their position offers additional input to any discussion on discernment. It also offers a new or different perspective on the subject of authority. Pentecostals do not shy away from the use of the term "revelation" here. They understand that no such revelation has the same authority as that of the biblical canon; that is, they respect the role of the word. Revelation, in this sense, however, provides insight, illumination, or wisdom to or in a specific situation. In short, it is something that is ad hoc: it addresses a very specific subject or situation. It never carries the implication of holding or conveying a universal message. Pentecostals identify this as a work of the Holy Spirit. They contend that they support discernment by appealing both to word and to Spirit.

Pentecostals argued in both the Reformed and Catholic dialogues that the Holy Spirit also makes discernment possible apart from a strictly rational approach. The "discernment of spirits [*diakriseis pneumátōn*]" is a charism like all other charisms listed in 1 Corinthians 12. Like the other charisms, the Holy Spirit gives this gift to whomever the Spirit wishes to give it—bishops, elders, women, men, the whole council. If the logic of Paul's questions is taken seriously

20. "Experience in Christian Faith and Life," §85: "Pentecostals agree with Reformed Christians that the decision-making process such as that outlined in Acts 15 is a valid example of discernment within the Church. . . ."; "Do Not Quench the Spirit," §82: "Many Pentecostals give greater priority to the discernment that occurs through the charism than to the ordinary corporate process of discernment (Acts 6:1-6; 15:1-35); however, all acknowledge that this process is essential to discerning the will of God as well as the mind of the community (cf. Acts 15:6-7)."

(1 Cor. 12:29-30), neither every believer nor even every bishop will necessarily receive this charism. It all depends upon the will of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11).

Within this specific context of 1 Cor. 12, Paul appears to connect the discerning of spirits with the charism of prophecy, another form of inspired speech, in much the same way that he connected the interpretation of tongues with speaking in tongues. In neither case, however, does reason appear to provide the primary locus for the discernment. These particular charisms, as well as utterances of wisdom and utterances of knowledge, appear to come as limited forms of revelation, made possible by the Holy Spirit at specific times (1 Cor. 12:8).

Pentecostals contend that at times, our ability to discern the spirits—to determine whether something or some word or some opportunity is from God or whether it originates from another source—may emerge in a more transrational or intuitive way than it does as a rational deduction. Think of how Paul expresses it in Romans 8:15-17: “When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” The Spirit bears witness with our spirit. In this case, it is a positive revelation affirming that “We are children of God.” The logic of what Paul states here might easily go in the opposite direction. The Spirit is able to convey a negative message directly with our spirits, apart from reasoning. It would seem to rest upon a revelation—at times, even an immediate or spontaneous revelation—made by the Holy Spirit. This revelation also needs to be discerned, as Paul told the believers in Thessalonica: “Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:19-22). Surely John would approve, when he made certain doctrinal claims on his own yet warned his readers that many others were making doctrinal claims, and not all were true. Just as importantly, John warned his readers that it wasn’t merely the words that they were to discern; it was also the spirits from whom those words originated (1 John 4:1). The discernment of spirits comes from spiritual revelation made possible by the Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament contains many references in which the Lord reveals things to those who are faithful. When Jeremiah and Hananiah confronted one another in the court of King Zedekiah with opposing messages, Zedekiah failed to discern which one of these two “prophets” spoke for God and respond accordingly. As a result, he chose to follow the promise conveyed by the false prophet, Hananiah. He did not consult the Lord for a revelation that might confirm one or the other prophet, and he suffered the consequences and died

soon thereafter. For Israel, the discernment process was a rational one. This process took 70 years to complete. Only then did Israel recognize that Jeremiah was the true prophet (Jer. 28:1-17).

Sometimes it is not the spiritual leaders of Israel who realize that God is speaking to them. When the sons of the high priest, Eli, corrupted the priesthood through their consistently wanton actions, the Lord did not speak directly to Eli, the acknowledged spiritual leader of Israel, though the Lord could have done so. Instead, the Lord revealed the message he wanted Eli to receive through the young boy, Samuel. In a sense, once he understood who called him in the night, Samuel “discerned” the words of the Lord, and then he reported them responsibly to Eli (1 Sam. 3:1-18). He did not resort to a rational approach. While Samuel, still a boy, must already have developed some capacity for reasoning and making moral judgments, the message he conveyed to Eli appears to have come through the immediate voice of the Lord to him: that is, through divine revelation.

In a third Old Testament account, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled his spirit. When his wise men could not interpret the dream, they told the king that no one anywhere could interpret the dream. Consequently, Nebuchadnezzar ordered their execution. Before they were to be executed, however, they approached Daniel, who asked his three friends to pray. That night, the Lord revealed the dream and its interpretation to Daniel in a vision. Once he had received the vision, Daniel asked for an audience with the king (Dan. 2:1-24). When Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel whether he could give the interpretation, Daniel told him that no one could. Only God in heaven could reveal such mysteries. The Lord had given Nebuchadnezzar a dream regarding the “end of days” (Dan. 2:28). As a result, Nebuchadnezzar came to believe that the Lord was the “God of gods” because the Lord had revealed the meaning of the dream through Daniel (Dan. 2:47). Once again, the answer from God did not come merely through prayerful reasoning or from scripture. Admittedly, Daniel, like the three young men who were cast into the fiery furnace, had prepared himself spiritually from the time of his youth, but the Lord’s response to Daniel’s request regarding the interpretation of the dream came through a vision during the night, a “revelation” from God.

Another incident during the ministry of Paul and Silas in the city of Philippi appears to demonstrate this point as well. While they were on their way to prayer, they met a “slave girl” who, Luke says, “had a spirit of divination.” Day after day, she followed them, shouting, “These men are the slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.” On the surface, at least, her description of Paul and Silas was correct. She said nothing wrong. Yet, her action “annoyed” Paul. Finally, Luke tells us, “Paul . . . turned and said to the spirit [*not to the slave-*

girl!], ‘I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And it came out that very hour” (Acts 16:16-18). Following John’s advice, the spirit of divination was where the words of the “slave girl” originated.

Pentecostals point out that Paul did not reprimand the slave girl for what she said. There is no hint that others informed Paul that she was possessed by a spirit. There is no suggestion that Paul had resorted only to his reasoning powers to make that determination. He was *annoyed* and simply “turned . . . to the spirit” responsible for the proclamation made through the slave-girl, and, in the name or by the authority of Jesus Christ, he commanded the spirit to leave the slave girl. It obeyed. Pentecostals read the annoying or troubling of Paul as culminating in a revelation by the Holy Spirit, an act in which the charism revealed to Paul why he was annoyed. The slave girl’s words were true enough, but a spirit of divination was their source, and Paul was troubled by and thus discerned this fact.

It seems that discernment has more than one way of providing much-needed wisdom or knowledge in a situation, which leads to an important decision in the life of the church. During our postmodern era, Christians of all types continue to employ the scientific method, which points to the primacy of reason as providing the answers even to our spiritual questions. Scripture reveals that while *prayerful reason* is one tool that may be used in discerning God’s will, *spiritual revelation* is an equally valid means of discerning God’s will, and it is not necessarily confined to one class of Christian leaders, nor is it confined only to leaders. Postmodernism may be able to provide the church with an old-new way of discerning God’s will within the church. It may also bring about revisions to some long-standing structures that otherwise hold the church captive to the past in artificial ways.

Discerning Those Who Discern

“Pentecostals and Catholics affirm together the singular importance that Scripture places on the continuing need for discernment in the life of the Church.”²¹ Yet, the question arises, do the teachings of those who discern and teach on behalf of the church, such as bishops, also need to be discerned? If so, who discerns those who teach? While “succession in ministry is meant to serve the apostolic continuity of the church” (*TCTCV*, §46), it has not always succeeded in doing so. Just as we find it recorded in scripture, the fallen nature of all human beings, including bishops—commonly represented by pride,

21. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §80.

presumption, bowing to peer pressure, the quest for power, and corruption—strongly suggests that all people, regardless of their level of institutional or spiritual authority, must be subject to discernment by others. This reality was a significant element that contributed to the Protestant Reformation. Too many of the church's bishops were no longer teaching the apostolic faith as the apostles had expressed it. From Martin Luther's perspective, the message of the gospel had been compromised, and its teachers needed correction and conversion. The church needed to be reformed. John Calvin essentially agreed with Luther but pressed the issue further to include the behaviour of all members of the church in light of church teaching. Their response, too, depended upon spiritual discernment. Catholic–Pentecostal discussions have led to the following shared claim: “Paul values not only the gifts that declare messages from God . . . but the gifts that discern the genuineness of those messages, which are in need of discernment because they are delivered by fallible men and women.”²²

Catholics and, for that matter, Pentecostals hold that “ordained ministers have a specific responsibility to recognize and discern the charisms of the faithful.” At the same time, they see clergy and laity as playing “complementary roles.”²³ Although laity may exercise the charism of discernment, it is the ordained clergy, pastors, and teachers who must make the decision regarding their value for the community.²⁴ While the ordained ministry also claims responsibility to recognize and discern the charisms of the faithful, discernment does not rest exclusively with them. Since the Spirit determines who receives specific gifts, including the charism of discerning of spirits, this charism may appear among any of God's people. Those who discern may include the bishop, or a pastor, or staff members, or those marked by their spiritual maturity, or any other person that the Spirit chooses to use. Catholics and Pentecostals both recognize that discernment is intended to be used primarily within the whole community. We might consider the *sensus fidelium* as an expression of discernment rendered by all the faithful, who recognize the ring of truth in what the Holy Spirit chooses to tell or reveal.²⁵

Still, the Reformed delegates in the WCRC–Pentecostal Dialogue worried about what they viewed as “the subjectivity of Pentecostal actions and experiences in these things.”²⁶ That is a valid concern that needs to be addressed by all

22. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §75.

23. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §88.

24. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §90.

25. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §77, 82, 84, 94, 97; Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (1964), §12.

26. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §87.

concerned and not limited only to decisions made by Pentecostals. It is essential that churches share criteria when making decisions and discerning the will of God. Some criteria belong to rational approaches and may be sorted out easily. Others are more sensed or intuited as the Holy Spirit reveals them or bears “witness with our spirit” (e.g., Rom. 8:16) in a way that is different from a strictly rational approach.²⁷ The question might be: Does the implementation of the scientific method, with its claim to objective truth, damage the church’s ability to embrace the idea of revelation in any form, and with that, the results of another revelation, which reveals the source of the original revelation?

When we see how discernment connects with authority and specifically to authoritative teaching, it is possible to see its unparalleled significance. The history of the church is full of examples of times and situations in which even leaders made poor or wrong decisions. We have seen how even bishops, priests, and deacons have succumbed to sin and corruption. It is important that the whole church discern the decisions, even of bishops, just as the Jerusalem Council, including “the whole church,” agreed with (discerned?) the decision offered by James. Their authority, like that of all Christians, rests in knowing and doing the will of God and holding those who are “in authority” accountable. Pentecostals contend that discernment is not only open to the laity, but, at times, it is critical that the laity weigh in, even on authoritative decisions, through their exercise of the *sensus fidelium*. They view this as a Spirit-inspired democratizing reality. It does not leave *all* authority, including the teachings of the church, in the hands of the bishops, or in the hands of the scholars, or simply in the hands of laity. While the *sensus fidelium* is capable of bringing about necessary change, it generally occupies a position not easily changed, and it can slow or limit those who otherwise might be “blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s

27. In “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §95, Catholics and Pentecostals provide a short list of criteria that they hold in common regarding the exercise of discernment. “The manifestation of a charism must align with Scripture and reflect a faith rooted in the mind of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 2:16). It must conform to church teaching and the *sensus fidelium* (sense of the faithful). It should build up the church, promoting unity and charity. The individual exercising the charism should be a person of spiritual and moral maturity. The individual exercising the charism should be responsive to pastoral leadership.”

trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming” (Eph. 4:14).²⁸

In its quest for unity in the church, discernment must take seriously collegiality and conciliarity. Is it to be led by a single individual, such as the Pope? The encyclical *Ut unum sint*²⁹ certainly raised that question, with a hint that it should be. At the same time, it offered a more or less collegial suggestion that other church leaders and theologians of goodwill might enter into a fruitful discussion of how such an idea might be clarified so that all Christians could find more acceptance across the breadth of the church in all its manifestations.³⁰

While the invitation to “engage in a patient and fraternal dialogue” on this subject is clear, the determination of what Pope John Paul II called “useless controversies” that must be left behind still calls for definition and discernment. Who defines which controversies are “useless,” and how is their use or uselessness determined? Here again, discernment, even of spirits, could provide a significant contribution to the discussion. The question of teaching authority—who possesses the authority, how it is exercised, and how it is discerned—as this chapter shows, is complex. Many questions remain that are both ancient and modern. What should be the appropriate role of scripture in such decisions? What is the appropriate role of the Holy Spirit in such decisions? Should the two play a complementary role in the discernment process, and how is that role to be discerned? Perhaps the question regarding word and Spirit can be put into another set of words that have long been a conundrum for the church: What should be the appropriate balance between the institutional and charismatic

28. Two major studies of the World Council of Churches’ Commission on Faith and Order have significant relevance here. The first was its work on sources of authority. See Tamara Grdzeldidze, ed., *Sources of Authority, Vol. 1: The Early Church*, Faith and Order Paper No. 217 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), and Tamara Grdzeldidze, ed., *Sources of Authority, Vol. 2: Contemporary Churches*, Faith and Order Paper No. 218 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014). The second was the commission’s work on moral discernment. See Myriam Wijlens and Vladimir Shmaliy, eds., *Churches and Moral Discernment, Vol. 1: Learning from Traditions*, Faith and Order Paper No. 228 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021); Myriam Wijlens, Vladimir Shmaliy, and Simone Sinn, eds., *Churches and Moral Discernment, Vol. 2: Learning from History*, Faith and Order Paper No. 229 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021); and *Churches and Moral Discernment, Vol.3: Facilitating Dialogue to Build Koinonia*, Faith and Order Paper No. 235 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021).

29. John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*. On commitment to ecumenism (1995).

30. John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, §96.

claims of authority in the church?³¹ Perhaps it is time to bring this discussion forward in the Commission on Faith and Order in light of the new realities that the entire church now faces, such as a centre of gravity in the global South, the decline of many mainline Protestant churches, and the rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches around the world.

31. Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 178, argued that the institutional authorities took action against the charismatic authorities when, in the judgment of the institutional authorities, the latter came too close to schism and heresy. J.L. Ash, "The Decline of Prophecy in the Early Church," *Theological Studies* 37 (1976), 252, contended that it was neither schism nor heresy that led to the decline of the charismatic, especially in the form of the gift of prophecy, but that it was "captured by the monarchical episcopate, used in its defense, and left to die an unnoticed death when true episcopal stability rendered it a superfluous tool."

The Threefold Ministry

Gevork Saroyan

Introduction

The first volume of this publication, entitled *Towards a Global Vision of the Church*,¹ emerged from the idea of broadening the table globally to interact with perspectives on ecclesiology from Asia, Africa, and Latin America on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*. *TCTCV*, the second convergence text of the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Commission on Faith and Order, seeks to uncover "what the Church is and what its mission implies in and for the world."²

The study of the material of the first volume, however, makes clear that not all churches from Asia, Africa, and Latin America have contributed to the composition of this volume. Of the 24 responses, 16 are written from a Pentecostal perspective.³ This at least allows us to make two suggestions regarding

1. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazryan Drissi, eds., *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022). Henceforth *TGVC*.

2. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), vi. This document must be read in light of the first convergence text, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982).

3. Section 1 (Perspectives from Asia) has five responses from Pentecostal churches, one response from an Asian megachurch, one perspective focusing on mission, one chapter from Basic Ecclesial Communities, two perspectives from India, and one response from a perspective of persecuted Christians. Section 2 (Perspectives from Latin America) has six responses from Pentecostal churches and two responses from the Methodist tradition. Section 3 (Perspectives from Africa) has one response from the Evangelical Church, two responses from Pentecostal churches, and two responses from African Independent Churches.

the content of the book: a) the Pentecostal perspective is dominant in this volume; and b) the volume partially reflects the perspectives of Asian, African, and Latin American churches on *TCTCV*. It is clear that, as the book itself notes in its introduction, more remains to be done to have the whole picture of those regions, thereby enabling other churches to express their views on *TCTCV* from their contextual perspective.

This chapter aims to offer reflections on one of the identified ten key themes found in the contributions of theologians, especially from the global South, which were included in the first volume of *Towards a Global Vision of the Church*. We will focus on what they said on the key theme of ministry, which includes both the threefold ministry and the role of the laity in the life of the church.

The study of the responses reveals that the question of the threefold ministry is much debated by Pentecostal theologians. The megachurch response, which derives partly from the Pentecostal tradition, offers some thoughts on this question which are almost identical to the Pentecostal vision of ministry. From this perspective, these Pentecostal and megachurch responses can be represented here jointly. With regard to the Catholic or Methodist responses, they have no difficulty with the doctrine of the threefold ministry; they do not make any critical comments about it or raise any questions. Particular interest is given to the response of persecuted Christians, to which I will make a special reference later in this discussion. Thus, my reflection in this chapter will be mainly centred on the Pentecostal responses on the issue of the threefold ministry written from different perspectives, namely Asian, Latin American, and African.

Pentecostal and Asian Megachurch Perspectives on the Threefold Ministry

The study of the Pentecostal responses allows us to classify them generally into two groups. Some are written from an apologetics perspective, considering where the text of *TCTCV* differs from Pentecostal ecclesiology.⁴ Some are critical of ecumenism.⁵ The others have adopted a more balanced approach in speaking on *TCTCV*, noting that it has “many elements in common with Pentecostal ecclesiology while at the same time presenting other elements that

4. See, for example, Jun Kim, “Communion with the Holy Spirit, Healing, and Spiritual Battle: A Korean Pentecostal Perspective on Ecclesiology,” in *TGVC*, 51–60; and Laura Saá, “Discipleship and Ordained Ministry from a Latin American Pentecostal Perspective,” in *TGVC*, 155–62.

5. Gedeon Freire de Alencar, “A Brazilian Pentecostal Perspective on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” in *TGVC*, 143–52.

are less common to Pentecostal churches.”⁶ As for the issue of the threefold ministry, not all of the authors touch upon it in their responses. A thorough study of the papers further discovers that some of the theologians bring up the issue of the threefold ministry only briefly in their account. Some of them do not use the term “threefold ministry” but speak of “ordained ministers” conforming to or arguing particular aspects of *TCTCV* on ministry. Other authors do not say a word on the subject.

This diversity of approaches to the question may be explained in light of the fact that Pentecostal churches are highly dependent on their contexts. The themes that the authors choose to consider in connection with *TCTCV* reflect their distinctive concerns and challenges about the church and its mission in this world. Still, all of their responses on *TCTCV* are valuable contributions for the Faith and Order Commission, enabling it to hear the voices of Christians from different regions of the world. This chapter aims to illustrate in what manner the Pentecostal and megachurch traditions perceive the concept of the threefold ministry. Do they attach to it equal ecclesiological significance, typical of churches representing different traditions, or do their interpretations on some aspects differ from the older churches? Finally, what questions do the Pentecostal and megachurch responses raise that require attentive and reflective analysis in search of the future ecumenical reception of *TCTCV*?

A thorough consideration of Pentecostal responses on the question of the threefold ministry allows one to hold that in some instances, Pentecostal ecclesiology converges with the traditional interpretation of the role of ministry, but in other cases it differs. For instance, the Assemblies of God Malaysia (AG Malaysia), in referring to the question of ministry, simply states:

AG Malaysia agrees that ordained ministers are the congregation’s shepherds (*TCTCV* §45–46). Each AG Malaysia church is led by credentialed ministers who are entrusted with the responsibility to care for the members. Concerning authority, AG Malaysia entirely agrees that all power in the Church comes from Jesus Christ, who is its head (*TCTCV* 51). The Church exercises the authority of Christ as it endeavors to be faithful to the revealed Word of God.⁷

6. Pablo R. Andiñach, “*The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and the Mission of the Church – A Latin American Methodist Perspective,” in *TGVC*, 185.

7. Victor Lee, “A Malaysian Pentecostal Perspective on the *Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” in *TGVC*, 5.

From this quotation, it appears that AG Malaysia finds that ordained ministers play some role in the life of the congregation; however, it is not clear that Pentecostals consider as normative the generally accepted pattern of three related ministries of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. This is further supported by the claim that Pentecostal ecclesiology does not see the institutional structures or ministerial orders “as rigidly willed and instituted by Christ for all time.”⁸ In view of this, this Malaysian perspective makes the point that the office of bishop should not be considered as a necessary ecclesiological constituent of the “structure and reality of the local church.” It further maintains that the elected executive committee can fulfil the functions of the office of the bishop without any difficulty.⁹ In other words, it seems that in the Pentecostal tradition, neither the order of bishop nor the deacon’s office is considered necessary for the structure and the mission of the church. This may be deemed highly controversial by many churches, which believe that the concept of the threefold ministry is one of the pillars of the New Testament church.¹⁰ It appears that the Pentecostal liberal approach to the threefold ministry is closely linked to its understanding of the apostolicity of the church. In light of this, we might ask why Pentecostals believe that the concept of apostolicity in our time has nothing to do with the structure and mission of the church. Rather, should it not be understood “in a historical sense, where the apostles established the Church in the first century?”¹¹ This perception of apostolicity in turn questions the established assumption of some church traditions regarding “the episcopal succession,” which has consistently supported the belief that “the continuity with the Church of the apostles finds profound expression in the successive laying on of hands by bishops.”¹² In addition, *TCTCV* notes very clearly that among the respective means for holding the apostolicity of the church, such as “the scriptural canon, dogma and liturgical order, ordained ministry has played an important role. Succession in ministry is meant to serve the apostolic continuity of the Church” (*TCTCV*, §46).

As regards the authority of the church, AG Malaysia does not speak

8. Lee, “A Malaysian Pentecostal Perspective,” 7.

9. Lee, “A Malaysian Pentecostal Perspective,” 7.

10. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 16–29. See also Paul Meyendorff, “Apostolic Faith in Relation to the Historic Episcopate, Authority, and Primacy,” in *Common Threads: Key Themes from Responses to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, eds. Ellen Wondra, Stephanie Dietrich, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 233 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), 33–39.

11. Lee, “A Malaysian Pentecostal Perspective,” 6.

12. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 29–30.

specifically about the authority of ordained ministry but relates it to the whole body of Christ, namely, the church. It becomes apparent that in a Pentecostal perception, ordained ministry does not assume a particular authority as we find it in the case of different church traditions, according to which the ordained ministry manifests and exercises “the authority of Christ in the way Christ himself revealed God’s authority to the world, by committing their life to the community.”¹³

Further, we find more radical claims regarding the concept of ministry in Viju Wilson’s response, written from an Indian perspective. The author maintains that “the ministry of oversight is not spiritually hegemonic.” According to him, “every Pentecostal follower is a potential minister.” In light of this, he develops the thesis that clergy and laity are equally responsible for the leadership of the church.¹⁴ However, for Pentecostal ecclesiology, the equation of the laity and ministry is not limited to the leadership of the church; it covers other important aspects as well, such as the sacramental life of the church. Pentecostal theologians further maintain that baptism and eucharist can also be performed “by lay church leaders.”¹⁵ In addition, the response of Christian Tsekpoe, written from the perspective of the Church of Pentecost of Ghana, allows us to make some more suggestions. The author in this discussion observes that the Church of Pentecost relies heavily on the ministry of lay leaders, while *TCTCV* focuses exclusively on ordained ministry.¹⁶ He promotes the notion that the key responsibility of the ordained ministry is “disciple making,” which particularly includes “mentoring, training, and developing other leaders.”¹⁷ In speaking on the Pentecostal perception of ministry, Tsekpoe does not say anything regarding sacraments. From his discussion, it appears that the sacraments have no relationship with the mission of ministry: according to Pentecostals, baptism and eucharist are simply ordinances.¹⁸ This ecclesiological position, in turn, empowers Pentecostals to allow the equal participation of the laity, including women, in the service and mission of the church. Pentecostal interpretation of the role of ministry obviously departs from the Lima text (*Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*

13. *Baptism, Eucharist and Mainistry*, 19.

14. Viju Wilson, “*The Church: Towards a Common Vision – A Pentecostal Subaltern Perspective*,” in *TGVC*, 82.

15. Lee, “A Malaysian Pentecostal Perspective,” 6.

16. Christian Tsekpoe, “Discipleship and Ordained Ministry in the Church of Pentecost, Ghana,” in *TGVC*, 217.

17. Tsekpoe, “Discipleship and Ordained Ministry in the Church of Pentecost, Ghana,” 218.

18. Lee, “A Malaysian Pentecostal Perspective,” 6.

[*BEM*]), which makes clear that “the specific authority and responsibility” of ordained ministry is “to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry.”¹⁹

Thus, on the one hand, the Pentecostal position strongly argues for the participation of the laity in the structure and mission of the church in a broader sense. This, of course, motivates some of the churches to rethink how the laity can be involved more actively and effectively in the life of the congregation, and in what ways their faith and commitment can be integrated into the mission and service of the church. On the other hand, the Pentecostal equation of ministry and laity radically challenges the classical approach of many churches regarding “specific authority and responsibility” of ordained ministers, which in turn questions the agreement of the churches on the issue of ministry adopted in Lima Document.²⁰

On this subject, Wolfhart Pannenberg has noticed in his valuable reflection, “The Future Role of Faith and Order,” that “in the agreed statements of Accra (1974) on baptism, the Lord’s supper and ministry, and in the Lima convergence document of 1982 (*BEM*) which revised them, it was also possible to state jointly and explicitly the common faith of Christians on these themes, which are central to the worshipping life of the churches.”²¹ This means that the efforts of the WCC towards a common vision of the church has already found a point of departure for this pilgrimage of faith. The volume titled *What Are the Churches Saying about the Church?* rightly points out that “*TCTCV*, this second convergence text, builds on the achievements of *BEM*, marking one more step on our pilgrimage of unity ... *TCTCV* addresses ecclesiological issues not considered by *BEM*, reflecting both growth in ecumenical agreement since the convergence stated in *BEM*, and challenges that have emerged since 1982, when *BEM* was published.”²² Thus, the question of whether ministry and laity have the same responsibility in the life and mission of the church of course has a strongly ecumenical dimension. It calls attention to the fact that any limited approach to the issue can endanger the efforts of churches towards visible unity. This at least

19. *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, 18–19.

20. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 17.

21. Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The Future Role of Faith and Order,” in *Faith and Order 1985–1989: The Commission Meeting at Budapest 1989*, ed. Thomas F. Best, Faith and Order Paper No. 148 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 223.

22. *What Are the Churches Saying about the Church? Key Findings and Proposals from the Responses to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 236 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), §2.

allows us to adopt a balanced approach to the issue. This will enable us to think critically about how the role of the laity can be expanded in the structure and mission of the church while remaining faithful to “the common faith of Christians on these themes”²³ (baptism, eucharist, and ministry), for as the Lima text says, “openness to each other holds the possibility that the Spirit may well speak to one church through the insights of another. Ecumenical consideration, therefore, should encourage, not restrain, the facing of this question.”²⁴

In his response, Wilson further promotes the concept of prophetic ministry, referring to the Pentecostal belief in the gift of prophecy.²⁵ This approach is interesting in the sense that in Pentecostal ecclesiology, one can discern some tendency to relate the concept of ministry exceptionally with the gift of prophecy. The Asian megachurch response, which relies on Presbyterian, Pentecostal, and Independent ecclesiologies, further adopts the same position to the question of ministry. According to it, ministry should not be limited to the leadership of the church; it actually refers to “the prophethood of all believers,” which the author of the paper defines as “radical democratization of ministry.”²⁶ These ecclesiologies promote the belief that their perception of the concept of ministry “challenges the historically established exclusive claim of ministry by clergy.”²⁷ In this connection, it could be argued that this perception of ministry contradicts the Pentecostal claim that “every Pentecostal follower is a potential minister.”²⁸ One may rightly raise the question: If it is so, why is the concept of ministry seen particularly in the context of the gift of prophecy? In this light, one might say that the concept of ministry in Pentecostal ecclesiology supposes certain ministerial functions which give the ministry a privileged status in the congregation while allowing others to exercise their gifts for the growth of the church.

The response of Elizabeth Salazar-Sanzana, written from a Latin American perspective in relation to this discussion, opts for a more constructive stance. She develops the notion that God’s calling to us “to be instruments in his hands” draws Christians to answer “according to what we are (endowed with the various

23. Pannenberg, “The Future Role of Faith and Order,” 223.

24. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 30.

25. Wilson, “*The Church: Towards a Common Vision—A Pentecostal Subaltern Perspective*,” 83.

26. Wonsuk Ma, “Asian Megachurch Ecclesiologies in Conversation with *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” in *TGVC*, 36.

27. Ma, “Asian Megachurch Ecclesiologies,” 37.

28. Wilson, “*The Church: Towards a Common Vision—A Pentecostal Subaltern Perspective*,” 82.

gifts) in the body of Christ.”²⁹ From her discussion, one may derive that she does not think that the Pentecostal doctrine of the universal ministry of all believers is in disagreement with the “specific authority and responsibility” of ordained ministers. In relation to this point, she further states, “we accept *TCTCV* paragraph 19, because there is no problem with the authority of anybody as long as he or she is rightfully chosen by the Holy Spirit and remains obedient.”³⁰ Thus, on the basis of this reflection, one may suggest that some Pentecostal theologians are inclined to believe that the concept of ministry is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit practised by certain members of community (*TCTCV*, §19). By making reference to *BEM*, they clearly indicate that ordained ministers “assemble and build up the Body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry” (*TCTCV*, §19).

Furthermore, the joint response of Opoku Onyinah and Christian Tsekpoe, written from an African perspective, can serve as a meeting ground between many of the churches and Pentecostal ecclesiology in order to come to an understanding on the concept of ministry, making one more step towards the future ecumenical reception of *TCTCV*. In their joint reflection, these Pentecostal theologians call attention to Paul’s body metaphor found in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, arguing that “although each of the body parts is different from the others, none of them is more important than the other.”³¹ The authors promote the notion that the Pauline “paradox of unity and diversity in the body of Christ” will help the churches to listen to each other, to understand each other,³² to learn from each other, to be resourceful to one another in uncovering “ecumenical vision of the nature, purpose, and mission of the church” (*TCTCV*, vii). In this light, Onyinah and Tsekpoe truly believe that “Pentecostals should listen to Paul’s admonishment that ‘there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another’ (1 Cor. 12:25).”³³ This open approach to other church traditions challenges “the church’s mission and self-understanding,” enabling them to revisit “their theology and practices,”³⁴ to “go

29. Elizabeth Salazar-Sanzana, “Recognizing Us on the Road: Contributions of Pentecostalism on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” in *TGVC*, 125–26.

30. Salazar-Sanzana, “Recognizing Us on the Road,” 126.

31. Opoku Onyinah and Christian Tsekpoe, “Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecumenism in Ghana: A Response to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” in *TGVC*, 238–39.

32. Onyinah and Tsekpoe, “Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecumenism in Ghana,” 238–40.

33. Onyinah and Tsekpoe, “Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecumenism in Ghana,” 239.

34. Andiñach, “*The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and the Mission of the Church,” 186–87.

beyond self-focus³⁵ that alienates the members of one and the same body from each other and encouraging the churches to advance a level of mutual recognition and acceptance among member churches.

Perspective of Persecuted Christians

Alongside the above approaches to the threefold ministry in this volume, a certain interest represents the response of Judith C.P. Lin, written from a perspective of persecuted Christians. The author, while agreeing that God's word and sacraments are two principal components in most churches, at the same time calls attention to the fact that "persecuted churches are often deprived of both."³⁶ She rightly observes that the needs and challenges of these communities differ starkly from normal church life. Based on that fact, she makes the argument that where Christianity is persecuted, "sacraments and the threefold ministry that are expected as normative in the West, can scarcely be anticipated in churches in these places."³⁷ Further, Lin maintains that despite the lack of external institutions, Christians in these regions incarnate the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers.³⁸ From her discussion, it turns out that she is referring to persecuted Christians who hold a low-church ecclesiology. Moreover, the situation in some places may be more complicated, when there are certain difficulties in providing the elementary needs of these churches, such as catechism or Bible study. Nevertheless, there is one subtlety that needs to be considered here. These persecuted Christians hold a low-church ecclesiology not because they chose to do so but because of the circumstances in which they have found themselves. Thus, to what degree the response of persecuted Christians clarifies their real position to *TCTCV* remains an open question for us. The ecclesiology study group of the Faith and Order Commission may well consider this fact in its future work. In my conviction, the main concern here for the Faith and Order Commission should be to reflect the voices of persecuted Christians in its future work on ecclesiology, which I believe will enhance the documents it will produce; this will also encourage the churches to increase their ecumenical sensitivity towards persecuted Christians.

35. Nicta Lubaale Makiika, "Walking with One Another in Mission: A Journey of African Independent Churches," in *TGVC*, 232.

36. Judith C.P. Lin, "The Weight of the Cross: A Response to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* from a Perspective of Persecuted Christians," in *TGVC*, 99.

37. Lin, "The Weight of the Cross," 99–100.

38. Lin, "The Weight of the Cross," 100.

Conclusion

In their responses, some of the Pentecostal theologians observe/complain that *TCTCV*, in relation to sacraments and ministry, is closely dependent on high-church ecclesiology, which, according to them, is evident “in the document’s emphasis on sacramental theology when discussing baptism, the eucharist, and ordained ministry.”³⁹ Furthermore, they like to stress that “this kind of approach” makes the task of *TCTCV* more difficult, considering that Pentecostals have low-church ecclesiology: “Ecclesiologically, we are not so-called high church.”⁴⁰

In relation to this, some of them even think that discussions on baptism, eucharist, and ministry need to be addressed “from two distinct perspectives (high and low church ecclesiology) in equal measures.”⁴¹ The proposed solution, of course, may seem reasonable for some, and particularly for Pentecostals. However, others may argue that *TCTCV* does not speak of the threefold ministry only from the perspective of historical church traditions (such as Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican), but in relation to each topic, it also refers to existing differences regarding the issue. In my understanding, in the case of *TCTCV*, we deal here with a document which allows us to hear different voices, at the same time enabling one to add one’s own perspective as part of the efforts to come to terms with the common vision of the church through the process of the ecumenical reception of *TCTCV*.

In this respect, I share the opinion of Pablo R. Andiónach, found in his response written from a Latin American Methodist perspective, that in the case of *TCTCV*, “now we have a text that expresses synthetically, a common place, where most ecclesiastical and theological traditions can feel represented. This was achieved not by weakening the theology or avoiding deep theological thoughts but rather through a genuine expression of the theological thought of the member churches.”⁴²

Thus, the thorough analysis of Pentecostal interpretations of the concept of the threefold ministry discovers that there can be found only a few places that converge with the text of *TCTCV* or that could have some connections with *BEM*. Moreover, on the basis of these responses, one may discern that in speaking on Pentecostal models of the church, the authors do not attach as much

39. Gani Wiyono, “An Indonesian Pentecostal Response to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” in *TGVC*, 15.

40. Wiyono, “An Indonesian Pentecostal Response,” 13.

41. Wiyono, “An Indonesian Pentecostal Response,” 15.

42. Andiónach, “*The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and the Mission of the Church,” 185–86.

importance to the question of the threefold ministry as is found in mainline church traditions. Even so, writing responses on *TCTCV* has empowered Pentecostal churches from different contexts to become part of the efforts of the ecumenical movement towards a common vision of the church. Moreover, it is encouraging to note that the Pentecostal responses enable diverse traditions, often competing against each other, to listen to each other and to learn more about each other at a new level. Nevertheless, I believe that any response to *TCTCV* cannot be detached from the Lima convergence document (*BEM*), the new awareness of common faith on these themes reached by different churches and traditions of Christianity. *TCTCV* derives from *BEM*—or, to put it more simply, it continues the movement towards agreement reached in *BEM*.

In summary, the study of *TGVC*, Vol. 1 shows that writing a reflection on *TCTCV* has enabled theologians to establish to what extent the convergence document expresses the ecclesiology of their own churches and church contexts. From this perspective, it should be noted that each of these reflections enters us into a dialogue with a certain church tradition, leading us “to acts of unity, deepening of relationships and community of witness.”⁴³ I believe, in light of this claim, that the suggestion of the Lima document that “the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also a means of achieving it” has to be interpreted.⁴⁴ In light of this, both *BEM* and *TCTCV* are means to bring the churches together. As one of the Armenian church fathers, Nerses the Gracious, has said, “*when we come together, He [God] may give us the wisdom to think, to speak and to do that which pleases the Holy Spirit and that which follows His will for the edification and firmness of the catholic, apostolic and orthodox Church.*”⁴⁵

43. Marlin van Elderen, *Introducing the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 128.

44. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 22.

45. Aram I, *Saint Nerses the Gracious and Church Unity: Armeno-Greek Church Relations (1165–1173)* (Antelias, Lebanon: Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 2010), 211.

Ministry in the Church: A Catholic Reading of Some Ecclesial Aspects in *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*

Krzysztof Mielcarek

Ministry within the church has always been a challenge in ecumenical doctrinal dialogues. For the past five decades, representatives of the various churches and ecclesial communities have been undertaking both bilateral and multilateral dialogues and have produced a number of documents that have expressed mutual concern about ministry. The Catholic ecumenical perspective of ecclesial matters was covered for the first time in the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* (UR).¹ There, the role of the Twelve established by Jesus Christ is stressed; their task “of teaching, ruling and sanctifying,” and a special role for Peter, is also underlined (UR §2). Thus, the importance of apostolic succession in the transmission of proper authority of teaching, governing, and sanctifying is obvious to Catholics. However, what is so obvious to Catholics—and, in a majority of cases, also to the Orthodox churches—is not necessarily the case for other ecclesial communities. Therefore, this chapter will consist of two parts. The first offers a short sketch of Catholic beliefs on church ministry. The second provides some reflections on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (TCTCV)² from the Catholic point of view.

1. Vatican Council II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* (1964), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html.

2. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

A Short Presentation of Catholic Beliefs on Ministry

Catholic doctrine on church ministry is present not only in the official documents of the church councils or in documents issued by the pope. The broader ecumenical perspective may also be derived from documents published as conclusions of many bilateral ecumenical dialogues in which Catholic representatives were engaged. These usually consist of some sketchy or extensive rendering of Catholic ecclesiology, including aspects of ministry. Since the goal of this chapter is to communicate with evangelical and Pentecostal churches, having in mind the content of *TCTCV*, it seems useful to take as a base document the text that meets such theological sensitivity. About a decade ago, the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity held the second round of their conversations (2006–2010), titled “The Word of God in the Life of the Church” (WGLC). The outcome of the dialogue is the official document of the same title, published in 2012.³ The additional advantage of such an approach is that Fr. William Henn, OFM Cap (a Catholic theologian) served in the editing working group of both texts (*TCTCV* and WGLC), and thus in some ways they are related.

In chapter four of WGLC, the authors declare that

Christ is the head of the church, her founder, creator and cornerstone. The church owes her whole existence to Christ and he continues to be her ‘shepherd and guardian (*episkopos*)’ (1 Pet. 2:25) ... Through these means, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the community of the church grows in her communion with God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (WGLC, 162)

We may add, with Fr. George Tavad, “and it sends its members on their mission in the world for the kingdom.”⁴

According to Catholic belief, all ecclesial ministry is called to continue the ministry of Christ over his church. Bishops, who are ordained in apostolic succession, continue to exercise episcopal ministry. According to the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (*LG*), their ministry derives from

3. See, “The Word of God in the Life of the Church: A Report of International Conversations between the Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance, 2006-2010,” at <https://www.baptistworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Baptist-Catholic-Dialogue-Phase-II.pdf>.

4. George Tavad, *A Theology for Ministry*. Theology and Life Series, 6 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1983), 51.

the mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles, which is destined to last until the end of the world (cf. Matt. 28:20); for that very reason, the apostles were careful to appoint successors in this hierarchically constituted society (*LG*, §20).⁵

Thus, *episkope* (oversight) is viewed as a gift of Christ to the church to enable the ministry of the whole people of God. Vatican II teaches that “bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church” (*LG*, §20). Because of that, Catholics believe that the fullness of the sacrament of orders is conferred upon bishops through episcopal consecration (*LG*, §21). This ministerial priesthood “differs essentially and not only in degree from the common priesthood of the faithful,” but “each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ” (*LG*, §10).

There is a threefold form of priesthood/ministry in the Catholic Church: namely, of bishops, presbyters, and deacons.⁶ Catholics are convinced that such a form of ministry is well grounded in the New Testament and that it developed later into ordained sacramental ministry.⁷ The apostles entrusted the tradition of the teaching of the gospel to dependable persons (1 Tim. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 4:1-5). Later, those reliable men functioned as the guardians of the apostolic tradition and acted as decision-making authorities. The decisive features of succession in the threefold ministry were soon recognized by the church of the first centuries.

Catholics and Orthodox agree that only men, by God’s design, were to be ordained, in light of a very strong common witness of the tradition. Thus, they affirm an unbroken tradition of their churches in not ordaining women. Pope John Paul II openly reaffirmed that “the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful.”⁸

Episkope is exercised in personal, collegial, and communal ways in the Catholic Church. These ways are not exclusive to one another but are bound together in a network of dynamic relationships, which together make up the overall *episkope* in the Church. Any bishop is exercising his personal *episkope* over his own particular church (i.e., a diocese). As a member of the College of Bishops,

5. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (1964), http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

6. See *TCTCV*, §47.

7. *TCTCV* is right in stating that “There is no single pattern of ministry in the New Testament” (§46).

8. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* (1994), §4, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html.

he cares for the Church universal within a collegial *episkope*. The fullest expression of this occurs in an ecumenical council. Within his own particular church, the bishop governs in a collaborative way with his councils and with other consultative bodies, which include the laity.

Episkope is primarily exercised in the local or particular church but always in communion with the universal Church. Catholics hold that the particular church is that portion of the people of God gathered around the bishop, who makes the headship of Christ visible by proclaiming the word, presiding over the eucharist with his presbyters and deacons, and shepherding his people in one community in the Holy Spirit.⁹ In each particular church, in full communion with other particular churches, the Catholic Church subsists in its fullness. The bishop is, therefore, not only the “visible principle” (*LG*, §23) for the unity of his local church, but he also serves the bond of unity with all other local churches, which makes every local church “complete.”

Probably all Christians would agree that personal *episkope* is established by Christ for the good of the Church and, in a way, for Christian discipleship. However, Catholics would go further and stress that the ministry of bishops belongs to the sacramental structure (the *esse* or being) of the Church. By their episcopal consecration, they receive the fullness of the sacrament of orders. They are assisted in their ministry by the presbyters and deacons (*UR*, §2).

The ministry of *episkope* or oversight includes as one of its principal purposes the promotion of the unity of the Christian community. It links the local church to the whole fellowship of churches beyond the local level. For Catholics, this is not just one of the functions of the office but a structural and sacramental necessity for the oneness of the Church universal. It reflects its apostolicity, which is expressed both by *faith* and by *ministry*. The faith of the church is apostolic by being faithful to revelation as contained in scripture and handed down through the ages.

Catholics believe that Christ assures that the Holy Spirit will guide the community into the truth (John 16:13). Thus, God preserves the community as a whole from error in its profession of fundamental, normative doctrines concerning faith and morals. In very precise and limited circumstances, the pope, as Peter’s successor, could exercise the infallibility of the church as a whole. The Second Vatican Council made explicit that the ability to teach infallibly also belongs to the college of bishops in communion with the pope, especially when

9. *LG*, §21; Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus* (1965), §11, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html.

gathered in an ecumenical council.¹⁰

According to Catholic belief, Christ assigned to Peter a special role: “primacy of jurisdiction.” This can be properly understood only from within an ecclesiology of communion. Catholics are well aware of differences between the historical role of Peter’s leadership as portrayed in the New Testament; their beliefs about the continuity of “Petrine ministry”; the need for such a ministry embodied in an individual *episkopos*; and its embodiment in the Bishop of Rome. For Catholics, these four points are intimately interconnected. They affirm that the Bible provides a *foundation* for the post-biblical development of a ministry in service to the universal unity of the church. It is also confirmed by many key figures in church history, such as Ignatius of Antioch,¹¹ Irenaeus,¹² and Pope Leo I.¹³ Even though there is no substantial agreement on such a universal ministry of unity in the church, John Paul II encouraged ecumenical reflection on ways of exercising such a ministry that might prove to be acceptable to other Christians.

TCTCV Read from the Catholic Perspective¹⁴

TCTCV is the result of long theological discussions and consultations among the churches that form a kind of mosaic of different communities and denominations with various ecclesiologies. Thus, any attempt to formulate some integral vision of global Christian ecclesiology poses quite a challenge. One could even wonder if there is any possibility of reconciling all the theological views and ecclesial sensibilities into one universal vision.

Besides, not only is a global vision difficult to imagine, but those engaged in the ecumenical dialogues are fully aware of some delicate points concerning

10. *LG* §25; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei verbum* (1965), §10.2, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

11. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans* 1.1, 3.1; *Letter to the Magnesians* 2, 6.1, 13.1-2; *Letter to the Trallians* 2.1-3, 3.1-2.

12. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.3.2-3.

13. Leo I, *Letter* 10.2-3, 28 (*The Tome*).

14. This part of the paper is based on the article of P. Kantyka, “Towards the Reconciliation of Ministries: Apostolic Succession and Mutual Recognition of Ministry from ‘Unitatis reintegratio’ to ‘The church – towards a common vision,’” *Studia Oecumenica* 14 (2014), 53–62. The official response of the Roman Catholic Church to *TCTCV* was published after this chapter had been written and can be found in Ellen Wondra, Stephanie Dietrich, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, eds., *Churches Respond to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Vol. 2, Faith and Order Paper No. 232 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), 161–221.

ecclesiology in general and church ministry in particular. For instance, historic churches (especially Catholics and Orthodox) would stress the importance of apostolic succession and the historical shape of church ministry. However, not every denomination would view it as belonging to the *esse* of the church. Some would think it is rather a matter of contemporary choice. Another issue of the same sort is the shape of the ministerial structure within the church. Many historic churches believe that all Christians are to follow a primordial structure rooted in the Scriptures, while others would like to organize it according to their contemporary needs.

For many post-Reformation churches, the ordination of women is a question of dignity and righteousness, but Catholics and Orthodox would view it as violating the oldest common tradition. In turn, many Protestants would consider such a position as is taken by the Catholic and Orthodox churches as an obstacle on the way to the reconciliation of ministries and the full visible unity of the church.

The Faith and Order document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*,¹⁵ which appeared in 1982, had already discussed ministry issues, but it did not offer any particular solution concerning ministry in the church that is acceptable to the global Christianity. Does the new document, *TCTCV*, have something innovative to offer? As has been signalled above, both *BEM* and *TCTCV* are a result of ecumenical discussions undertaken by members of the World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order. Since the parties involved in those debates originated from numerous traditions, the final text, unsurprisingly, shows features of many ecclesiologies rather than one integral vision. In fact, the World Council of Churches, being a fellowship of churches, could produce nothing else but a balanced panorama of various ecclesiologies.

The main points of this panorama are as follows:

1. The identity of the church calls for a visible unity understood as mutual recognition of “the authentic presence of what the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople (381) calls the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church” (*TCTCV*, §9). These “attributes ... are not separate from one another” but “inform one another and are mutually interrelated,” as a result of the fact that “the apostolic faith is one” (*TCTCV*, §22).
2. The apostolicity of the church is rooted in the action of God himself: “The Church is apostolic because the Father sent the Son to establish it. The Son, in turn, chose and sent the apostles and prophets, empowered

15. World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982).

- with the gifts of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, to serve as its foundation and to oversee its mission” (*TCTCV*, §22).
3. The apostolicity of the church is also connected to a local church: “the local Church is ‘a community of baptized believers in which the word of God is preached, the apostolic faith confessed, the sacraments are celebrated, the redemptive work of Christ for the world is witnessed to, and a ministry of *episkopé* exercised by bishops or other ministers in serving the community” (*TCTCV*, §31). Most Protestant churches would agree with such definition, although the phrase “receiving and sharing the faith of the apostles” (*TCTCV*, §34) might cause some of them to wonder what exactly was meant.
 4. The apostolicity of the church is related to the ministry realized in apostolic succession. “The Christian community is called to be ever faithful to these apostolic origins,” and the apostolicity of the church is assured by the apostolic succession in ministry (*TCTCV*, §22). All this is done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and his activity in the Church “is related to institutional structures or ministerial order” (*TCTCV*, §24). At this point, however, the authors of *TCTCV* are unable to give a homogenous vision of the ecclesial reality described above. Instead, they offer several different perspectives: “Some see certain essential aspects of the Church’s order as willed and instituted by Christ himself for all time; therefore, in faithfulness to the Gospel, Christians would have no authority fundamentally to alter this divinely instituted structure” – referring to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox position; and “Some affirm that the ordering of the Church according to God’s calling can take more than one form while others affirm that no single institutional order can be attributed to the will of God” (*TCTCV*, §24) – covering various Protestant positions.
 5. In the third chapter of *TCTCV*, sections 45 to 57 are devoted specifically to the ministry within the church, which constitutes “challenging obstacles on the path to unity” (*TCTCV*, §45). There, three sub-topics are discussed: a. Ordained ministry, b. The gift of authority in the ministry of the church; and c. The ministry of oversight (*episkopé*).
 - a. The churches differ in the approach to the question of the threefold ministry of deacons, presbyters, and bishops. This model, still perceived as normative by many churches, has been replaced by a variety of models adopted by some post-Reformation churches (*TCTCV*, §46). The most important question on the matter is “whether or not the ‘historic episcopate’

(meaning bishops ordained in apostolic succession back to the earliest generations of the Church), or the apostolic succession of ordained ministry more generally, is something intended by Christ for his community” (*TCTCV*, §47).

- b. Although the threefold ministry is viewed as the one that “may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek” (*TCTCV*, §47), it is unclear what kind of role the ordained ministers have “in providing an authoritative interpretation of revelation” (*TCTCV*, §51).
- c. The importance of the *episkope* in “maintaining continuity in apostolic faith and unity of life” is noted (*TCTCV*, §52), as well as the fact that the functions connected to the exercise of *episkope* are always directed to the community. Whether exercised individually or in common, they are always to be exercised in personal, collegial, and communal ways.¹⁶ However, even though the text of *TCTCV* mentions “synodality” and “conciliarity” (*TCTCV*, §53), clearly taken from the Orthodox tradition, and primatiality stressed by Catholics (*TCTCV*, §55), the authors are fully aware that churches do not agree whether “a universal ministry of primacy is necessary or even desirable” (*TCTCV*, §57).

Evaluation as conclusion

The recent document of the Faith and Order Commission does not offer any ecumenical agreement on ordained ministry or apostolic succession. However, *TCTCV* has provided the reader with a very solid and panoramic outline of the results of ecumenical discussions—a genuine catalogue of convergences and divergences. From the Roman Catholic point of view, one needs to admit that the theology presented in the latest Faith and Order text shows some progress in comparison to the previous documents.¹⁷ In other words, Catholic theologians can appreciate many answers concerning ecclesiology given within *TCTCV*. However, the remaining disagreements call for further evaluation, whether they

16. Cf. *BEM*, §26.

17. *The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper No. 181 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998); *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper No. 198 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005).

are “Church-divisive or ... part of legitimate diversity” (*TCTCV*, §30). Furthermore, these answers cannot remain on general questions but must also answer specific questions like “What should the united church look like?” “What kind of specific ministries of leadership are needed to serve such unity?” The Commission on Faith and Order needs to continue putting a lot of effort in stimulating such agreements.

Sacraments

Ulrike Link-Wieczorek

“The Church: Growing in Communion,” the third chapter of *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*,¹ contains a sub-chapter addressing the subject of sacraments. Together with the subjects of faith and ministry, sacraments are described as significant in the context of the “full realisation of God’s gift of communion” (*TCTCV*, §37). So, the term “sacraments” is about something that is also of great importance to the Pentecostal churches and other evangelical types: the present activity of God in drawing the faithful into communion with God. Generally, speaking of a sacrament means that it is an event in which God is the actor. This is why the concept of ordinance has long (often?) been understood as incompatible with the concept of sacrament. As *TCTCV* points out, the notion of ordinance is more cautious about God’s role in the event, focusing on the congregation as the actor.

The term “ordinance” expresses the idea that we perform, in obedience, something that is already there, independent of this ecclesial action: that is, “ordinance” refers to something other than the idea that God’s own action is involved.² Using the example of baptism and the Lord’s supper/eucharist, *TCTCV* shows how in recent years, different ecclesial traditions have come closer together through ecumenical dialogue and speaking of both aspects. Most traditions “affirm that these events are both *instrumental* (in that God uses them to bring about a new reality), and *expressive* (of an already-existing reality)” (*TCTCV*, §44). Following §44, *TCTCV* offers a paragraph in italics with questions suggestive of further ecumenical work. It points out that in all churches there are many “rites,” “such as chrismations/confirmations, weddings, and ordinations within their liturgies and many also have rites for the forgiveness of

1. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

2. See the explanation in *TCTCV*, §44.

sin and the blessing of the sick” (*TCTCV*, §44), that in a similar way to both baptism and the eucharist realize or show God’s saving action towards the faithful. In the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, these rites are understood as sacraments, but this is not the case in the other churches; *TCTCV* asks whether the churches are not nevertheless closer in this than the conceptual distinction between sacraments and ordinances suggests.

The ecumenical discussion about the concept of sacraments, then, is about how we can speak of God’s presence in such a way that it can be understood as a current experience (in baptism and the Lord’s supper) without implying that the church “owns” God’s presence. Perhaps this is a fundamental problem in the Christian life of faith that needs to be rebalanced again and again. And perhaps this problem lies in the subsoil of our ecclesiological differences in general. The Pentecostal tradition exacerbates this problem—how to speak of the presence of God—by its conviction of the direct experience of the presence of the Spirit without the “mediation” of the church. Daniel Chiquete Beltrán points this out clearly: The “majority sector of Pentecostalism . . . considers that this nourishing by the Spirit is not given by eucharistic mediation and is given *only very indirectly* through the mediation of the word of God. Rather, it is understood as a direct infusion, commonly associated with the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which can also occur outside of liturgical activities.”³

No doubt, the reference to the idea of a direct experience of the Spirit hits a core aspect of Pentecostal theology. But is it really an antithesis to the concept of sacraments or ordinances? In the practice of Pentecostal faith, the experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit is also expressed in certain specific events and actions. When Pentecostals speak about the surprising coming of the Spirit, for instance, in baptism in the Spirit, they recognize such phenomena as expressions of the Spirit’s presence. And they do so because they trace them back to the biblical tradition.⁴ Seen in this way, then, speaking in tongues, or a visible trance-

3. Daniel Chiquete Beltrán, “A Mexican Pentecostal Perspective on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 135. Italics mine.

4. See, for instance, John 3:8, where the Spirit’s action is likened to that of the wind; or Acts 2:1-4, where suddenly the Spirit, fire, and the sound of wind appears; or Acts 10:44, when the Spirit comes upon Cornelius and his household during the middle of Peter’s sermon; or Acts 19:6, where the Spirit comes when Paul lays hands on the Ephesians. But also, in a more general way—for example, in the gifts of healing or prophecy—the experience of the Spirit is recognized in the communion of faith by tracing it in its biblical basis.

like devotion in prayer, could be understood as a sacrament. They function as signs and as instruments of God's healing presence, each in a different way for the practitioners and for those who see or hear them within the common perspective of faith. As in sacraments and as in ordinances, the Pentecostal signs of the Spirit's presence function within the interweaving of individual experience and the faith experience of the communion of faith. Without this interweaving, we would not be able to interpret it. Here lies a bridge to the ecumenical conversation on the ecclesial relevance of the Pentecostal experiential characteristics with high potential for convergence.

However, Chiquete Beltrán's remarks also show that in such a conversation, the older, historic churches (Protestant, Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox) must be prepared to receive a critical response from the Pentecostal participants. Pentecostal pneumatology would emphasize the action of the Spirit leading to direct experience because Pentecostals don't want to mix the Spirit with the interpreting work of the church. So, Pentecostals may ask historical churches whether they do not give the impression that the presence of God is somehow dependent on the church. Ecumenical dialogue with Pentecostal churches will have to make it clear, above all, that none of the churches, whether in the case of sacraments or ordinances, has this in mind. Historical churches must make it clear that they do not think they can determine where and how God is present. And, of course, on the other side, Pentecostals will be asked to explain how their tradition can present a plausible concept of the discernment of spirits and how the misuse and misunderstanding of the direct experience of the Spirit can be avoided. In both aspects of an ecumenical dialogue, insights regarding the relevance of church—for example, as a lived communion of believers and of churches—might still emerge.⁵

The idea of the immediate effectiveness of the Spirit has, above all, as many contributions point out, an equalizing element. The Spirit comes to whom he wills—there is no distinction between men and women and priests and lay people. This consequence of Pentecostal theology seems to me to be the most important challenge for our understanding of ecclesiology. Of course, one will have to ask whether the equality of all is actually found in all or in any Pentecostal community. At any rate, Chiquete Beltrán thinks that Pentecostals do not need

5. This seems to me to be where the Reformed–Pentecostal dialogue is heading; see “Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community, and Justice. The Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 2001–2011,” 103–16 and elsewhere, http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj21/warc_2011d.html.

a concept of “church as sacrament,” or indeed any concept of sacrament at all, because they want to see themselves in their own personal lives as sacraments: “in [Pentecostalism’s] daily religious practice, the temple, the community of believers and the person him- or herself live as sacraments: sacred and consecrated elements for the service of the kingdom of God.”⁶ They do not want to be signs but manifestations.⁷ This is admittedly a steep thesis, which also has its dangers. But it shows that church and the fellowship of churches need to support, comment on, and correct each other in this service. In his analysis of evangelical ecclesiology, Sotirios Boukis shows the tendency that many evangelical or Pentecostal churches have to focus on a concept of spiritual (invisible) unity rather than a concept of visible unity through the recognition of ministry and sacraments.⁸ An ecumenical conversation with the Pentecostal tradition could bring more mutual understanding about forms of God’s presence and embed the concepts of sacraments and, hopefully also, of ministry in it.

Finally, I would like to refer to a thought from a brief but fine chapter by Judith C.P. Lin. She describes the situation of Christians in the face of persecution and rightly rebukes *TCTCV* for mentioning “persecution or martyrdom only as something that happened in the past.”⁹ She then describes how the individualistic perspective of the intimate relationship with God is almost life sustaining, especially in a situation where public church life is not possible. A “high church” ecclesiology is then not possible, she writes. She describes impressively that in this situation, “visions, dreams, hearing God’s voice” become literally understood signs and wonders. They are fed by an intensive Bible reading, so they also have an ecclesiological framework. Finally, she describes life in the persecution of Christians as formation in following the cross and lets these reflections lead to the thesis: “Persecution *is* the norm for those who are called Christians, and it is the persecuted churches that reflect *even authentically* the church life that Jesus

6. Chiquete Beltrán, “A Mexican Pentecostal Perspective,” 136.

7. Chiquete Beltrán, “A Mexican Pentecostal Perspective,” 135.

8. Sotirios Boukis, “Evangelical Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on Foundational Statements of the Lausanne Movement,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 121-22.

9. Judith C.P. Lin, “The Weight of the Cross: A Response to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* from a Perspective of Persecuted Christians,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 99. See also *TCTCV*, §6.

described, rather than the non-persecuted churches.”¹⁰ Is this not also a description of the church as sacrament, as a sign and instrument of salvation in the concrete situation of persecution? At least as an offering for discussion in the ecumenical dialogue on the church, such a concept of sacrament in its contextual dynamics could be interesting.

10. Lin, “The Weight of the Cross,” 191. Emphasis in original.

Baptism in Water and Baptism in the Spirit

Krzysztof Mielcarek

For most Christian churches and traditions, water baptism is essential to their identity. That is why in the first global ecumenical convergence document of the 20th century, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (*BEM*), baptism covers one-third of the text.¹ The authors of *BEM* (also called the “Lima text”) reflect on the institution of baptism, its meaning, its relation to faith, baptismal practices, and celebrations.

BEM stresses that water baptism is “rooted in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, in his death and in his resurrection.”² It is “the sign of new life through Jesus Christ,” uniting the one baptized with Christ and with his people.³ *BEM*

1. See *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982).

2. *BEM*, Baptism, §1; see also *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), §41 (henceforth *TCTCV*). Note the somewhat unusual expression in *TCTCV* connecting Jesus’ baptism and ours directly. One may think of connecting them by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:21-22) immediately before his mission, the Spirit was given to Jesus’ disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus’ declaration of himself as the “anointed” one (Luke 4:18-21) links his anointing directly with his baptism in the Jordan (see Luke 7:22; Matt. 11:4-6).

3. *BEM*, Baptism, §2; see *TCTCV*, §41. On the role of the community of believers in baptism see “Perspectives on Koinonia: The Report of the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 1985–1989,” *Pneuma* 12:2 (1990), §53. See also the “Final Report of the Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1976),” §19. Baptism properly conferred “constitutes a sacramental bond of unity . . . [being itself] only a beginning, (. . .) wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ” (Unitatis reintegratio, §22); see also “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of Koinonia: A Report of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (1993–2002),” §15.

recalls images from Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12, speaking of participation in Christ's death and resurrection through baptism. Its results are expressed in many biblical images and formulas: the washing away of sins (1 Cor. 6:11); a new birth (John 3:5); enlightenment by Christ (Eph. 5:14); a reclothing in Christ (Gal. 3:27); a renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5); the experience of salvation from the flood (1 Pet. 3:20-21); an exodus from bondage (1 Cor. 10:1-2), and a liberation into a new humanity without barriers or divisions (Gal. 3:27-28; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Many Christians would see baptism prefigured in Old Testament symbolism in scenes such as the salvation of Noah (see 1 Pet. 3:20-21); the passing through the Red Sea (see 1 Cor. 10:1-5); and the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit foretold in Ezekiel 36:25.⁴

The authors of *BEM* also see some ethical implications in baptism (§4): as cleansing one of all sin and as an act of justification (Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11). In this way, all the baptized have a new ethical orientation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

To all the signatories of *BEM*, the presence of the Holy Spirit is essential to the reality of water baptism, for he is active in the lives of the baptized before, during, and after their baptism.⁵ He guarantees (as a seal) their status as sons and daughters of God and nurtures them so they will be able to come to the divine fullness and to the praise of the glory of God (2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14).⁶ Just as Christ's death and resurrection are linked with the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit, in the same way participation of the baptized in Christ's death and resurrection is inseparably bound up with the reception of the Spirit. Thus baptism, in its full meaning, signifies and effects both.⁷ *BEM* also recognizes that although Christians differ on the view to which rite (water baptism, anointing with chrism, imposition of hands) the presence of the Spirit must be connected, all agree that Christian baptism is in water and the Holy Spirit.⁸

Since not every Pentecostal community would consent to such a statement, it poses a serious challenge for future ecumenical dialogue. However, the stress on the role of the Holy Spirit in water baptism seems to be valuable in the

4. See "Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989)," §39.

5. Roman Catholics would go a step further, confessing that baptismal initiation results in participation within the trinitarian *koinonia* by faith, through Christ in his Spirit; see "Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989)," §31.

6. *BEM*, Baptism, §5.

7. *BEM*, Baptism, §15.

8. *BEM*, Baptism, §16. See also the "Final Report of the Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1976)," §21.

dialogue with Pentecostals. It has a strong biblical basis in the theological concept of Luke-Acts. Many scholars have seen a direct connection between Jesus' experience by the Jordan River and the event at the Pentecost feast in Jerusalem after his resurrection (Luke 3:21-22; Acts 2:1-13, 38-39).

In the bilateral dialogue with Catholics, Pentecostals have expressed their approval of the conviction of God, intending "that each follower of Jesus enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9)"; however, there is an obvious difference of understanding on the role of the Spirit in Christian initiation and life.⁹ Catholics, Orthodox, and some other historic churches would tend to stress the importance of sacraments of initiation,¹⁰ while most evangelical, Pentecostal, and non-denominational churches hold a non-sacramental view of water baptism.¹¹ Pentecostals accentuate Spirit baptism as the "essential gateway experience for the receiving of certain charisms."¹² This does not mean that Pentecostals believe that charisms and other spiritual gifts are confined to Spirit baptism, but they place special emphasis on baptism in the Holy Spirit.¹³

9. "Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989)," §64.

10. This includes the eucharist as well, but according to Jelle Creemers of the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Louvain, Belgium, evangelicals (and, by implication, most Pentecostals) would struggle to see a "dynamic and profound relation between baptism and the eucharist," as described in *TCTCV* §42; see Creemers, "An Evangelical Response to 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision,'" in *Churches Respond to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Vol. 2, eds. Ellen Wondra, Stephanie Dietrich, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 232 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), 339.

11. Sotirios Boukis quotes the Lutheran–Pentecostal dialogue [*Lutherans and Pentecostals Together* (Strasbourg: Institute for Ecumenical Research; Pasadena: David du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality; and Zurich: European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010), §15–16], which speaks of Pentecostals' predilection towards "ordinances" rather than "sacraments." See Sotirios Boukis, "Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on the International Bilateral Dialogues of Pentecostals with Reformed and Lutheran Churches," in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 31.

12. "'Do Not Quench the Spirit': Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church – Report of the Sixth Phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (2011–2015)," Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* N. 147 (2016/I), §10.

13. Krzysztof Mielcarek, "Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogues," in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 7.

This said, one must notice with a certain measure of disbelief that Pentecostal views on baptism seem to be utterly absent from *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*. The recent Faith and Order document says nothing about baptism in the Holy Spirit or some other specific elements of worship or gifts of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ It is true that *TCTCV* (§41) gives only a short resumé of baptism in water drawn from *BEM*, but neither document notes such phenomena as baptism in the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Part of the issue might be connected to the fact that baptism in the Spirit “has no precise, commonly accepted theological formulation.”¹⁶ Some describe it as “the outpouring of the Spirit in the life of someone converted to Christ, giving him [or her] the strength to bear witness to the Lord Jesus in the world.”¹⁷

The absence of baptism in the Holy Spirit in *TCTCV* is one of the main obstacles to Pentecostal churches embracing the document. For Pentecostals, such an experience is central in their theology.¹⁸ Baptism in the Spirit is strongly encouraged and cultivated among Pentecostals, and the majority of them expect that baptism in the Spirit will be accompanied by some form of charismatic evidence—most frequently, speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4).¹⁹ Moreover, the Spirit-baptized person is expected to develop his/her ability to receive and employ a variety of spiritual gifts, such as tongues, healing, words of wisdom, and prophecy.²⁰ These charisms are a necessary means for convincing and successfully witnessing about God’s salvation given in Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8).²¹ This empowerment “includes divine calling, equipping, commissioning, and the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit throughout mission.”²²

According to Pentecostal conviction, a personal experience of the Holy

14. Boukis, “Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” 32.

15. Boukis, “Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” 32.

16. J. Usma Gómez, “Dialogue with Pentecostals,” *L’Osservatore Romano*: Weekly Edition in English, 28 March 2001, 10.

17. Gómez, “Dialogue with Pentecostals,” 10.

18. Boukis, “Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” 32.

19. Boukis, “Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” 32.

20. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, §19.

21. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, §35.

22. “Word and Spirit, Church and World: International Pentecostal–Reformed Dialogue 1996–2000,” in *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998–2005*, eds. Jeffrey Gros, Thomas F. Best, and Lorelei F. Fuchs (Geneva: WCC Publications and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 490.

Spirit by each Christian increases mutual awareness of the need for unity.²³ Nonetheless, even though the experience of baptism in the Spirit has spread across many churches and ecclesial communities, giving occasion to rapprochement and dialogue, so far it has led to no visible unity, not even among Classical Pentecostal groups. On the contrary, Pentecostals themselves seem to be divided on understanding the experience.²⁴

On the other hand, water baptism has its obvious ecclesial meaning, and thus *BEM* speaks of “baptismal unity,” which has always been at the centre of ecumenical activity.²⁵ Being “a sign and seal of our common discipleship,” it signifies one’s union with Christ as well as with every baptized member of the church, no matter the place or time in which he/she might live. Thus, it is a “basic bond of unity” (cf. Eph. 4:4-6).²⁶ This statement is in full agreement with the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* (UR, §22).

For Pentecostals, however, the unity between Christians is not based in a common water baptism. They would rather stress common faith as the foundation of unity along with the experience of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour through the Holy Spirit.²⁷ In this perspective, faith is understood as a personal response, with the assistance of the Spirit, to the preaching of the word, which is the very centre of Pentecostal worship.²⁸ Pentecostals are aware, of course, that the experience of the Holy Spirit belongs to the life of the church and that any manifestation of the Spirit needs communal discernment.²⁹

Most churches agree that the significance of water baptism goes far beyond the contemporary situation of the baptized. It points towards the kingdom of

23. See “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §65; see also *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, §16.

24. Gómez, “Dialogue with Pentecostals,” 10.

25. *BEM*, Baptism, §6.

26. *BEM*, Baptism, §6. Some evangelical churches would stress the fact that incorporation into the church is brought about by faith alone, “a faith by which all share in the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2).” See “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §33. Similarly, Creemers’ evangelical response to *TCTCV* argues that many evangelicals would doubt the existence of a valid connection between water baptism and entering the church on the basis of Acts 17:22-34. See Creemers, “An Evangelical Response to ‘*The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,’” 336, n. 10. Part of the tension here might be the result of Pentecostals emphasizing the “unmediated presence of Christ in each believer by his Spirit”: Creemers, “An Evangelical Response,” 338.

27. “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §55.

28. “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §96. According to Pentecostals, such a personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ constitutes the basis of Christian community. See the “Final Report of the Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1976),” §45.

29. “Final Report of the Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1976),” §66.

God and towards the new life of the world to come. The divine gifts granted in baptism by God enable the baptized to live the Christian life day by day.³⁰

The gifts of God demand a human response. This cannot be understood as a single act, but rather as a lifelong process³¹ of systematic growing into “the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph. 4:13; see also Rom. 8:18-24; 1 Cor. 15:22-28, 49-57). Therefore, the faith of every individual Christian is a necessary condition for participation in Christ’s salvation.³² Subsequent personal commitment is also essential for lively membership in the body of Christ. The Gospel of Matthew has a similar perspective, ending with the Great Commission given by the resurrected Christ (Matt. 28:19). The content of the instruction shows clearly that baptizing people is only part of the process expressed with the Greek verb *μαθητεύω*: making disciples. In accordance with the Lord’s commission, his disciples baptized those who were added to the fellowship of believers (Acts 2:41).³³

Biblical evidence on the practice of baptism shows that baptism usually followed the confession of faith,³⁴ although the baptism of entire households (Acts 16:15) must have included children and even infants relying on the will of the *pater familias*.³⁵ Nonetheless, a personal confession of faith was expected, as well as the requirement of a continuing growth in it, along with a permanent bond with Christ until the end of life.³⁶

Many evangelical churches and most Pentecostals hold that the baptism of infants should not be practised. Roman Catholics and Orthodox, on the other hand, admitting the lack of direct biblical reference for such a practice, stress that infant baptism is a part of early church tradition and was seen as being of apostolic origin.³⁷ They believe that “infant baptism is the beginning of a process towards full maturity of faith in the life of the Spirit, which is nurtured by the

30. *BEM*, Baptism, §7.

31. *BEM*, Baptism, §9.

32. *BEM*, Baptism, §8. The International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue also stresses the fact that “faith precedes and is a precondition of baptism” (see Mark 16:16); see “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §43.

33. “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §40.

34. *BEM*, Baptism, §11. The majority of Pentecostals practise believers’ baptism, stressing the necessity of the personal response of an individual (Rom. 10:9); see also “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §45.

35. Pentecostals would not use the word “must” here. At most, they might use the word “may,” which suggests only the possibility that infants were included.

36. *BEM*, Baptism, §12.

37. “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §42.

believing community.”³⁸

All the signatories of *BEM* believe baptism to be an unrepeatable act.³⁹ Most Classical Pentecostals would consent to this understanding of baptism.⁴⁰ But such a confession calls for the mutual recognition of baptism as a sign and means of expressing the baptismal unity given in Christ.⁴¹ *TCTCV* supports this view by describing baptism as an effective means of grace (§41–44), but Pentecostals might question this phrase.⁴²

According to the biblical and early church tradition, the baptismal rite requires the use of water and the trinitarian formula: “in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁴³ Water is considered to be an important and necessary element of the rite,⁴⁴ while the gestures signifying the gift of the Spirit may vary from church to church.⁴⁵ *BEM* authors list a number of indispensable elements for a valid baptism:⁴⁶ a) the proclamation of the Scriptures referring to baptism; b) an invocation of the Holy Spirit; c) a renunciation of evil; d) a profession of faith in Christ and the Holy Trinity;⁴⁷ e) the use of water;⁴⁸ f) a declaration that the baptized person gains a new identity as God’s son or daughter

38. “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §44.

39. *BEM*, Baptism, §13. It is also confirmed by the Catholic–Pentecostal statement in the “Final Report of the Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1976),” §27: “Rebaptism in the strict sense of the word is unacceptable to all.” However, for some Pentecostals, infant baptism is not a real baptism, and thus they do not consider the baptism of a believing adult who earlier has received infant baptism as rebaptism. The Roman Catholic Church maintains the validity of the baptism performed by any legitimate Christian community; see “Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*,” §21.

40. See “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §58.

41. *BEM*, Baptism, §15.

42. In Creemers’ opinion, evangelicals would have problems with accepting baptism as the “effective means of grace” or of “effectuating one’s incorporation in the body of Christ”. See Creemers, “An Evangelical Response to ‘*The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,’” 338. Most Pentecostals would agree with evangelicals on this issue.

43. *BEM*, Baptism, §16.

44. *BEM*, Baptism, §18.

45. *BEM*, Baptism, §19.

46. *BEM*, Baptism, §20.

47. Some Pentecostals do not baptize according to the trinitarian formula, limiting themselves to baptizing in Jesus’ name only, based on verses such as Acts 2:38. These groups deny the orthodox understanding of the Trinity “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §56). Such a situation poses a serious threat to a recognition of baptism by other churches.

48. For most Pentecostals, it is essentially important that baptism is conveyed by immersion. “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §57.

becoming a member of the Church;⁴⁹ and being called to be witnesses of the gospel. For some churches, the rite is incomplete unless the baptized is sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit and participates in holy communion. Most churches stress that baptism is normally administered by an ordained minister.⁵⁰

BEM limits the issue of neglecting water in the baptism rite to some African churches. However, it seems that since the time the document was published, the practice of baptism without water has broadened to include other places and churches in the world.⁵¹

The relationship between water baptism and baptism in the Spirit is rather unclear. Even reports on bilateral dialogues are not complete in this respect. For instance, the final report of the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church⁵² and leaders of some Pentecostal churches and Protestant charismatic movement representatives touches a few key issues on the relation of baptism in the Holy Spirit to the rites of Christian initiation, the role of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit in the mystical tradition (1973), along with the theology of Christian initiation, a practice of infant and adult baptism (1974). At the fourth meeting, held in Venice in May 1975, the areas of public worship (especially eucharistic celebration), the human dimension in the exercise of the spiritual gifts, and discerning of spirits were the main concern. In Rome in May 1976, the final session was devoted to the topic of prayer and praise.

The first meeting of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue took place in Horgen, Switzerland (June 1972), where the subject was “Baptism in the Holy Spirit.” It was there that Pentecostal representatives were first able to

49. At least some Pentecostals believe that baptism is a precondition for full church membership. “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §57.

50. *BEM*, Baptism, §22.

51. Berhanu Ofgaa, “Distinctive Elements of Ecclesiology in the African Context,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 198–99. Ofgaa, while writing on Pentecostal African Independent Churches, mentions the African Zionist churches from South Africa that concentrate on spiritual gifts and baptism in the Holy Spirit as well as the Aladura Pentecostal churches (Nigeria), which rely on baptism in the Holy Spirit, rejecting any practice of infant baptism. Nonetheless, Classical Pentecostals declare that all of them consider baptism to be an integral part of the whole experience of becoming a Christian; see “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §50.

52. Pope John XXIII established the office responsible for the Vatican’s engagement in ecumenism as the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) in 1960. Under the reorganization by Pope John Paul II, it became the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) in 1988. Under the reorganization of the curia by Pope Francis, it was renamed the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (DPCU) in 2022.

formulate their understanding on the matter. For them, phrases like “being baptized in the Spirit,” “being filled with the Holy Spirit,” and “receiving the Holy Spirit” refer to a decisive Christian experience distinct from conversion.⁵³ The Holy Spirit manifests himself in this experience and “empowers and transforms one’s life, and enlightens one as to the whole reality of the Christian mystery” (Acts 2:4; 8:17; 10:44; 19:6).

Being the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit freely disseminates his gifts (1 Cor. 12:11; John 3:7, 8) that enable the baptized to live a full “life in the Spirit”—that is, growth in Christ (Eph. 4:15-16). The Holy Spirit’s manifestations are meant for the common good (Mark 16:17-18) and for urging people to respond adequately to God’s calls (1 Cor. 13:13-14; 1 Thess. 1:3-5).⁵⁴

In their bilateral dialogues, Pentecostals and Catholics agreed that Christian initiation is a clear request for the reception of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit dwells in all Christians (Rom. 8:9) and not just in those “baptized in the Holy Spirit.” However, differences between the Christian denominations seem to rest on “openness and expectancy with regard to the Holy Spirit and his gifts.”⁵⁵

The real theological issue has been noted concerning charismatic ministry in the church. Is baptism in the Holy Spirit the unique and only act given to an individual, or are some further manifestations of the Spirit still possible? Another issue that was difficult to resolve was whether baptism in the Holy Spirit should be viewed as in some way an autonomous or independent experience or “a kind of release of a certain aspect of the Spirit already given.”⁵⁶

Finally, an important disagreement concerns the Roman Catholic (and Orthodox?) teaching that baptism is a constitutive means of salvation accomplished by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, since some biblical

53. For most Pentecostals, coming to Christ is possible only when a person has turned away from his/her sins and has repented towards God in faith (1 Thess. 1:9). Only then can one become a part of the believing community. Thus, baptism is to them a visible symbol of regeneration. See “Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989),” §47. The subject of baptism in the Holy Spirit was addressed more fully in “On Becoming a Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings with Some Contemporary Reflections,” Section V, §192–262. It is found in *Growth in Agreement IV, Book I: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 2004–2014*, eds. Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, S.A., John Gibaut, Jeffrey Gros, FSC, and Despina Prassas (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2017), 450–65.

54. See the “Final Report of the Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1976),” §13–15.

55. “Final Report of the Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1976),” §16.

56. “Final Report of the Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1976),” §18.

passages (such as John 3:5; Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; and 1 Pet. 3:21) seem to make a direct link between baptism and salvation.⁵⁷

57. "Perspectives on *Koinonia* (1985–1989)," §51.

Gifts (Charisms) of the Spirit

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr

Introduction

One of the most significant debates within Pentecostal circles today is how to identify a Pentecostal church.¹ In one sense, the whole church is Pentecostal. The fact that the Holy Spirit “constituted and animated the Church at Pentecost” (Acts 2) provides a strong case for the idea that the entire church is Pentecostal or Charismatic.² If the definition of “Pentecostal” hinges upon the fact that a church must manifest charisms, even if it limits which charisms it recognizes as valid today, we might still justify supporting the idea that the church is Pentecostal or Charismatic.³ It is the Holy Spirit, poured out on that first Pentecost, who gives the various gifts or charisms to the church. Gifts or charisms of the Holy Spirit have been present throughout the history of the church; their presence and exercise is not only “an important dimension in the

1. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, “Pentecostal Ecclesiology,” in *T & T Clark Companion to Ecclesiology*, eds. Kimlyn J. Bender and D. Stephen Long (London: Bloomsbury – T & T Clark, 2020), 241–58. Also republished as chapter six of this current volume, 75-97.

2. “‘Do Not Quench the Spirit’: Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church: Report of the Sixth Phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (2011–2015),” §24. This sixth round of Catholic–Pentecostal dialogue studied charisms but focused only on prophecy, healings, and discernment of spirits.

3. Arnold Bittlinger, *The Church Is Charismatic* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1981); “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §9. “Word and Spirit, Church and World: The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders,” §32, suggested that Reformed churches had held this position in “previous centuries.” Yet, the report noted that while it is a declining position, some still hold to it.

life of the Church”;⁴ Reformed, Catholic, and Pentecostals alike agree that, in a sense, charisms are “constitutive of ecclesial life.”⁵

Within the worldwide church, however, some churches reject these broader definitions as inadequate for defining what constitutes a truly Pentecostal church, particularly when certain gifts are questioned or are absent.⁶ Many of these churches began at or since the beginning of the 20th century, and they were often condemned or marginalized by existing churches.⁷ They have traditionally argued that a Pentecostal church is one that is open to all the gifts or charisms of the Holy Spirit, including those that many other churches exclude as being no longer relevant or even available to the church today. In fact, many Pentecostal churches would argue that if certain gifts are absent from a church, then that which makes a church truly Pentecostal is also absent. It is an impoverishment of what the church is meant to be—Pentecostal even in the broader sense of the term.⁸

Catholics have expressed their appreciation of the fact that “Pentecostals have awakened a greater sensitivity to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of spiritual gifts in the Church in the contemporary era.”⁹ For their part, Pentecostals are “thankful that Catholics and other Christians have recognized the Pentecostal witness to the significance of charisms in the life of the Church.”¹⁰ Together, Catholics and Pentecostals invite other churches to join them in rediscovering “the charisms and reignit[ing] the use of these gifts in their respective communities.”¹¹

This chapter concentrates on the interaction between Classical Pentecostals—that is, those churches that extend from early-20th-century origins, coming out

4. “On Becoming a Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings with Some Contemporary Reflections: Report of the Fifth Phase of the International Dialogue between some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders and the Catholic Church (1998–2006),” §262. Catholics and Pentecostals reject the idea that certain charisms ceased to exist at some point in history; so does “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §21.

5. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §51; “On Becoming a Christian,” §193.

6. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community, and Justice: The Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders (2001–2011),” §87.

7. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together* (Strasbourg: Institute for Ecumenical Research; Pasadena: David du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality; and Zurich: European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010), 21.

8. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, 20.

9. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §14.

10. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §14.

11. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §105.

of the Wesleyan-Holiness family of churches—and the rest of the church on the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.¹² The Pentecostal positions expressed here are not limited to Classical Pentecostal churches, however, since many churches identified as independent, charismatic, neo-Pentecostal, Third Wave, or New Apostolic; many megachurches; and many African Independent Churches frequently embrace gifts of the Spirit in the same or similar ways to Classical Pentecostals. The Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic churches with whom Classical Pentecostals have engaged in ecumenical dialogue at the international level all recognize that even among their ecclesial families, many of their “charismatic” members, especially in the churches of the emerging world, hold and practise the full range of charisms in much the same way that Pentecostals do.¹³

The international dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Classical Pentecostals began precisely because the former LWF general secretary, Gunnar Stålsett, believed that Pentecostals could help the LWF better understand one of its member churches, the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Jesus Church. While the Mekane Jesus Church is a valid Lutheran denomination that embraces Lutheran identity, theology, and liturgy, it also embraces the full range of charisms that Pentecostals do. Similarly, the Malagasy Lutheran Church in Madagascar accepts many of these same charisms, and it practises healing and exorcism on a regular basis. While some Lutheran families are comfortable with these practices, others are not. Stålsett thought that Pentecostals, with a century of experience in the practice of the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, might provide these churches with greater understanding, appreciation, and teaching.

The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV) does not address the subject of gifts of the Spirit in detail, but it does make a few important points. When the church embraces the gifts of the Spirit, and their members exercise the gifts “for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7), they give witness to the unity of the

12. Fr. Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 2, defined Classical Pentecostals for the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

13. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, 21; “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §56; “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §109.

Body of Christ.¹⁴ All churches recognize that the Holy Spirit is the giver of the “spiritual gifts” or charisms to every believer (1 Cor. 12:11).¹⁵ They strive to employ various charisms in ways that are consistent with the teaching of scripture. They also recognize that just as Jesus compared the mysterious movement of the wind to the way the Spirit works (John 3:8), so, too, the apostle Paul points to the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in bestowing the charisms upon each member in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:10).¹⁶ As a result, the experiences of individual Christians may differ. All Christians are able to engage the church or the world using their natural endowments, but the gifts of the Spirit, which differ from one person to the next, are manifestations of grace that go beyond natural endowments.¹⁷ The Holy Spirit gives these gifts with power to fulfil a variety of purposes.¹⁸ “There are multiple gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in Pentecostal worship to make God’s presence obvious and to communicate God’s will.”¹⁹ “Furthermore, both Reformed and Pentecostal churches understand that it is the Spirit who enables faithful worship by the community.”²⁰

All churches recognize scripture as authoritative, and they strive to act in ways that are consistent with the word of God. This includes the way(s) that they understand and express the gifts of the Spirit.²¹ All churches also recognize that scripture contains several lists of charisms, none of which is exhaustive. No list in scripture provides a “template” into which the church *must* fit.²² Each list is unique, though there is some overlap between them. For instance, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 mentions an utterance of wisdom, an utterance of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, the ability to distinguish between spirits, various kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. 1 Corinthians

14. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), §21, 28; “Perspectives on *Koinonia*: The Report from the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders (1985–1989),” §36.

15. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, 20; “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §10.

16. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §115.

17. “Final Report of the Dialogue between the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Leaders of Some Pentecostal Churches and Participants in the Charismatic Movement within Protestant and Anglican Churches, (1972–1976),” §16. Hereafter “Final Report, 1972–1976.” See also “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §61.

18. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, 19.

19. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §25.

20. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §41.

21. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §15, 94.

22. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §56.

12:28 lists apostles, prophets, teachers, helpers, and leaders. Romans 12:6-8 notes prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, and acts of mercy. Ephesians 4:11-15 lists apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. 1 Peter 4:10-11 seems to summarize all gifts under two categories: those who speak the oracles of God and those who serve by the strength that God supplies. There are likely more charisms, since the spirit of the Lord filled Bezalel, granting him “ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft” (Ex. 31:3), and in 1 Corinthians 13:3, Paul seems to suggest that martyrdom can be a charism.²³ Whatever the gift or charism, the church recognizes that the expression of all charisms includes both divine and human dimensions: that is, we do not set our humanity aside when exercising these gifts. God uses both nature and grace.²⁴

Each of these gifts or charisms has a purpose or function in the church. They may provide edification and nurture,²⁵ they may provide needed exhortation, they may include words or judgments designed to protect, and they may enable the church to evangelize and to serve.²⁶ A few, such as miracles or healings, are often recognized as “signs” or “wonders” that may demonstrate the power of the gospel that they accompany. Some newer churches, part of the New Apostolic Movement, for instance, privilege various charisms over others: first, apostles; second, prophets; and so on. Others label the ability to speak “various types of tongues” as being among the “least of the gifts.”²⁷ Some churches have adopted theological positions which limit some of these charisms to specific times or seasons, such as the apostolic or sub-apostolic ages. Other churches have suppressed the practice of certain of these gifts for reasons of order, especially when their exercise has challenged the authority of those who exercise another valid charism, or who occupy a certain office (such as bishop) within the church. Some churches have distanced themselves from certain gifts out of the fear that

23. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §53, 56.

24. “Final Report, 1972–1976,” §35; “Final Report of the Dialogue between the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostals: 1977–1982,” §15. Hereafter “Final Report, 1977–1982.”

25. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §105.

26. “Called to God’s Mission: Report of the Third Round of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders (2014–2020),” §35.

27. Many fundamentalist and dispensational authors make this claim, often citing its placement in the list in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. Cf. W. Harold Mare, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, general ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 10:261-281.

certain charisms might bring disorder to the church,²⁸ or they view their use as unseemly in their more dignified worship settings. It may be this fear that has caused some churches to take an overly casual approach to “seeking and receiving the Spirit’s gifts.”²⁹ The apostle Paul makes clear in his teaching regarding charisms that they are to be exercised in love. “Love is the context in which all gifts are rightly exercised.”³⁰ Thus, it is no surprise to find the apostle’s “ode to love” (1 Cor. 13) in the middle of his discussion of charisms (1 Cor. 12) and their proper use (1 Cor. 14).

Historically, the message of those churches that claim the name “Pentecostal” has not always been accepted as valid. Part of this has to do with the Pentecostal understanding of baptism in the Spirit, out of which the charisms flow. Part of it has to do with the fact that they believe that all of the charisms mentioned in Scripture are still present today. Part of this has to do with their insistence that all gifts must be recognized as valid today, including those which some have suppressed and others have limited to an earlier age. For still others, it is the Pentecostal insistence that these gifts should make their appearance on a more or less regular basis or be encouraged in various types of worship services. The list of gifts which Pentecostals tend to prioritize is the list given by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. It is also this list where much of the debate between churches takes place. Still, like other churches, Pentecostals recognize differences in value and purpose between various charisms, with some being spontaneously present (tongues, prophecy, etc.) and others having an institutional character (teaching, administration, etc.) (*TCTCV*, §34).

Those who approach Pentecostal churches as outside observers often caricature what Pentecostal churches hold to be essential to a Pentecostal church: namely, some expression of one of the more spontaneous, or extraordinary, or supernatural gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecy, healing, and especially speaking in tongues. While these charisms do not constitute the central notion of what makes a local church a valid part of the whole church, the denial of their validity

28. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, 20.

29. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §54.

30. “Final Report, 1972–1976,” §17.

for today—or their suppression³¹—raises questions for Pentecostals regarding the nature of the fullness of the church. If a church limits certain charisms or groups of charisms to a historical age and does not anticipate them to appear today, is it the church in its fullness? If a church suppresses a certain charism or a group of charisms granted sovereignly by the Holy Spirit, is it the church in its fullness? Discernment is misused when it excludes certain gifts from the ongoing life of the church.³² Pentecostals contend that the church should anticipate the Holy Spirit to overcome what they view as arbitrary or capricious limitations placed upon any particular charism that the Spirit wishes to bestow and use. Any church body that does these things does not represent the church in her fullness.

Speaking in Tongues

That said, Pentecostals offer a message that is often not clear to the outside observer. The outside observer may understand that Pentecostals attribute particular value to such charisms as speaking in tongues³³ or even prophecy or healing. That is a misunderstanding, likely caused by undisciplined Pentecostal rhetoric. Pentecostals value the gift of speaking in tongues, when properly interpreted, because it may constitute an aid to worship and praise, pointing to the God who sends this gift (1 Cor. 14:13-17). Pentecostals talk a great deal about speaking in tongues, which appears to suggest that this gift is more highly valued than it actually is. Some may even believe that Pentecostals teach that all Christians should have the gift of speaking in various types of tongues. This is not the case. Pentecostals recognize in Paul's question "Do all speak in tongues?" an anticipation of a negative response. They recognize that the Spirit distributes

31. Suppression of specific gifts can take place by overemphasizing or prioritizing certain gifts over others. Lutherans suggested that they are more "at home with" certain gifts than with others (*Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, 20), while Pentecostals prioritize the charisms mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and are often reluctant to embrace "apostles and prophets" because of past abuses ("Final Report, 1977-1982," §83). Suppression can also take place by labelling some as gifts and others as ministries, or some as ordinary and others as extraordinary, or some as gifts and others as offices, or some as natural and others as supernatural, then focusing on one set and ignoring the other.

32. "Final Report, 1972-1976," §17.

33. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, 21. The Lutheran team was quite candid when it made the following statement: "Lutherans tend to fixate on speaking in tongues when they look at Pentecostal spirituality, but it is important for them to see Pentecostalism in the whole context of Spirit baptism, a variety of spiritual gifts, the fruit of the Spirit, and worship practices oriented towards a vivid experience of God's presence involving the whole community."

all gifts or charisms sovereignly to whomever the Spirit wishes to give them. Their presence in a person is not a sign of that person's righteousness, spiritual maturity, or sanctification, nor should the lack of specific gifts be taken as a sign of inferiority.³⁴ Pentecostals do not expect the Holy Spirit to bestow the charism to speak in various types of tongues to every Christian, nor do they expect that all Christians will or must receive this gift.

The rhetoric is admittedly confusing also because most Classical Pentecostals link the ability to speak in various types of tongues to Pentecost (Acts 2:1-10), with Jesus' promises that "you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5) and "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). Pentecostals and many other Christians are concerned that all believers receive this power, which they understand as coming with this promised baptism. Where the confusion lies is in the insistence by Classical Pentecostals that the same experience that the 120 had on that first day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4) is available to all believers today (Acts 2:38-39) and should have the same evidence that signified the baptism of the 120. They spoke in tongues when they received the Holy Spirit, so Pentecostals argue that one will speak in tongues as evidence that they have received this "Promise of the Father," or baptism in the Spirit (Acts 10:44-48; 19:1-6). Often, they contend that this baptism in the Spirit with its evidence of speaking in tongues may engender a "prayer language."³⁵

Where most outside observers may become confused is that Pentecostals understand this form of speaking in tongues received with baptism in the Holy Spirit as a onetime event, not to be confused with the charism or spiritual gift of speaking in various types of tongues within the congregational setting. It is the same in essence, but different in its purpose. The topic of "Baptism in the Spirit" is addressed in chapter 19 of this book, so I will not belabour the point. I only note that not all Classical Pentecostals hold to this very specific understanding, though most do. Others allow for a broader palette of evidence that an individual has been baptized in the Spirit—evidence such as healings, miracles, being "slain"

34. "Final Report, 1972–1976," §17; "Do Not Quench the Spirit," §71.

35. Jack Hayford, *The Beauty of Spiritual Language: Unveiling the Mysteries of Speaking in Tongues* (Southlake: Gateway Press, 2018, rev. ed.).

by or resting in the Spirit, dancing in the Spirit, and prophecy.³⁶

If the bestowal of charisms is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, as we have already noted, what do Pentecostals understand to be the “rules for engagement” when using these gifts? Peter uses the term *χάρισμα* (*charisma*) as a general term to describe both spoken words and acts of service. It seems to be a summary statement that covers all “charismatic” words and all “charismatic” acts of service, and it is easy to fit all of the charisms found in the various Pauline lists into one or the other of these two Petrine categories. Thus, any utterance, such as words of wisdom, or of knowledge, or prophecy, or tongues, is to be treated with the utmost awe and reverence by the speaker because they are the “very words of God.” Does this mean that all such utterances are to be taken at face value? No! John warns, for instance, that many false prophets have gone out into the world, and the church must discern the words of the “prophets,” distinguishing the genuine from the spurious (1 John 4:1-3). Paul agrees when he notes that others are to discern when prophecy is offered (1 Cor. 14:29), and again the church is instructed not to hold prophecy in contempt but rather to “test” everything, holding on to the good and avoiding the evil (1 Thess. 5:19-22).

Paul also points out that within the body of Christ, where the various members exercise the respective charism that they have received, people are to defer to one another (1 Cor. 14:26). There should be time for each to contribute what she or he has received: no pushing or shoving, no shouting down or demanding more time. It is to be a shared series of actions, inspired by the Holy Spirit but subject to the control of the recipient (1 Cor. 14:32). Decency and order are the hallmarks of all valid charismatic activity within the body of Christ because they reflect the character of the God who gives these gifts (1 Cor. 14:33). Paul suggests that self-control, a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23), is an important component of maintaining order in the church. A person who has a word of prophecy may give it at an opportune time, or that person can be silent, holding it for a more appropriate time, so that another person may speak (1 Cor. 14:29-

36. C. Alvarez, P. Correa, M. Poblete, and P. Guell, *Historia de la Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile* (Santiago: Ediciones Rehue Ltda, n.d.), 54, includes the affirmation from the *Declaracion de Fe de la Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile*. It reads, [Section 10] “*CREEMOS: en el Espíritu Santo como una gracia y promesa para todos los creyentes en EL.* [Section 11] *Que: el hablar en otros lenguas, danzar, tener visiones, profetizar o cualquier manifestacion conforme a la palabra de Dios, son una evidencia del bautismo del Espíritu Santo.*” English translation: “WE BELIEVE: in the Holy Spirit as a grace and promise to all believers in HIM [Section 11] That: speaking in other languages [tongues], dancing, having visions, prophesying or any manifestation according to the word of God, are evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

32). A person who has the ability, perhaps even the impulse, to speak in a tongue is personally responsible for seeing that it results in understanding and thus in edification. If the person cannot find an interpreter to the tongue, or if the person is unwilling to ask for that gift in order to make the words intelligible (1 Cor. 14:13), it is the responsibility of that person to remain silent, speaking only to himself or herself and the Lord (1 Cor. 14:28).

As noted earlier, the Holy Spirit grants gifts to meet various needs, building up the body of Christ, nurturing or encouraging the body of Christ, teaching the body of Christ, warning the body of Christ, comforting the body of Christ, and so on. Perhaps more than anything, the body of Christ needs to be edified or built up, so Paul urges his readers to excel in gifts that will fill this need (1 Cor. 14:5). As a result, the charism of prophecy should be embraced; however, the charism of tongues should not be despised or rejected (1 Cor. 14:39).

Gifts of Healings

Gifts of healings frequently receive significant notice in Pentecostal churches and ministries. And why not? Healing is an essential dimension of ministry and many, perhaps even most, Christians join Pentecostals in affirming that Christ continues to heal. Certainly, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, and Pentecostal churches have *never* ceased to believe in the possibility of the miraculous, including healing.³⁷ Healing was one of the most important components of Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:18). The apostle James asked,

Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. (James 5:14-16)

Like all other charisms, gifts of healings are granted to whomever the Holy Spirit wishes to give them (1 Cor. 12:9-10). There are no guarantees that healing will take place, only the sovereign interaction between the Spirit and the person needing healing. Just as Jesus went around healing the sick, and the apostles did the same, for Pentecostals, the fact that all charisms are available to the church

37. "Do Not Quench the Spirit," §65, 66.

today points to a place for prayer and anointing for healing of the sick, which is now a widespread practice in many churches.³⁸ Healing is not always physical. Healing can be of a psychological or an emotional nature as well, so Pentecostals pray for varieties of healings.³⁹

When Jesus spoke to his home synagogue in Nazareth, he noted that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he was anointed to proclaim good news to the poor and release to the captives, to give sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed. He went around Israel performing signs and wonders. Healings and miracles were part of those signs and wonders, so following the pattern of Jesus, Pentecostals expect such things to accompany them as they proclaim the good news of the gospel.⁴⁰ The extraordinary thing is that healings often happen, especially in places where ready medical access is not available. It is not always possible to draw a direct line between the need for healing, prayer for the healing, and the bestowal of gifts of healings through anointing and the laying on of hands, but Pentecostals believe that it is important to anticipate God's actions wherever needs arise. Sometimes these healings bring an openness to the gospel message that was not present before the healing takes place.

This is another charism needing discernment. Sadly, Pentecostals have all too often erred in their understanding of healing. They have presumed upon the graciousness of God. They have made promises that were not theirs to make, and these promises went unfulfilled, bringing questions to the validity of the gospel itself. They have turned healing into events that parallel circus acts. These two excesses are found most frequently among independent Pentecostal evangelists and churches, as well as in some Neo-Pentecostal churches. Most Classical Pentecostal churches have condemned such teachings associated with the "Health and Wealth" or "Positive Confession" and "Prosperity" versions of the gospel.⁴¹

Some Pentecostals have erred in condemning the sick for lacking faith or for having unconfessed sin in their life when a healing did not take place, thereby

38. "Final Report, 1977–1982," §31–33.

39. "Do Not Quench the Spirit," §52.

40. "Do Not Quench the Spirit," §67.

41. The Assemblies of God, for instance, condemned what it called "Positive Confession," which encapsulates this teaching, as early as 1980. See "The Believer and Positive Confession," <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/The-Believer-and-Positive-Confession>. This teaching is sometimes called the "Health and Wealth" doctrine. Gordon D. Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels* (Costa Mesa: The Word for Today, 1979); Bruce Barron, *The Health and Wealth Gospel: What's Going on Today in a Movement that Has Shaped the Faith that Has Shaped Millions?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1987).

blaming the victim.⁴² Far too many do not understand the significant role that suffering can play in the life of the sick person or the person with a disability. They do not always have the answers to all the questions that people raise regarding sickness and healing. Just as others in the church need to be more open to the movement of God's Spirit in bringing healing and anticipating God's intervention at times, so some Pentecostals need other parts of the church to hold them accountable for the way(s) that they think about, speak about, and act when it comes to the nature of divine healing.

Apostles

Both apostles and prophets are mentioned in several lists of charisms (1 Cor. 12:28, 29; Eph. 4:11). In fact, the church is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20), with Christ being the chief cornerstone. Most churches acknowledge that apostles and prophets were present in the earliest church. Pentecostals, among others, however, have adopted a Restorationist approach to the reading of church history.⁴³ In this Restorationist approach, advocates sometimes contend that all the gifts and offices found in the New Testament are being restored as the church moves towards the eschaton. That includes the charism of apostleship.

From the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement in the early 20th century, some Pentecostals have argued that the church needs to expect the restoration of apostles and prophets in the church. The Apostolic Church in Great Britain may be the earliest Classical Pentecostal group to recognize the restoration of an apostolic office. Throughout the 20th century, their missionaries spread this doctrine in various places of the British Commonwealth, such as New Zealand and Australia, as well as Ghana. The Church of Pentecost in Ghana is the largest

42. This error is the same as the disciples raised to Jesus regarding the man born blind. "As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him'" (John 9:1-3).

43. Other groups that embrace Restorationism include churches of the Stone-Campbell Movement, including the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Churches of Christ, independent Church of Christ/Christian Church congregations; various Adventist groups; and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, among others.

of these churches, led by a Council of Apostles.⁴⁴

Other early Pentecostals suggested that they could anticipate the restoration of the “five-fold offices” mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, though most soon stopped short of anticipating an office of apostle or of prophet. In 1949, with the emergence of the Latter Rain Movement, headquartered in Saskatchewan, Canada, leaders began to claim that these offices were being restored. More recently, the New Apostolic churches, named by C. Peter Wagner, have carried that idea forward. The majority of Classical Pentecostal denominations did not accept the teachings of either the Latter Rain Movement or the New Apostolic Church Movement. Their success continues to lie in independent Pentecostal churches and certain Pentecostal or Charismatic megachurches and the loose networks of churches they have formed.

The largest Classical Pentecostal denomination is the Assemblies of God, whose General Presbytery adopted a position paper on the subject in 2001. It distinguishes between the foundational apostles and prophets, called and appointed by Jesus, and those who have subsequently claimed these titles. It does not recognize the restoration of such offices or titles, finding them to be unnecessary and sometimes based upon pride and desires for power.⁴⁵

Prophecy

Throughout scripture, God spoke to God’s people in a variety of ways. Sometimes it was through visions or dreams (Job 33:14-18; Is. 6:1-13), or through a prophet, while at other times God spoke in an audible voice or even in a deep sense such as the “still small voice” (as the King James Bible puts it) or the “sound of sheer silence” that Elijah experienced (1 Kings 19:12). Each of the ways that God speaks needs to be discerned. In this passage, Elijah listened as a great wind blew, then the earth quaked, and a fire burst forth. In each of these manifestations, Elijah discerned the absence of God. Yet, he recognized

44. Opoku Onyinah served as president of The Church of Pentecost for many years. His recent book, *Apostles and Prophets: The Ministry of Apostles and Prophets throughout the Generations* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2022), lays out the argument for the restoration of these two charismatic offices.

45. Assemblies of God, “Apostles and Prophets,” Position Paper adopted by the General Presbytery in Session 6, August 2001, <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Apostles-and-Prophets>. Among those who take a position in support of contemporary apostles and prophets are C. Peter Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2000), and Opoku Onyinah, *Apostles and Prophets: The Ministry of Apostles and Prophets through the Generations* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2021).

the presence of God in the “sound of sheer silence.” “When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” (1 Kings 19:13).

“With the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the whole Church became a prophetic community (Acts 2:17-18).”⁴⁶ This statement is consistent with a broader understanding of prophecy, since every Christian shares in Christ’s role as prophet, priest, and king.⁴⁷ Yet, the Holy Spirit grants the gift of prophecy to certain people so that they might communicate a timely or specific word from God. This may be seen in the Old Testament prophets, but it can be seen in quite ordinary people in the New Testament, too: people like Simeon (Luke 2:25-35), Anna (Luke 2:36-38), the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8-9), and many nameless members of the congregation in Corinth (1 Cor. 14). In fact, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to seek this gift more than any other (1 Cor. 14:1).⁴⁸

The prophet Agabus may be used as an example of one who prophesied on at least two occasions (Acts 11:27-30; 21:10-14); in the first instance, he prophesied a famine. Obviously, prophets received their message by one form of revelation or another. Luke explains that this famine took place as predicted and that the Christians in Antioch took up an offering for their sisters and brothers in Jerusalem. This “revelation,” this prophetic word, may be classed under the subject of a “continuing revelation,” but in and of itself, it offers a specific message to a specific congregation at a specific time in history. For us, it has no canonical value other than as an example of how God cares for God’s people and how a congregation responded to what they obviously discerned to be a message from God. Similarly, the instance in Acts 21, where Agabus claims, “Thus says the Holy Spirit,” provides another revelation that has no canonical status for us today, other than telling of the lengths to which God went to let the people know that Paul would not return to Caesarea again. Such examples should demonstrate that there is no competition between “continuing revelation” and what the church views as the closed revelation of the canon. There is broad agreement between many churches that various people continue to receive and exercise the gift of prophecy.⁴⁹ Like all charisms, it needs proper discernment to guarantee its value and effectiveness within the community of faith.⁵⁰ In fact, just

46. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §36.

47. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §44.

48. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §36–37.

49. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §47.

50. “Do Not Quench the Spirit,” §46–48.

as tongues require interpretation for them to have value for the congregation (1 Cor. 14), so prophecy relies upon the discerning of spirits to guarantee its divine origin, its veracity, and its application in a given situation (1 Cor. 12:10; 1 John 4:1-3). What is very important to underscore is that Pentecostals do not treat prophetic words as in any way equal to those of the biblical canon. Whatever “revelations” are given through this gift today are intended for a specific person or people, at a specific time, in a specific place, to cover a specific issue they may be facing. They are understood simply as being ad hoc, and they must be tested. They do not hold any universal implications for the church.

Discerning of Spirits/Discernment

We have seen that the New Testament writers repeatedly point out the need for discernment. Paul speaks of “the discernment of spirits” (*diakrīseis pneumátōn*) in 1 Corinthians 12:10, and he draws from the same verb in 1 Corinthians 14:29 to describe the actions the community must take when prophecies are given. The apostle John uses a different word while making the same point, calling upon his readers to “test the spirits” (*dokimázete tà pneúmata*) (1 John 4:1). Paul uses the same verb in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 when exhorting the congregation in Thessalonica to “test” (*dokimázete*) the prophecies that come to them. I will not address here the issue of who has the ultimate authority to engage in discernment. That will be addressed in a different chapter dedicated to that subject.⁵¹ Yet, it appears that the apostles Paul and John agree that for the safety of the congregation, the discerning of spirits is a critically important gift that involves an equally important process or insight.

Through the centuries, the church has engaged in this task at various times and in various places. The noun “discernment” is frequently used today to describe a process of testing, of making judgments, of discriminating between options that are available to those who exercise it. This term may apply to the direction that an individual, or a congregation, or a denomination, or even the entire church seeks, such as the Faith and Order Commission’s quest to understand a truly global vision of the church. In most cases, we understand “discernment” to refer to a conscious, rational decision-making process. At the foundational level, that is surely the dominant way of expressing this idea. Yet “the term ‘discernment’ has more than one meaning.”⁵²

The discussion at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 provides a classic example

51. See chapter 15, on authoritative teaching.

52. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §74.

of where discernment comes into play to maintain unity among the followers of Jesus (*TCTCV*, §30). One group contended that Gentiles needed to submit to Jewish law before they could be recognized as Christians (Acts 15:5). Another group, represented by the apostle Peter, argued that Gentiles need not submit to Jewish law to be recognized as Christians; they become Christians “through the grace of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 15:11). These two contradicting points became the focus in what was probably a heated debate, since Paul addressed the issue again, singling out Peter’s duplicity when he wrote to the Galatians (2:11-14). Yet, in Acts 15, the apostle James spoke for the whole council when he announced that they would accept Peter’s argument with a couple of added nuances because Peter’s argument was consistent with Amos’ prophecy (Amos 9:11-12) regarding the coming of the Spirit. The entire assembly then commissioned a letter that outlined what they expected of Gentile Christians, noting that the decision had “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28).

Pentecostals agree with the value of this rational approach to the process of discernment.⁵³ Yet, they go beyond this approach by referring to the fact that when Paul speaks of the “discernment of spirits” in 1 Corinthians 12:10, his reference is to a divinely bestowed *charism*, just as his reference to prophecy and the ability to speak varieties of tongues are divinely given. This link suggests that what Paul has in mind here is not specifically or only to a rational response, a natural response using logic, but to something that the Spirit *reveals*—a divinely inspired revelation at a specific time, in a specific place, and for a specific reason. As the first round of Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue noted, “There are different aspects of discernment of spirits which allow for human experience, wisdom and reason as a consequence of growth in the Spirit, while other aspects imply an immediate communication of the Spirit for discernment in a specific situation.”⁵⁴ It is to this latter formulation that Pentecostals wish to draw attention as equally valid.

On the other hand, Reformed churches, who hold a more substantial tie to reason and rational expectations, perhaps stemming from the Enlightenment and their concern about the limits of continuing revelation in light of a closed canon, are uncomfortable with the more immediate form of discernment communication than are Catholics or Pentecostals. As the Reformed team noted in their second dialogue with Pentecostals, “We do not always concur on how ‘discernment’ or the ‘discerning of spirits’ plays out within our respective communities, especially where different cosmologies are in place, or where

53. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §85.

54. “Final Report of the Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1976),” §38.

secularization has occurred, or where the society has been largely desacralized.”⁵⁵ In short, Pentecostals wish to encourage those with whom they have had dialogue regarding this gift to think beyond rationality alone to something like a spiritual revelation that may or may not accompany a rational decision. Both approaches to or dimensions of the discernment process need to be considered by the whole church—in part because the world does not share a single cosmology.

As with most things held by Christians around the world, all of us hold many more things in common than those over which we differ. While this chapter does not evaluate all of the charisms outlined in scripture, it should provide sufficient information and raise sufficient questions to find relevance in our continuing discussions of *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. The unity of the church demands that we keep the discussion going. We may find that when considering the many charisms given by the Holy Spirit, we will see better ways of serving the common good and fostering Christian unity. It may be as simple as acknowledging that we differ in our comfort levels when we think about certain charisms. Some of them seem to be too subjective for our tastes. Others are lost to history due to past abuses and experiences. The Holy Spirit is not at fault for fostering disunity in the church over the issue of charisms. It is we who are at fault. Together, we are able to sort out the differences, forgive past abuses, and even learn to live with things that make us uncomfortable apart from our mutual faith in the gift-giving God whom we serve.

55. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §109. See also §73, which makes the point that “the subject is not always well understood in the Church today.”

Experience in Church and Theology

Ulrike Link-Wieczorek

The phenomenon of experience—and, more precisely, the experience of the Holy Spirit or the experience of God—is a supporting pillar of Pentecostal congregations and of evangelical and Pietist movements. It is understood as an experience of encounter in which the believing individual and God meet intensively and in a physically empirically, perceptible way. This experience is imprinted on the person's attitude towards life, so that a conscious orientation towards life in the community of God is connected with it, which shapes the rest of everyday life. In the Pentecostal milieu, the primary place where this experience takes place is in worship in a community of believers and in the midst of believers who are moved by the Spirit to varying degrees. The experience of the presence of God's Spirit, expressed in bodily perceptible and visible phenomena, shows itself in certain forms (speaking in tongues, a kind of trance, etc.), but at the same time it contains the characteristic of the unpredictable and surprising. The question being raised in this chapter is whether the church plays a role in this experience—or, vice versa, whether this experience of encountering God is even an essential or constitutive part of the church.

In a broader way, the experience of encountering God plays a role in the evangelical context, where tangible experiences of God are also sought and experienced in individual prayer or individual Bible reading but do not necessarily result in forms of physical performance. Of course, it is not anything new in the history of Christianity that believers refer to the experience of God. In all churches, there have been and continue to be theological currents that place the experience of God at the centre, often as a critical commentary on the official church line and with the impulse to renew it. Let us recall, for example, the role of mysticism and monasticism in the Patristic church and in the medieval church of the West, or the passionate devotion to the eucharist of the mystics, who experienced a psychologically markable experience of union with Christ. We might also remember the Pietist revival, which spread to the churches of the

world through mission. Last but not least are the charismatic elements that today intensively permeate the historical churches. Theologically, we would probably describe these currents today as having a strong pneumatological foundation. A careful examination of classical theology(/ies) would certainly show that the pneumatologically based aspect of enabling believers to shape their lives in the community of Christ can be found in all churches.¹

So, when I focus below on the phenomena of experiencing God in the Pentecostal milieu as performed in worship, it is against the background that experiential Christian phenomena of faith make themselves tangible here in a special way and challenge us to take them into account in thinking about what the church is.

Experiencing God as a Theme in Ecumenism and the Pentecostal Tradition

There can be no question that the experience of God plays an important role in the life of believers and the church. It is all the more astonishing that we hardly find it reflected ecclesologically.

Experience plays a central role in Pentecostal theology. It is something like the primordial assurance of God's presence, which arises in the concrete encounter of the individual believer with God but whose forms of expression, such as the outpouring of tongues, prophecy, or healing, can be perceived in the church service—either in one's own person or in other participants in the service. These forms of experience are attributed to the effect of the Holy Spirit. In all churches, the Holy Spirit is theologically responsible for the concretization of God's work as Creator and as Son in the concrete present life of the believer. In worship, Pentecostal believers experience in a specific way that God is present in the Holy Spirit, and they carry this experience into their concrete daily lives, which they shape in response to this promise (by experience) of God's presence in this sense. In this respect, this experience of God is conceivable only within the framework of Christian faith. In the Pentecostal tradition, it is triggered in a special way by the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit, by which is meant a tangible experience of (re)orientation towards a life in the community of God.

1. See, for example, Georgios D. Martzelos, "Ecclesiology, Pneumatology and Spirituality in the Orthodox Tradition," in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 287.

It is therefore not surprising that the concept of experience in ecumenical dialogue with Pentecostal churches appears primarily in two contexts: in connection with the sacraments, and in connection with faith. Chapter 18 of this volume has focused on the topic of sacraments, but the following two points should also be noted here.

First, sacraments are also about experiencing God. However, it is not the individual exclusivity of the experience of God that is at the centre of the sacraments—for example, in baptism and the eucharist/Lord’s Supper—but the certainty that God turns to all believing participants equally in God’s healing presence. Nevertheless, sacramental theology assumes that the encounter with God takes place in a certain way, spatially and temporally concentrated. In this way, they prove to be experiential events, for space and time belong to the core essentials of experience. The theological debates about the real presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper/eucharist or about the role of the creed in baptism revolve around the question of whether it is clear enough that it is a God-initiated experience. That is, they focus on the question of the extent to which these place-times are chosen by God himself and not “constructed” by the believer. It can be said that the historical churches, in their ecumenical dialogues, have agreed on a concept of sacrament that emphasizes God’s initiative in the sacramental encounter. Here, therefore, a concept of (God’s) experience is also implicitly found.

Second, theologically, it is only possible to speak of experiencing God and encountering God within *faith*. The Pentecostal concept of experience also includes the life of the believer as a consequence of the experience of God: it is described as “transforming life.” In principle, there is a strong consensus here with other church traditions, which also know the experience of a fundamental “conversion” in the life of faith. In the International Pentecostal–Catholic dialogue, the Catholic view of the process of growing in faith is mirrored in the Pentecostal language of the transformation of life through baptism in the Spirit. Cecil Robeck even sees the Pentecostal core identity in the life-transforming conversion experience and the process of sanctification, followed by a powerful or perhaps, again, life-transforming “encounter between ... [the] individual and the Holy Spirit” that Pentecostals understand as baptism in the Spirit.² This also

2. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, “An Introduction to Pentecostal Identity: Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, and Spirituality,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 303.

means that the phenomenon of experiencing God in Pentecostal churches does not have to be understood primarily as a one-off experience but is also seen as a process in the life of the believer.³

Pentecostal churches, however, promote a concept of experience that initially lies beyond sacramental doctrinal formation. In their supporting theology, which is based on the work of the Holy Spirit, they place the significance of God's presence in the concrete life of each individual person, entirely at the centre of their theology. But there also seem to be certain identifying marks for this. They are defined according to the Pauline doctrine of charisms. The biblical reference is the sign for the initiation of the charismatic experience as actually God-intended. By making these marks visible and audible, primarily in worship in the community of believers, this divine authorship is emphasized and ritualized. However, the exact concepts of how one can think of this experience (immediate? mediate? supernatural?) are currently being reflected upon in the theological-academic inner-Pentecostal discourse.⁴ A particular problem—also in bilateral dialogue—is the gift of the discernment of spirits, which is often attributed to individual persons and not simply to the congregation/church as a whole or to the decision-making structures that exist here.⁵

This discourse is certainly of ecclesiological relevance. The theological difficulty in the concept of experience lies in keeping clearly in view the authorship or origin of the experience in God and thus protecting against the claim that it is the Holy Spirit who is acting when it is actually the individual. It is no coincidence that the Pentecostal experience finds a place in the church service and that it is from here that the shaping and interpretation of life is

3. So also the Pentecostal side in the Catholic–Pentecostal dialogue. See “On Becoming a Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings with Some Contemporary Reflections,” §25–27, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-del-documento-in-inglese1.html>.

4. Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006); Simo Frestadius, “‘Pentecost with Signs’: Historical and Theological Reflections on Spirit Baptism from a British and Wider European Perspective,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 40 (2020), 104–19; Juan Sepulveda, “Another Way of Being Pentecostal,” in *Pentecostal Power: Expressions, Faith and Politics of Latin American Pentecostalism*, ed. Calvin Smith, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies Series 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 37–61.

5. See “Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community, and Justice. The Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 2001–2011,” §84, §87, http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj21/warc_2011d.html. See also the self-critical Pentecostal statement found in §114.

initiated, out of this communal experience of God. One can say that the church here forms the space for the identification of the encounter with God and the experience of God. At least implicitly, then, the Pentecostal concept of experience is framed in an ecclesiological way.

Thematizing Experience in Bilateral Dialogues

The International Roman Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue treats the Pentecostal understanding of experience in connection with that of faith.⁶ The experience of God’s presence as an encounter with God is defined as an experience of grace. This emphasizes the initiative of God in the experiential event, but it also lifts up the empowerment of the believer to *respond* in the shaping of his or her life. One might see here that the Roman Catholic doctrine of grace, in its responsorial character, corresponds particularly to the Pentecostal connection of spirit/experience of God and the resulting shaping of life. Finally, the report emphasizes the interweaving of God’s action and human action both in the realization of the experience of grace and in the shaping of life that follows from it.⁷

We find in the Reformed–Pentecostal dialogue a similar connection between the gift of faith and response in the shaping of life in sanctification.⁸ In a similar way, the God-human interplay of spiritual experience can be discerned in Orthodox pneumatology.⁹ Here, one could even draw on the concept of *theosis* as an analogy to the Pentecostal spiritual experience.¹⁰

The International Reformed–Pentecostal dialogue emphasizes the critical role of calling on the Holy Spirit in worship as a perspective of correction in two ways: it corrects, on the one hand, a subjectivist approach and, on the other hand, a rationalist-abstract form of worship.¹¹ Here, too, it is a matter of theologically adequate witnessing to the priority of God’s action in his being present. In the Reformed view, it can be expressed either through Christological terminology, via the real presence of Christ in the Lord’s supper, or in

6. “On Becoming a Christian,” §6.

7. “On Becoming a Christian,” §190.

8. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §49.

9. See Martzelos, “Ecclesiology, Pneumatology and Spirituality in the Orthodox Tradition,” 292.

10. Martzelos, “Ecclesiology, Pneumatology and Spirituality in the Orthodox Tradition,” 290. See also Edmund J. Rybarczyk, *Beyond Salvation: Eastern Orthodoxy and Classical Pentecostalism on Becoming Like Christ* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2004).

11. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §35, 41.

pneumatological terminology, as empowerment by the Holy Spirit.¹² The Reformed side, however, also sees itself in the position of understanding the proclamation of the gospel and the promise of God's forgiveness in worship as a gift received from God, to which the believer responds with "repentance, confession and joy in God's Law."¹³ The term "experience" is still carefully avoided here. However, it is explicitly used in the area of responding to life: "People *hear* the good news of God's grace in scripture, and *experience* what it means to stand within God's salvation history."¹⁴ The Pentecostal interlocutors want to "give space to the unexpected" in worship. Emotional signs such as tears, as well as "charisms such as prophecy, tongues, interpretation and the presence of God," are expected and play a role in the service.¹⁵

Significance for *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*

If one considers the close connection of the Pentecostal concept of experience with the classical language of sacraments and the experience of faith, it becomes clear that the convergence text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*¹⁶ says more about (God's) experience than is apparent at first glance. A more explicit integration of the Pentecostal voice would more strongly relate what is said here to the individual lives of believers. It would then also have to be stated more clearly in what way the church, and indeed the one Church, is a sign and instrument to make the divine encounter identifiable as such. This concerns the "secret ecclesiological basis" of Pentecostal experiential theology. For this to happen, however, the ecclesiology of *TCTCV* would have to show more clearly that the unity of the church is no more an end in itself than are the mission of the church to the world, the structure of church offices, or the mechanisms of church decision-making.

12. "Experience in Christian Faith and Life," §40.

13. "Experience in Christian Faith and Life," §40.

14. "Experience in Christian Faith and Life," §40. Emphasis added.

15. "Experience in Christian Faith and Life," §42.

16. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, and Spirituality in the Orthodox Tradition*

Georgios D. Martzelos

Introduction

It is true that while *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*¹ refers to the Church as “the Church of the Triune God,”² pointing to the trinitarian foundation and constitution of the Church as communion, it does not sufficiently develop the special contribution of the Holy Spirit to the performance of the salvific work of the church in the world. As a result, the relationship between ecclesiology and pneumatology is not clearly and emphatically reflected in the document. It is precisely for this reason that the aim of this chapter is to present the Orthodox position on the relationship between ecclesiology and pneumatology, believing that this presentation, like the presentation of other confessional positions on this issue, can enrich theological reflection and help to achieve as much as possible the desired convergence in the framework of the ecumenical dialogue.

Furthermore, clarifying the concept of spirituality from a theological and especially from an Orthodox point of view is absolutely necessary: not only can it help to eliminate some misunderstandings due to a diffuse anthropocentric understanding of spirituality, but also it can highlight the relation of spirituality to both pneumatology and ecclesiology.

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1. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

2. “The Church of the Triune God” is the primary heading for *TCTCV*, Chapter II.

Ecclesiology and Pneumatology

Ecclesiology in the Orthodox tradition is inextricably linked to pneumatology. That is not only because the Holy Spirit played a leading role in the foundation of the church on the day of Pentecost, but also because the whole church as the “body of Christ” is constituted and maintained over time by the active presence and energy of the Holy Spirit, who, living within the members of this body, makes them “the temple of God.”³ So, as St John Chrysostom has noted in the present case, “if the Spirit was not present, the Church would not be constituted, but if the Church is constituted, it is obvious that the Spirit is present.”⁴ In other words, it is the Holy Spirit who “constitutes the whole institution of the Church,”⁵ as it is chanted in a hymn of the Vespers of Pentecost. It is he who acts in various ways within the church, distributing the various gifts and ministries, and “allots to each one individually just as he chooses” (1 Cor. 12:11), so that the whole “institution of the church” is constituted. It is he who, through the variety of his gifts, creatively contributes to the institutional organization of the church and to the building and safeguarding of its unity as the “body of Christ.”

This truth is particularly pointed out by the apostle Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians, when he considers the church as a charismatic body, as the “body of Christ”⁶ composed of members who are adorned by the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, among which are also the various ecclesiastical ministries. That is why the unity that the church has as a charismatic body is, according to the apostle Paul, both charismatic and functional. The variety of gifts that adorn the members of this body is not a cause of their breakdown; on the contrary, it constitutes a basic and necessary condition for the achievement of a functional communion and relationship among them in order to build and safeguard the charismatic unity of this body. None of the members of this charismatic body operate autonomously and independently of the others, nor is any member considered unnecessary or useless. On the contrary, all of them—without exception and with their own personal peculiarity—are carriers of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and they accomplish their particular functional role for the building

3. See 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19.

4. *Homily in Pentecost, Patrologia Graeca (PG)* 50, 459.

5. *Πεντηκοστάριον* (Athens: Αποστολική Διακονία της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος, 1959), 200.

6. See 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:23, 4:12, 5:30; Col. 1:24.

and safeguarding of the ecclesial unity.⁷ In this way, the “institution of the Church” is constituted as a charismatic body.

In this sense, as we can see, dialectics between institution and charisma within the framework of Orthodox ecclesiology have no place. Not only the church as an institution, but also all the various individual institutions and gifts within the church that derive from the general institution of the church, are the fruit of the active presence and energy of the Holy Spirit.⁸

This does not mean, however, that the church should be understood solely as the work of the Holy Spirit or solely as a communion of the Holy Spirit, as some Slavophiles of the 19th century, led by A. Khomiakov, characterized her, being led in this way in an idiosyncratic pneumatomonism due to reaction to the occult christomonism of Western ecclesiology. That is why G. Florovsky rightly opposed Khomiakov’s position, highlighting the Christological basis of ecclesiology and pointing out that Khomiakov’s characterization of the church simply as a “communion of the Holy Spirit” gives a sociological dimension to the church, underestimating the history. Other Orthodox theologians—such as V.I. Lossky, N. Nissiotis, and B. Bobrinskoy—in reaction to Florovsky emphasized more the pneumatological dimension of Orthodox ecclesiology.⁹

However, we should not lose sight of the fact that the church is also understood to be the “body of Christ,” the Christ who “loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour,

7. See also N.A. Matsoukas, *Δογματική και Συμβολική Θεολογία Β': Έκθεση της ορθόδοξης πίστης* (Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras, 1985), 414ff.; G.I. Mantzarides, *Κοινωνιολογία του Χριστιανισμού*, 2nd ed. (Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras, 1981), 48.

8. See G.D. Martzelos, “Η ενότητα θεσμού και χαρίσματος και η σημασία της για την ενότητα της Εκκλησίας,” in *Θεσμός και χάρισμα στην ανατολική και δυτική παράδοση*, ed. Fotios Ioannidis, Sixth Intrachristian Symposium, Beroia, Greece, 4-9 September 1999 (Thessaloniki: Faculty of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Athenaeum Antonianum di Roma and Metropolis of Beroia, Naousa and Kampania, 2006), 63-77.

9. For more on this issue, see Metropolitan John Zizioulas, “Η Ευχαριστιακή Εκκλησιολογία στην Ορθόδοξη Παράδοση,” *Θεολογία* 80:4 (2009), 6ff. See also John Zizioulas, “Εκκλησιολογία, Χριστολογία, Πνευματολογία,” in <https://www.oodegr.com/oode/dogmat1/P5.htm>; John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 124ff. See also Stavros Yagazoglou, “Η σύνθεση Χριστολογίας και Πνευματολογίας και οι εκκλησιολογικές συνέπειές της στο έργο του Μητροπολίτη Περγάμου Ιωάννη Ζηζιούλα,” in *Πρόσωπο, Ευχαριστία και Βασιλεία του Θεού σε ορθόδοξη και οικουμενική προοπτική. Σύναξις Ευχαριστίας προς τιμήν του Μητροπολίτη Περγάμου Ιωάννη Δ. Ζηζιούλα* (Volos: Ekdotiki Dimitriadou, Volos Academy for Theological Studies, 2016), 156ff.

without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind . . . so that she may be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27). Christ is the one who, according to his promise, sent the Paraclete to his disciples on the day of the Pentecost and founded the church as his body, becoming its “head.” And since Christ is the “head” of the church, so the Holy Spirit is, according to the fathers of the church and some contemporary Orthodox theologians, the soul of the church that animates her body, the “body of Christ,” and connects her members with the head and with one another.¹⁰ Therefore, pneumatology should not be understood as detached from Christology in the context of ecclesiology.

On the other hand, the Holy Spirit, according to the Orthodox patristic tradition, not only in the church but also throughout the divine economy, never acts detachedly and independently of the Son. All three divine persons act together in the divine economy because the active presence and energy of the Holy Trinity, manifested in creation and history, is one. However, each person has a special role to play in the manifestation of their common action: the Father as the source and cause of every divine energy manifested in the divine economy performs the preliminary work, expressing in this regard his will to establish the church in his Son for the salvation of the world. The Son as the creative cause of everything, “through whom everything was done,” creatively realizes the will of the Father, undertaking this salvific work by his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and establishing of the church through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, in his turn, as the perfective cause of everything, completes the work of the Son, contributing to the moral and spiritual perfection, sanctification, and deification of the faithful through his active presence and inspiration in the church.¹¹

As the Metropolitan of Pergamon, John Zizioulas, observed in this regard, deploying the above patristic position in more detail, the church is a reality that originates from the Holy Trinity, from the triune God himself. It is the result of the will of the Father—a will that is common to the other two persons of the Holy Trinity—and is realized through the economy of God, in which all three

10. See John Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians* 9, 3, PG 62, 72; *Homily on Colossians* 1, 3, PG 62, 303. Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily* 32, 11, PG 36, 185. See also J. Karmiris, *Η εκκλησιολογία των τριών Ιεραρχών* (Athens: n.p., 1962), 64f.; V. Lossky, *Η Μυστική Θεολογία της Ανατολικής Ορθοδόξου Εκκλησίας* (Thessaloniki: Pournaras, 1964), 206f.

11. See Basil of Caesarea, *Περί Αγίου Πνεύματος* 38, PG 32, 136 BC; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily* 34, *Εις τούς Αιγύπτου επιδημήσαντας*, 8, PG 36, 249 A; Gregory of Nyssa, *Περί του μη είναι τρεις Θεούς, Πρός Αβλάβιον*, PG 45, 125 C–128 C; Gregory Palamas, “Ομολογία Πίστεως,” in *Τόμος Συνοδικός* 3, PG 151, 765 A–766 A.

persons of the Holy Trinity are involved. However, there is a particular contribution of every person of the Holy Trinity to the realization of the church. As everything in the divine economy begins with the Father and returns to the Father, so the church has its cause in the Father's primary will. The Father expressed his goodwill (ἠϋδόκησε) to establish the church. In other words, he wanted to unite the world he created with himself so that the world can live coming into communion with him. And this union of the world with him is attained in the person of his only begotten Son. The Son co-wills (συνευδοκεῖ), that is, consents freely to the will of the Father, becoming the person in whom this union of created and uncreated will take place. The Holy Spirit also has his own special contribution to the foundation of the church: to make it possible for the creation to be incorporated into the Son by offering through his presence the opportunity to the creation to go out of its boundaries so it can be incorporated into the Son and in this way achieve its deification. This is because creation, not only because of its fall to sin but mainly because of its finite ontological limits, cannot be incorporated into the Son by itself and come into communion with God. It has to overcome its limits so that it can, as something finite, get into the uncreated and infinite God and communicate with him. And that is what happens through the special contribution of the Holy Spirit.

In short, the church is part of this trinitarian plan, according to which the Father "deigns" its foundation; the Son offers himself for the incorporation of creation and its communion with God, and the Holy Spirit delivers creation from the limits and boundaries of its nature to achieve its incorporation into the Son and its communion with God that is necessary for its deification.¹² That is why, we believe, it is not at all accidental that in every eucharistic gathering the Holy Spirit is invoked by the bishop or the presbyter in order to change the offered bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, so that the faithful who share them may be incorporated into Christ and become members of his body, the church. That is why Orthodox theology, in the framework of the so-called eucharistic ecclesiology, particularly emphasizes the decisive importance of the eucharist for the constitution of the church.¹³

Therefore, the church is not the work of only one divine person but of all three persons of the Holy Trinity. That is why we cannot speak of ecclesiology,

12. See John Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon, "The Trinitarian Basis of Ecclesiology," in <http://www.oodegr.com/english/dogmatiki1/F2c.htm>.

13. See, for this subject, John Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology in the Orthodox tradition," in *Lecclésiologie eucharistique*, ed. Jean-Marie Van Cangh, Académie Internationale des Sciences Religieuses (Bruxelles: Cerf, 2009), 187–202.

from an Orthodox point of view, without referring to trinitarian theology and especially to the communion and contribution of the persons of the Holy Trinity to the performance of the plan of the divine economy. Besides, we should not forget that in both the biblical and the patristic tradition, not only the image of the church as the body of Christ but also the communion of the persons of the Holy Trinity in general are the models of the church as a communion of the faithful.¹⁴ As Fr. G. Dragas notes in this case, “The Holy Trinity is the ultimate basis and source of the Church’s existence and, as such, the Church is in the image and likeness of God. This being in the image of the blessed Trinity constitutes the mode of the Church’s existence, which, in fact, reveals her nature. Being in God, the Church reflects on earth God’s unity in Trinity. What is natural to God is given to the Church by grace.”¹⁵

Orthodox Ecclesiology and Spirituality

Before referring to the relationship between Orthodox ecclesiology and spirituality, we must clarify the meaning of “spirituality” from an Orthodox point of view, as this term is multifaceted and is used by philosophy, theology, and psychology as well as by social and cultural sciences in a totally different sense, which can create enormous confusion. Often, even among theologians, the term “spirituality” is perceived in an ideological-philosophical meaning, referring to a way of life that is different or contrary to the materialistic way, as if it relates only to the human spirit and not to the Spirit of God.

Such an understanding, as we perceive, alienates spirituality from the source and cause of the spiritual life, which, in the biblical and patristic tradition, is the Holy Spirit. Thus, from a purely Orthodox point of view, the term “spirituality” means the holy-spiritual experience and life of the faithful within the church. It is an experience and life characterized by the fruit of the Holy Spirit—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”—as the apostle Paul describes briefly in his letter to the Galatians (Gal. 5:22-23). They are the fruits that express the life and experience of deification in the church, in which, according to St Maximus the Confessor and St Gregory Palamas, the human being as a member of the body of Christ becomes true god,

14. See John 17:20-21; Ignatius of Antiochia, *Magnesians* 7, PG 5, 668 B; 13, PG 5, 673 A; *Smyrnaeans* 8, PG 5, 713 B; Athanasius of Alexandria, *Against the Arians* 3, 21, PG 26, 365 C–368 A; 22, PG 26, 368 C–369 B; 23, PG 26, 372 ABC.

15. G. Dragas, “Orthodox Ecclesiology in Outline,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 26:3 (1981), 185.

having by grace what God has by nature “without the identity of essence.”¹⁶ In this sense, Orthodox spirituality, as closely related to the presence of the Holy Spirit within the church and the Holy Spirit’s life and experience of the church, is inextricably linked to Orthodox ecclesiology.

To better understand the relationship between Orthodox ecclesiology and spirituality, we must take into account the general relationship observed in the Orthodox tradition between spirituality and theology, one aspect of which is ecclesiology. Theology is so closely connected with spirituality in the Orthodox tradition that we cannot understand one independently of the other. They are two sides of the same reality that the incarnation of the Word (*Logos*) inaugurated in history. We could say that Orthodox theology is the theoretical expression of Orthodox spirituality, just as Orthodox spirituality is the practical experience of the content of Orthodox theology. Thus, theory and practice, theology and spiritual experience and life—in other words, doctrine and ethos—are inextricably linked within the Orthodox tradition. This is precisely why any attempt by the heretics appearing in history to alter the content of Orthodox theology was considered by the fathers of the church as an attempt to alter the spiritual experience and life of the church. But also, any attempt of the fathers of the church to formulate the Orthodox doctrine, so as to exclude any heretical counterfeiting, ultimately aims at safeguarding the spiritual experience and life of the church. This becomes clearer when we consider that the fathers faced both the trinitarian and the Christological heresies, noting first and foremost the negative consequences they had for the realization of the salvation and deification of humanity. In other words, the main interest of the fathers of the church, both in facing the various heresies and in the development and formulation of their doctrinal teachings, was to ensure the reality of salvation and deification of human beings. If the incarnation of the Word of God is the beginning and the basis of the new reality in Christ, the deification of humanity is its end and its purpose. It is precisely this basic truth that St Athanasius of Alexandria originally and uniquely emphasizes when he says: “He [the Word of God] ... has been incarnated, so that we may be deified.”¹⁷ As the incarnation of God’s Word is the centre of Orthodox theology, so the deification of human beings is the centre of Orthodox spirituality. This is precisely why the close relationship that exists between the incarnation of God’s Word and the deification of human beings

16. See Maximus Confessor, *Προς Θαλάσσιον, Περί των διαφόρων απόρων της θείας Γραφής*, 22, PG 90, 320 A; Gregory Palamas, *Θεοφάνης ή Περί θεότητος και του κατ’ αυτήν αμεθέκτου και μεθεκτού*, PG 150, 936 C.

17. Athanasius of Alexandria, *Περί της ενανθρωπήσεως του Λόγου* 54, PG 25, 192 B.

does not only emphasize the close relationship between Christology and soteriology in the Orthodox tradition, but it also highlights the close and functional relationship that exists between Orthodox theology and Orthodox spirituality. Throughout the patristic tradition, this relationship remains indissoluble.

On the basis of these facts, we understand that Orthodox spirituality, having as its centre the spiritual experience of the deification of humanity, is inextricably and functionally connected with Orthodox ecclesiology, since, as we have emphasized above, the deification of human beings takes place within the church through Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that St Gregory Palamas characterizes the church as a “communion of deification.”¹⁸ Thus, Orthodox spirituality is ultimately nothing more than a lived and living ecclesiology with all mentioned aspects and parameters of Orthodox theology.

Conclusion

Based on the above information, it becomes clear that, as ecclesiology in the Orthodox tradition is not conceived independently of Christology, it also cannot be understood independently of pneumatology. This is because the basis of Orthodox ecclesiology is ultimately trinitarian, since all three persons of the Holy Trinity participate together—each one with his personal contribution to the foundation and the salvific work of the church.

Furthermore, Orthodox spirituality, having as its centre the deification of humankind, does not have an ideological-philosophical content but is in direct and functional relation to the active presence and energy of the Holy Spirit within the church, and this fact points to its inextricable link both with Orthodox pneumatology and Orthodox ecclesiology. In this sense, spirituality, pneumatology, and ecclesiology, in spite of the difference in their meaning, constitute an inseparable whole, expressing in general the inextricable and functional relationship between theology and spirituality in the Orthodox tradition.

18. Gregory Palamas, *Λόγος αποδεικτικός* 2, 78, in *Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά, Συγγράμματα*, Vol. 1, ed. P. Chrestou (Thessaloniki: Ethniko Idryma Erevnon, 1962), 149; see, on this issue, the dissertation of St. Yagazoglou, *Κοινωνία Θεώσεως. Η σύνθεση Χριστολογίας και Πνευματολογίας στο έργο του Αγίου Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά* (Athens: Domos, 2001).

An Introduction to Pentecostal Identity: Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, and Spirituality*

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr

Pneumatology and the Numbering of “Pentecostals”

It is no secret that Pentecostals constitute a significant portion of Christians who make up the worldwide body of Christ. If the recent figures released by Dr Todd M. Johnston, Director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, through the *International Bulletin of Mission Research* have any merit, there are 8,045,322,000 people on earth, and the total number of Christians in the world stands at 2,604,381,000, or 33% of the world population. The largest Christian denomination is the Roman Catholic Church, with 1,268,858,000 members. In second place is that group that Johnston labels as Pentecostal/Charismatics or Renewalists, with 670,085,000 members.¹ What this means is that just over half of all Christians in the world are Roman Catholics, and roughly 25% of all Christians in the world may be counted as Pentecostal/Charismatics or Renewalists. This figure is significant because it points to the

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1. Gina A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, “World Christianity 2023: A Gendered Approach,” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 47 (Jan. 2023), 11–22.

fact that the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement or Renewalists is much larger than all other Christian families—Orthodox, Protestant, or Evangelical—together.

These figures, while useful at some levels, are at the same time misleading. Of the over 669 million Pentecostal/Charismatics or Renewalists, only 34% of them would self-identify as Classical Pentecostals. It was Fr. Kilian McDonnell, OSB, who first described Classical Pentecostals, the oldest group within the movement, as “those groups of Pentecostals which grew out of the Holiness movement at the beginning of the [20th] century.”² By using this definition, both Trinitarian groups such as the Church of God in Christ, Assemblies of God, Church of God (Cleveland, TN), International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and the like, as well as Oneness groups, such as the United Pentecostal Church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, may claim the designation “Classical Pentecostal,” since they share common points of origin, primarily the 19th-century Holiness movement and the Apostolic Faith movements of Charles Parham and William Seymour.

Professor Allan Anderson, however, both broadens and narrows this definition. He broadens it by noting that Classical Pentecostals “are those whose faith can be shown to have originated in the evangelical revival and missionary movements of the early twentieth century,” but he narrows it by essentially limiting it to those in “the Western world.”³ As such, he can include revivals not specifically linked to the Holiness movement that was most prominent in the United States, or to the works of Parham and Seymour.

What is important to note is that the Holiness movement cited by Fr. McDonnell and Donald W. Dayton⁴ as the dominant source of Classical Pentecostalism, and the Evangelical movement cited by Anderson and William

2. Kilian McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 2.

3. Allan Heath Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5. It is indisputable that the Spirit fell on various groups around the world within that first decade of the 20th century, but North Americans who have sent the most missionaries to pass along their teachings, as well as the older European Pentecostals, have traditionally understood some of these groups as not being fully “Pentecostal” unless they adopted a classical Pentecostal theology. See Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, “The Origins of Modern Pentecostalism: Some Historiographical Issues,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr and Amos Yong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 13–30.

4. Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Frances Asbury Press, 1987), 35–60.

Menzies⁵ as another source of the movement, are not the same thing. Indeed, there continues to be considerable debate over what constitutes an Evangelical and whether Holiness and Pentecostal Christians are Evangelicals.⁶ Definition, and particularly self-definition, is important. That said, the definition of “Pentecostal” today often varies with the denominations that use the term as a self-designation, as well as with the disciplines that study it. Theologians and historians differ from sociologists and anthropologists in the ways they define Pentecostalism. Furthermore, definitions within the movement may vary, depending upon which part of the world one inhabits. They may also vary depending upon their understanding of or emphasis upon a particular doctrine, such as the doctrine of God, or sanctification, or baptism in the Holy Spirit, or divine healing, or exorcism, or even prosperity, just to name a few.

The best way to count Trinitarian Classical Pentecostals *may* be to look at who holds membership in the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF).⁷ Its Trinitarian Statement of Faith states that baptism in the Holy Spirit carries “the evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance according to Acts 2:4 and in the operation of the spiritual gifts and ministries.”⁸ The total membership of the PWF is not known precisely, but a look at the organizations found in its membership suggests that it is probably around 225,000,000 people. The single-largest member of the Pentecostal World Fellowship is the World

5. William W. Menzies, “The Reformed Roots of Pentecostalism,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 9 (2006), 260–82. William W. Menzies, “Non-Wesleyan Pentecostalism: A Tradition—‘The Finished Work,’” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (2011), 187–98; William W. Menzies, “Non-Wesleyan Pentecostalism: A Tradition—‘The Influence of Fundamentalism,’” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (2011), 199–211; William W. Menzies, “Non-Wesleyan Pentecostalism: A Tradition—‘Keswick and the Higher Life,’” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (2011), 213–25; William W. Menzies, “Non-Wesleyan Pentecostalism: A Tradition—‘The Christian and Missionary Alliance and the Assemblies of God,’” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14 (2011), 226–38.

6. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds., *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1991, 1997).

7. The Pentecostal World Fellowship, which was founded in 1947, is open to membership of Trinitarian denominations and organizations that willingly agree to cooperate with one another in its triennial meetings. Its conferences are convened and overseen by a small executive committee and a larger advisory committee made up of leaders from member denominations and organizations. It is not, however, a body that legislates or takes official actions to be implemented by its members because it views itself in strictly voluntary terms.

8. The new Pentecostal World Fellowship website includes the Statement of Faith at <https://www.pwfellowship.org/about-us>.

Assemblies of God Fellowship, with 68,000,000 members and adherents.⁹

If the total number of Pentecostal/Charismatics in the world is 670 million, and only 225 million are members of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, then who are the rest? The remaining number includes other Classical Pentecostals, known as Oneness or Apostolic Pentecostals. They do not accept Chalcedonian trinitarian language. They typically describe themselves as Modal Monarchianists. As a result, they do not use the trinitarian formula in their baptisms but baptize “in the name of Jesus Christ,” using Acts 2:38 as their standard.¹⁰ Here again, numbers are difficult to obtain, though there may be as many as 40 million worldwide.¹¹

This Renewalist category also includes thousands of independent Pentecostal congregations, many of which have existed from the earliest days of Pentecostalism, though the largest number stems from the mid-20th century and later. Many of these congregations came into being through work done by various healing evangelists during the 1940s through the 1960s.¹² Others came into existence among Scandinavian immigrants to the United States, who chose to follow the radical form of congregationalism first embraced by Pentecostals in Sweden, which spread throughout Scandinavia and the missions established by these churches.¹³ Still others emerged as a result of the “Latter Rain Movement” that began in Canada and the north-central part of the United States in the late 1940s, many of which broke from the Assemblies of God or the Pentecostal

9. Both International and United States statistics on the Assemblies of God through 2015 may be found at <http://ag.org/top/About/Statistics/index.cfm>.

10. David A. Reed, “In Jesus’ Name”: *The History and Beliefs of Oneness Pentecostals* (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2008).

11. The estimate that “half of the worldwide Pentecostal population” is Oneness attributed to Walter Hollenweger, but without adequate documentation, in David Mesquiati de Oliveira, “The FTL, Pentecostal Theology, and the Academy in Brazil,” *Journal of Latin American Theology: Christian Reflections from the Latino South* 11:2 (2016), 105, is far from accurate. A more realistic estimate is David K. Bernard, “The Future of Oneness Pentecostalism,” in *The Future of Pentecostalism in the United States*, eds. Erick Patterson and Edmund Rybarczyk (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 124, who suggested nearly two decades ago that it was “24 million or more.”

12. David Edwin Harrell, Jr, *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 93–96.

13. Joseph R. Coletti, “Lewi Pethrus: His Influence upon Scandinavian–American Pentecostalism,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 5:2 (Fall 1983), 18–29; Bertil Carlsson, *Organizations and Decision Procedures within the Swedish Pentecostal Movements* (Stockholm: privately published, 1974).

Assemblies of Canada at that time.¹⁴ Because of their independent nature, whether by design or by necessity, the numbers of all these independent congregations are often subject, at best, to educated guess work, and their frequent unwillingness to cooperate fully with others makes it very difficult to know exactly how many there are.

This number of Pentecostal/Charismatic or Renewalists also includes many of those who are members of the traditional Charismatic Renewal. The Charismatic Renewal began as a Pentecostalizing movement within historic Protestant denominations in the late 1950s: that is, in those denominations that came into being from the time of the Protestant Reformation. From 1967 onward, the Renewal also entered the Roman Catholic Church. In recent years, little study has been conducted on the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic and Protestant churches, and we have seen a decline in the highly visible events held by Charismatics within most historic Protestant churches.¹⁵ Numbers are, once again, difficult to assess. The one church that has kept more accurate records of its renewal membership is the Roman Catholic Church. Today, the Vatican has an official office for International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services that places Catholic Charismatics at 11.5% of the Church's membership, or 160,000,000 people, which would make it over twice as large as the largest Classical Pentecostal body, the World Assemblies of God Fellowship.¹⁶ The former Vatican correspondent John Allen, Jr noted that this is one of the most significant trends contributing to the revitalization of the Catholic Church today.¹⁷

It should be noted, too, that those churches typically called "Third Wave" or

14. George and Ernest Hawtin, *Church Government* (no city: privately published, c. 1949); Richard Riss, "The Latter Rain Movement of 1948," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 4:1 (1982), 32–45; D. William Faupel, "The New Order of the Latter Rain: Restoration or Renewal?" in *Winds from the North: Canadian Contributions to the Pentecostal Movement*, eds. Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 239–63.

15. The last major study of the renewal was Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics II: How a Christian Renewal Movement Became Part of the American Religious Mainstream* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983). Michael J. McClymond, "Charismatic Renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism: From North American Origins to Global Permutations," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr and Amos Yong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 31–51, provides a more recent and well-documented overview of these movements.

16. Alessandra Nucci, "The Charismatic Renewal and the Catholic Church," *The Catholic World Report* (18 May 2013).

17. John L. Allen, Jr, *The Future Church: How Ten Trends Are Revolutionizing the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 375–413.

“New Apostolic” are also numbered among the Renewalists. Both of these groups, which include such denominations as The Vineyard, are commonly open to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit through baptism in the Spirit as well as in various gifts or charisms of the Holy Spirit. They often represent otherwise evangelical voices that did not feel as though they were always well represented by either Classical Pentecostal expectations or by what they perceived to be less “evangelical” or more “liberal” mainline Protestant Charismatics. As a result, they view themselves as occupying a middle space between these groups.¹⁸

The number of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians published by Johnston also includes what are often these days termed Neo-Pentecostal churches. While the term “Neo-Pentecostal” was used during the early years of the Charismatic movement to describe first Protestant¹⁹ and then Catholic²⁰ Charismatics, “Neo-Pentecostalism” is now used most widely to describe Pentecostal or Pentecostal-like churches that emphasize the theme of prosperity.²¹ Even so, their statements of faith often read like those that are typically found in Classical Pentecostal churches, although their preaching is more focused on issues related to healing and wealth.

18. See The Vineyard’s Statement of Faith in Bill Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle: A History of the Vineyard* (Cape Town: Vineyard International Publishing, 2000), 409–12, esp. 411.

19. Walter Wietake and Jack Husted, *Towards a Mutual Understanding of Neo-Pentecostalism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1973); Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics: The Origins, Development, and Significance of Neo-Pentecostalism* (New York: Doubleday, 1976); Charles Edwin Jones, *The Charismatic Movement: A Guide to the Study of Neo-Pentecostalism with Emphasis on Anglo-American Sources*, ATLA Bibliography Series, No. 30, 2 vols (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press and the American Theological Library Association, 1995); Michael Girolimon, “‘The Charismatic Wiggle’: United Methodism’s Twentieth-Century Neo-Pentecostal Impulses,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 17:1 (Spring 1995), 89–103.

20. Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* Francis Martin, trans. (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

21. Leonido Silveira Campos, *Teatro, Templo e Mercado: Organizaçã e Marketing de um Empreendimento Neopentecostal* (Petrópolis: Vozes; São Paulo: Simpósio Editora e Universidade Metodista de São Paulo, 1997); Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo, “Africa’s Poverty and Its Neo-Pentecostal ‘Liberators’: An Ecotheological Assessment of Africa’s Prosperity Gospellers,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 35:3 (2013), 366–84; Deji Ayegboyin, “New Pentecostal Churches and Prosperity Theology in Nigeria,” in *Who Is Afraid of the Holy Ghost? Pentecostalism and Globalization in Africa and Beyond* (Trenton: African World Press, 2011), 155–79. For a nuanced treatment of prosperity among different types of Pentecostals, see Katherine Attanasi and Amos Yong, eds., *Pentecostalism and Prosperity: The Socio-Economics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

What is it that stands at the core of Pentecostal identity? In spite of this diversity within what may be broadly identified as various forms of Pentecostalism, there are a number of points that all Pentecostal movements hold in common. In earlier years, and especially among North American Pentecostals and the missions they established around the world, a Pentecostal was one who believed that Christians could receive a post-conversion baptism in the Holy Spirit that provides divine power, thereby enabling them to minister more effectively. The evidence of that baptism in the Holy Spirit was inevitably the ability to speak in other tongues. Indeed, all Pentecostal churches continue to emphasize a life-transforming experience of being “baptized in/with the Holy Spirit”; typically, it comes with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues. This position, however, is not the only position that Pentecostals have held, even from their earliest years.²² *La Iglesia Metodista Pentecostal* of Chile, for instance, has always held that there are more manifestations that provide evidence for baptism in the Holy Spirit than speaking in tongues.²³

More recently, there has been a decline in the practice of tongues speech in many Pentecostal churches. For many Pentecostal leaders, this signals a troubling erosion of Pentecostalism’s core identity. But the common core that unites all Pentecostals may be more basic even than baptism in the Spirit with its physical evidence. At its core is a form of spirituality in which *the participant typically anticipates that something extraordinary will transpire* in a post-conversion encounter between that individual and the Holy Spirit of God. It is a spirituality rooted in *divine encounter* made possible by the Holy Spirit, the result of which is often a meaningful transformation that has a profound effect upon the individual’s subsequent life and ministry. Pastor William Seymour of the Azusa Street Mission understood this, but it also made him wary of those who sought only an experience. As a result, he wrote that we are to keep our eyes on Jesus

22. Juan Sepúlveda, “Another Way of Being Pentecostal,” in Calvin L. Smith, *Pentecostal Power: Expressions, Impact and Faith of Latin American Pentecostalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 45–50.

23. C. Alvarez, P. Correa, M. Poblete, and P. Guell, *Historia de la Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile* (Santiago: Ediciones Rehue Ltda, n.d.), 54, includes the affirmation from the *Declaracion de Fe de la Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile*. It reads, [Section 10] “*CREEMOS: en el Espíritu Santo como una gracia y promesa para todos los creyentes en EL.* [Section 11] *Que: el hablar en otros lenguas, danzar, tener visiones, profetizar o cualquier manifestacion conforme a la palabra de Dios, son una evidencia del bautismo del Espíritu Santo.*” English translation: [Section 10] “WE BELIEVE: in the Holy Spirit as a grace and promise for all believers in HIM. [Section 11] That: speaking in other tongues, dancing, having visions, prophesying or any manifestation according to the word of God, are evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

rather than on tongues or any other sign. If we fail to do that, or fail to follow the Bible, he warned, “we will wind up in Spiritualism.”²⁴

Spirituality or Church?

I find it most helpful to think of the entire movement of Renewalists as representing a *form of spirituality* as much as it is a collection of Christian congregations that are technically classified as a family of churches that are part of the Church universal. They are that, but they are more. The Free Methodist theologian Daniel Castelo understands Pentecostalism as a theology/spirituality of encounter and, more importantly, as a contemporary form of Christian mysticism that stands within that great historical chain of those labelled “mystics” but who are often side-lined or marginalized.²⁵

The terms “movement” and “fellowship,” which are often applied to these groups that claim to experience the Holy Spirit in very active ways, give it a kind of vitality and mobility not often found in traditional discussions of either pneumatology or ecclesiology. The fact that it is a recognizable movement that has demonstrated great creativity in crossing most denominational lines only lends support to such an understanding. Interestingly, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran–Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* makes a remarkable statement when it comments on the role that Pentecostals and Charismatics have made to global Christianity. It then notes,

These powerful movements have put forward new emphases that have made many of the old confessional controversies seem obsolete. The Pentecostal movement is present in many other churches in the form of the charismatic movement, creating new commonalities and communities across confessional boundaries. Thus, this movement opens up new ecumenical opportunities while, at the same time, creating additional challenges....²⁶

The Pentecostal movement as part of these Renewalist groups reflects a

24. William J. Seymour, *Doctrines and Disciplines of the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission*, (Los Angeles: Apostolic Faith Mission, 1915), 5.

25. Daniel Castelo, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), esp. 37–82.

26. *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran–Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt; Paderborn: Bonifatius, 2016), 14, §14.

spirituality that encourages the direct encounter between the believer and the triune God, an encounter that takes seriously the presence, authority, and power of the Holy Spirit at significant levels and anticipates or expects various manifestations of the Holy Spirit to occur.²⁷ It is a spirituality that recognizes that within the divine–human encounter, regardless of the Christian tradition in which it finds expression, a profound transformation in the believer, from cleansing to fruitfulness and empowerment, is possible and expected through the Holy Spirit.

In a sense, it moves the person and work of the Holy Spirit from the written text found both in scripture and in Tradition to include also a lived experience. It moves life in the Spirit from something confessed to something experienced or lived. That experience of the Holy Spirit has the power to change how one lives one's life and provides renewed confidence for how one ministers to others, both inside and outside the believing community.²⁸ It *anticipates* the presence, the manifestation, and the authority of the Holy Spirit in the midst of God's people both when they are gathered and when they are scattered. In short, the Holy Spirit is understood as potentially having authority wherever the people of God may be present. This expression is understood to be the living out of the "priesthood" and, in the words of the late Canadian Pentecostal theologian Roger Stronstad, the prophethood of *all believers*.²⁹ As a result, Pentecostals have typically maintained that if people do not expect something from God, they will not receive it (James 4:2).³⁰

This line of thinking was clearly articulated in the 1941 testimony of Robert W. Cummings, who was reared in a Presbyterian family on the mission field in India. When he received his Pentecostal "baptism in the Holy Spirit" and

27. Mark J. Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition*, Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006), 19, 25–27; Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 1–16, 20–27; Simon Chan, "Encountering the Triune God: Spirituality Since the Azusa Street Revival," in Harold D. Hunter and Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, eds., *The Azusa Street Revival and Its Legacy* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2006), 215–26.

28. Matthew S. Clark and Henry I. Lederle, *What Is Distinctive about Pentecostal Theology?* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989), 43–65.

29. Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke's Charismatic Theology*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 16 (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1999), 123–24.

30. This paragraph is slightly revised from a section of my chapter regarding sources of authority in the church. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, "A Response to David Adesanya," in Tamara Grdzeldize, ed., *Contemporary Churches: Sources of Authority, Vol. 2*, Faith and Order Paper No. 218 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), 44–45.

subsequently left the Presbyterian Church to serve as a Pentecostal missionary, he alleged that “Shameful neglect of the Holy Spirit is the great sin of the Christian Church, and it is the greatest sin of the average Christian. We forget that when the Church came into being at Pentecost *every* member, the *least* as well as the greatest, was supernaturally filled with the Holy Spirit....” He continued this point by noting cynically that in this age of so-called enlightenment,

instead of believing the testimony of the Scriptures [we] have taken it for granted that great experiences in the Holy Spirit are only for a favoured few; and we have made demigods of those favoured few.... We have told the men and women of our own day who have had great experiences to keep them in the background lest ordinary Christians, our sons and daughters and young people who are hungry for reality, should get the idea that they, too, may have such wonderful experiences. We sum it all up when we piously sing, “I ask no dreams, no prophet ecstasies; no sudden rending of the veil of clay; no angel visitant, no opening skies.” So we get none.³¹

Thus, Pentecostals hold the *expectation* that something extraordinary *will* happen as a result of their encounters with God and that some type of spiritual manifestation *will* be experienced when they gather in the presence of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. To Pentecostals, the expectation that something will happen in, to, or through them is as important as the encounter itself. And when it does happen, and it has been discerned as a genuine work of the Holy Spirit, it is considered to have authority among them.³²

It is for this reason that the Pentecostals wrote in the Fifth Report of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue regarding this experience,

31. Robert W. Cummings, “Unto You Is the Promise,” 1–2. This pamphlet was subsequently reprinted many times by the Assemblies of God in the United States (e.g., Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1948). Italics are in the original text. The words to the 1854 hymn “Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart” are taken from the second verse, which were written by the Irish Anglican divine George Croly. Donald Gee, *All with One Accord* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 24–28, takes a similar position to that of Cummings.

32. “‘Do Not Quench the Spirit’: Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church: Report of the Sixth Phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (2011–2015),” Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* N. 147 (2016/1), 56–92, esp. §73–104.

God reveals Himself in a personal and life-transforming way to the believer. The result is that the believer is empowered by the Holy Spirit, and becomes aware in a new and powerful way, of the presence of the risen and glorified Christ (cf. John 16:14). This encounter enables the believer to become a stronger witness for Christ (Acts 1:8) and to experience a deeper dimension of prayer and worship (1 Cor. 12-14).³³

Thus, Pentecostals are able to embrace a holistic worldview or understanding of life that speaks to the physical, psychological, spiritual, and material needs of people. They may recognize the presence of the sacred throughout life, even in desacralized societies. In their quest for a holistic understanding, they may engage in social ministry, ministries of compassion, prayer for healing, and the identification of evil in demonic forms both personal and systemic—and they may even engage it through exorcism. They believe that knowledge is not limited solely to the realms of reason and sensory perception or experience, but it is also revealed to individuals in other ways, to specific people, at specific times, and for specific purposes. As Daniel Castelo puts it, “for Pentecostals, God-knowledge is not so much cultivated through actions of the intellect as it is through holistic engagement.”³⁴

This is a place where Pentecostals differ from evangelicals and fundamentalists. While Pentecostals are able to value the mind³⁵—after all, we are to love the Lord our God with all our mind (Luke 10:27)—our love of God is not merely rational, a development that is indebted to the Enlightenment, or at least to various

33. “On Becoming a Christian: Insights from the Scriptures and the Patristic Writings with some Contemporary Reflections: Report of the Fifth Phase of the International Dialogue between Some Pentecostal Churches and Leaders and the Catholic Church (1998–2005),” §207. This document may be found in English at Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* N. 129 (2008/III), 162–215, and in French at *Service d'information* N. 129 (2008/III), 163–219; Copies of the English version are available at http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/pe-rc/doc/e_pe-rc_5-contents.html; at http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj18/2007RC_Pent_Dialogue.pdf; and at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-del-documento-in-inglese1.html>.

34. Such revelations may come through dreams, visions, prophetic words, and other trans-rational or supra-rational means. See Castelo, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 37.

35. Jamie K.A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

methods found in the Enlightenment.³⁶ Pentecostals do not only share a common historical and theological basis with these groups that at times are still antagonistic to what Pentecostals believe and practise; they clearly differ with them, and, as a result, Pentecostals are often not well understood.³⁷ Pentecostal attention to the scriptures was not originally inerrantist in its focus. The term “inerrancy” is not found in any Pentecostal statement of faith of which I am aware. At the same time, Pentecostals have always believed the Bible to be the word of God. My role here is not to debate this point; it is only to note that where the argument appears for the inerrancy of scripture among Pentecostals, it is where these Pentecostals have been pushed or encouraged by fundamentalists or evangelicals to adopt their form of rationalism, something that has been foreign to Pentecostals from the beginning.³⁸

Pentecostals have always embraced a view of the Bible as a “living book”: that is, the Holy Spirit is always active in the text, making it live for those who read it or hear it read or preached. As the Pentecostal team noted in their dialogue with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches nearly 20 years ago,

For Pentecostals, the Bible is a story; they read their lives into that story and that story into their lives. They stress returning to the experiences of God to which Scripture bears witness, but also moving forth into the world to witness *to* the deeds of God multiplied through them in new contexts. Essential to hearing the Word, therefore, is the spiritual openness and fitness of the interpreter. The gap between the Bible and the contemporary world, which is emphasized among Pentecostals, is not historical but spiritual. . . . Pentecostals normally emphasize that the Bible speaks and transforms lives only through the

36. Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 83–108.

37. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 24, considers Pentecostalism—alongside fundamentalism, dispensational premillennialism, and the Higher Life movement—a “disaster for the life of the mind.”

38. While the official doctrinal statement of the Assemblies of God, known as its “Statement of Fundamental Truths,” does not make any reference to inerrancy, in an attempt to move the Assemblies of God more centrally into the evangelical camp, Thomas F. Zimmerman, the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, convened a committee to write a statement on scripture that supported inerrancy. Its most recent update was in 2015. It may be found at <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Topics-Index/Inspiration-Inerrancy-Authority-of-Scripture>. Position papers have no legal standing in the Fellowship. They are viewed only as recommendations.

work of the Holy Spirit.³⁹

Finally, Pentecostal worship services in all the varieties of Pentecostalism are often viewed as celebrations, and as such, Pentecostal congregations frequently display pronounced signs of joy within their services. There are the enthusiastic and festive celebrations made public in singing, shouting, clapping, leaping, and dancing, all of which find precedent in scripture. One might even argue that their worship is more like that found in the Old and New Testaments than it is like certain other types of worship found in many historic churches—Protestant, Orthodox, or Catholic. At the same time, there are ecstatic manifestations that take place in some Pentecostal worship services that include speaking in tongues, prophesying, and falling or resting “in the Spirit,” with the total abandonment of one’s self to God that is demonstrated at the altar. These actions are often accompanied by public displays of tears, groaning, and crying in anguish for past sins or in sympathy with current requests, and by grovelling on the floor in prayer paralleling somewhat the Old Testament practice of putting on sackcloth and ashes. On other occasions, Pentecostal worship is marked by periods of complete silence, a kind of “holy hush,”⁴⁰ and even singing in tongues that may contribute to a deep sense of awe before God.⁴¹ In the scriptures, the surprise is that all of these actions are viewed as fully acceptable.⁴² In many churches today, the surprise is that they are not.

What I have tried to spell out is the sense that the Pentecostal movement might well be viewed as offering a specific type of spirituality. It has a unique identity as a movement in which the people of God anticipate a life-giving, life-transforming, personal encounter with the Living God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—an encounter that goes well beyond the rational senses to what might be

39. “Word and Spirit, Church and World: The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 1996-2000,” §27–28.

40. Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles: As It Was in the Beginning* (Los Angeles: F. Bartleman, c. 1925), 60, 81–82, 103.

41. “Negroes at Revival Meeting Talk in Strange Tongues,” *Los Angeles Examiner* (5 June 1906), 3.

42. On speaking in tongues and prophesying, see 1 Corinthians 14; on falling while “in the Spirit,” see 1 Samuel 19:23-24 and Revelation 1:9-18; on abandonment to God demonstrated through the shedding of tears, lament, and wailing or cries of anguish for past sins, see Jeremiah 4:8; on grovelling on the floor in prayer to the point of appearing to be drunk, see 1 Samuel 1:9-17; on singing, see Psalm 9:11; 21:13; 30:4; 33:3; on shouting for joy, see Psalm 32:11; 47:1; 132:9; on clapping, see Psalm 47:1; and on leaping and dancing, see 2 Samuel 6:12-23.

described as the trans-rational or supra-rational self. This does not mean that the rational is set aside, only that it is not the sole means of encountering and experiencing the divine. But if the Pentecostal movement is understood as a “movement of the Holy Spirit” that has effectively touched all churches, to what extent is it “church”? My sense is that while both theologically and sociologically, Pentecostals manifest many of the same elements that other “churches” do—elements such as buildings, polity, ministry, statements of faith, worship services, and the like—they might be more than that. It might be the case that their role as a movement is not so much to be numbered among other “churches” as one of them but rather to bring about or to facilitate a greater charismaticization of the Church as a whole and, hence, a greater reliance upon the Spirit of God to lead the Church into greater unity than has yet been seen.

The Church as Life in the Spirit: An Evangelical Perspective on Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, and Spirituality

Sotirios Boukis

“Where the church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the church, and every kind of grace.” Therefore, St. Irenaeus continues, those who do not partake of the Spirit “are neither nourished into life from the mother’s breasts, nor do they enjoy that most limpid fountain which issues from the body of Christ.”¹

This beautiful picture of the church as life *by* the Spirit and life *in* the Spirit has deep theological roots. The close linking of church and Spirit, ecclesiology and pneumatology, has been foundational in the course of church history, strongly reflected in the creedal tradition (most notably in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed).²

Inextricably connected with these is also spirituality: just as theology is the theoretical expression of spirituality, so spirituality is the practical, lived, and living experience of the content of theology.³ Thus, the work of the Holy Spirit must be understood not only doctrinally but also through experience with the

1. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, 3.24.1, ANF Vol. 1.

2. For a detailed analysis of ecclesiology and pneumatology in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, see Joseph L. Mangina, “Ecclesiology and Pneumatology,” in *T&T Clark Handbook of Ecclesiology*, eds. Kimlyn J. Bender and D. Stephen Long (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 344-358.

3. Georgios Martzelos, “Ecclesiology, Pneumatology and Spirituality in the Orthodox Tradition,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 293.

power of the Spirit and in the living of the charismata.⁴

Since its publication in 2013, the convergence text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)* has been a stimulus for further multilateral reflection on ecclesiology. During the reception process of the official responses to *TCTCV*, as well as during the global consultations organized by the Faith and Order Commission, one frequent observation was the need for an integration of a more robust pneumatology and a stronger link to spirituality to the ecclesiology described in *TCTCV* so that the charismatic and institutional perspectives of the church can be presented in a more balanced way.

The purpose of this final chapter will be to work towards such a synthesis by harvesting some key contributions on these topics from these two volumes, which reflect a significant part of the work of the ecclesiology study group of the Commission during the 2015–22 period.

The key points which will be presented in this chapter can be summarized as below. A helpful starting point is the concept of a spirituality of encounter: all Christians, in one way or another, go to church not just to listen to the word of God and receive the sacraments, but also expecting to encounter God during worship. When Christians encounter God, this is a transformative encounter, and so the church can be described as a community of sanctification where all members are sanctified, transformed, equipped to take an active role and use their spiritual gifts to serve their brothers and sisters as well as the world. The baptismal identity of all believers entails the priesthood of all believers, which entails the ministry of all believers, and their participation to God's mission. Under this viewpoint, the role of ordained ministers is not just an institutional one, but above all a spiritual and missiological one: to "make disciples" who will in their turn make other disciples. Hence, the role of the laity is not confined only to the liturgy, but also to the "liturgy after the liturgy": it is a vision of lay Christians carrying on God's mission in their daily lives by following their vocational callings and by living transformed lives that will be transforming to the lives of others and will invite others to join this community of transformation and encounter God for themselves.

Thus, the thesis of this chapter is that this spirituality of encounter, transformation, sanctification, ministry of the laity, gifts of the Holy Spirit, and discipleship that leads to the vocational practice of mission in daily life is a

4. Regina Sanches, "The Mission of the Church from a Latin American Pentecostal Perspective and Experience," in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 177.

significant contribution from these two volumes, which can help towards a more robust integration of ecclesiology with pneumatology and spirituality.

Of course, this pneumatological approach to ecclesiology must be understood in the broader context of the trinitarian ecclesiology of *TCTCV*: the church is the “people of God, body of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit” (*TCTCV*, §21). It is called into being by the Father, grounded in the Son (*creatura Verbi*), and enlivened by the Holy Spirit (*TCTCV*, §13–16). The *koinonia* experienced in the church is rooted in the *koinonia* in the life of the triune God; the church is called to be a reflection of that *koinonia*.⁵ Hence, while this chapter obviously focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit in and through the church, it does so assuming this trinitarian context.

A Spirituality of Encounter

The church is a place of divine encounter: when Christians go to church, they in some way anticipate an encounter with the triune God. Some traditions anticipate a spiritual encounter in worship and/or God’s spiritual presence during the eucharist. Other traditions believe in the real presence of God in the

5. The *TCTCV* concepts of this paragraph are also present in the bilateral dialogues of Roman Catholics with Pentecostals (see, for example, “Perspectives on *Koinonia*: The Report of the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 1989,” *Pneuma* 12:2 [1990], §29–30) as well as of Reformed with Pentecostals (“Word and Spirit, Church and World: International Pentecostal–Reformed Dialogue, 1996–2000,” §36, <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj8/WARC.html>, and “Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community and Justice—The Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 2001–2011,” *Reformed World* 63:1 [2013], §125). See also Krzysztof Mielcarek, “Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogues,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 3, and Sotirios Boukis, “Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on the International Bilateral Dialogues of Pentecostals with Reformed and Lutheran Churches,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 23.

eucharist or even anticipate the real presence of God in the entire worship.⁶ Yet, while the kind of encounter anticipated (direct or indirect) differs in each church, the idea of encounter is common in all and is a significant point of convergence.

Pentecostalism offers an interesting case study here, sometimes being described as both a theology and a spirituality of encounter.⁷ As Robeck puts it, “Pentecostals hold the *expectation* that something extraordinary *will* happen as a result of their encounters with God and that some type of spiritual manifestation *will* be experienced when they gather in the presence of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.” Pentecostalism thus “reflects a spirituality that encourages the direct encounter between the believer and the triune God, an encounter that takes seriously the presence, authority, and power of the Holy Spirit at significant levels and anticipates or expects various manifestations of the Holy Spirit to occur.”⁸ In the context of this spirituality, “the people of God anticipate a life-giving, life-transforming, personal encounter with the Living God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: an encounter that goes well beyond the rational senses to what might be described as the trans-rational or supra-rational self.”⁹

The context in which the church actualizes itself most fully is in the worshipping assembly. Some of the core elements of Pentecostal worship are testimonies, altar calls, joyful songs of praise and adoration, preaching, prayers of

6. While not all churches that hold a “real presence” theology of the eucharist also hold a “real presence” approach to the entire worship, the connection between the two is not entirely disconnected. For example, in the Lutheran–Pentecostal bilateral dialogue, it is affirmed that “because of their consistent emphasis on the real presence of God in worship, Pentecostals expect the Lord to be present in his Supper.” *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together* (Strasbourg: Institute for Ecumenical Research; Pasadena: David du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality; and Zurich: European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010), §17–18.

7. Daniel Castelo, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 37–82. Castelo also considers Pentecostalism as a contemporary form of Christian mysticism. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr unpacks further this concept of theology/spirituality of encounter in “An Introduction to Pentecostal Identity: Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, and Spirituality,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 306.

8. Robeck, “An Introduction to Pentecostal Identity,” 305.

9. Robeck, “An Introduction to Pentecostal Identity,” 309–10. He adds that “this does not mean that the rational is set aside; only that it is not the sole means of encountering and experiencing the divine.”

intercession for healing and other needs, and “the potential for personal participation by all through the manifestation of spiritual gifts or charisms such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, and discerning of spirits, among others.”¹⁰

Just as the “category of experience is essential to understanding the spirituality of Pentecostals, and thus their worship,”¹¹ so, too, the assembly for worship is the key to the theological understanding of the church.¹² The assemblies of Pentecostals for worship “are designed to provide a context for a mystical encounter, an experience with the divine. This encounter is mediated by the sense of the immediate divine presence . . . The gestures, ritual actions, and symbols all function within this context to speak of the manifest presence.”¹³

While the above descriptions sound distinctively Pentecostal, a closer analysis can unearth some significant points of convergence with other traditions.

First, the idea of God’s real presence in the entire worship could well resonate with other traditions. For example, in the Orthodox tradition, “the church is an earthly heaven in which the super-celestial God dwells and walks about”¹⁴; those who enter the church do this with an anticipation to encounter the divine presence upon entering. In many ways, the same could be stated for the Catholic tradition as well.

Second, as Haight observes, “When pentecostal experience is actualized as in worship, it is a participation in the transcendent kingdom of God in the sense of Zizioulas, a participation in the reality of the kingdom beyond history, the *eschata*, an experience of transcendence, something beyond the self.”¹⁵ This linking of the present with the *eschata* and with the worship experience at its core is a crucial point of convergence, again not only between Orthodox and Pentecostals, but among other traditions as well.

10. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §38; *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, §12. The fact that *TCTCV* does not make any reference to most of these elements of worship which are core in Pentecostal spirituality is probably a major omission of *TCTCV* from a Pentecostal viewpoint.

11. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 70.

12. Roger D. Haight, *Christian Community in History, Vol. 2: Comparative Ecclesiology* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2005), 465–66.

13. Daniel E. Albrecht, “Pentecostal Spirituality: Looking Through the Lens of Ritual,” *Pneuma* 14:2 (1996), 21. Cited by Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 70–71.

14. St. Germanos of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, PG 98, 384B.

15. Roger D. Haight, *Christian Community in History*, 465. See also Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 98.

Third, the emphasis of experiencing the divine encounter in the entire worship is also a point of convergence for all traditions, even though some understand it as an indirect encounter and others as a direct one. It is essentially another way of describing the *koinonia* reflected in *TCTCV*.¹⁶

Fourth, the immediacy described above is sometimes perceived as being in tension with Tradition. As the Lutheran–Pentecostal bilateral dialogue observes, most Pentecostals “tend not to place much value upon either history or Tradition as it came to be expressed through concepts such as apostolic succession or in creedal formulations, but rather they value the place of immediacy, experience, and the spontaneous reality of divine intervention in their lives.”¹⁷ This seeming tension, however, can be bridged if seen from the perspective of other churches that see Tradition and immediacy as not mutually exclusive. The Reformation principle *ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda* is a good example of this, as it depicts a dynamic and not static approach to Tradition. In fact, some leading Orthodox theologians have interpreted this exact principle as “a Protestant way of understanding Tradition”¹⁸ and its dynamic nature. When Tradition is understood in a dynamic way, the possibility of immediacy is not considered as opposite but fully compatible with it. As Robeck observes, a spirituality of encounter moves life in the Spirit from something confessed (in scripture or Tradition) to something experienced or lived,¹⁹ hence bridging the two.

Fifth, Pentecostal ecclesiology is essentially one of a community gathered in the Spirit. Distinctive from a Protestant ecclesiology of the word of God, or a Catholic ecclesiology of the eucharist, “a distinctively Pentecostal ecclesiology revolves around a community gathered in the Spirit. Because it is a community gathered by the Spirit, it is essentially dynamic and charismatic, with an active, participatory laity.”²⁰ Interestingly, this approach has significant overlap with the Orthodox understanding of the Spirit being constitutive of the church.

While the above places a focus on some specific church traditions, all of these lead to a common convergence: as a communion of encounter, the church

16. “In the liturgy, the people of God experience communion with God and fellowship with Christians of all times and places” (*TCTCV*, §67).

17. *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, §32, 37.

18. John Meyendorff, “Η σημασία της Μεταρρύθμισης στην ιστορία της Χριστιανοσύνης,” *Σύναξη* 51 (1994), 19–20. See also N. Nissiotis, “Ο εορτασμός της 450ής επετείου της Μεταρρυθμίσεως της Γενεύης. Μια ορθόδοξη αποτίμηση του γεγονότος αυτού,” *Επίσκεψις* 357 (1986), 11–12.

19. Robeck, “An Introduction to Pentecostal Identity,” 305.

20. Haight, *Christian Community in History*, 466. Here he draws from Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 77–78.

is a communion of sanctification.²¹ The divine–human encounter experienced in it leads to a profound transformation of the believers through the Holy Spirit²²; hence, spirituality can be understood as a life characterized by the fruit of the Holy Spirit.²³

As the Roman Catholic–Pentecostal dialogue points out,

God reveals Himself in a personal and life-transforming way to the believer. The result is that the believer is empowered by the Holy Spirit, and becomes aware in a new and powerful way, of the presence of the risen and glorified Christ (cf. John 16:14). This encounter enables the believer to become a stronger witness for Christ (Acts 1:8) and to experience a deeper dimension of prayer and worship (1 Cor. 12-14).²⁴

The Holy Spirit as “the Lord, the giver of life,” breathes in the believers a new life and nurtures them as they study God’s word, as they pray, as they have communion with their brothers and sisters in Christ, as they partake in the sacraments, as they serve, and as they give witness to the triune God.

The Role and Ministry of the Laity

The transformed people of God are called to be an active community where everyone participates in worship, discernment, and ministry, as the priesthood of all believers entails the ministry of all believers.²⁵ This concept of ministry of all believers is, of course, not antithetical to that of ordained ministry: the two

21. See the famous quote from St. Gregory Palamas, who characterized the church as a “communion of deification” (*Λόγος αποδεικτικός* 2, 78, in *Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά, Συγγράμματα*, Vol. 1, ed. Panagiotis Chrestou [Thessaloniki, 1962], 149).

22. Robeck, “An Introduction to Pentecostal Identity,” 305.

23. Martzelos, “Ecclesiology, Pneumatology and Spirituality in the Orthodox Tradition,” 292.

24. “On Becoming a Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings with Some Contemporary Reflections—The Report from the Fifth Phase of the International Dialogue between Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders and the Catholic Church (1998–2006),” §207.

25. See Lausanne Movement, *The Manila Manifesto*, §6, <https://lausanne.org/content/manifesto/the-manila-manifesto>.

are mutually complementary.²⁶

By virtue of their baptism, all the faithful share in Christ's royal priesthood and become the presence of Christ in the world (*TCTCV*, §41). "This local community gathers together, praises God, offers prayers on behalf of all, experiences God's presence, then goes forth to bring that presence out into the world."²⁷

As Meyendorff points out, every baptized Christian is a sign of God's presence in the world; this is "affirmed by scripture, realized in the liturgy, and it must be lived out in the world." Thus, every Christian is called to this priestly, mediatory task: to visit the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help the poor, and reflect God's love everywhere. Meyendorff also underlines that this task does not only belong to ordained clergy but to all believers (even ordained ministers who do them do so not by virtue of their ordination but because they are themselves baptized Christians, members of the priestly, royal people of God).²⁸

The importance of the role of laity in Orthodox theology is also reflected in the theology of Zizioulas, who talks about the four orders of ministry (bishop, presbyters, deacons, and laity), which are evidenced with St Ignatius and which "became the indispensable ministries of the church in her relation *ad intra*."²⁹ According to Zizioulas, the people of God are "that order of the church which was constituted by virtue of the rite of initiation (baptism-chrismation) and considered the *sine qua non* condition for the eucharistic community to exist and to express the church's unity."³⁰

Therefore, the fact that *TCTCV* speaks only about ordained ministry and not the ministry of all believers is a major omission. After all, as Meyendorff also observes, *leitourgia* literally means "common work," not just work of the clergy.³¹ This need for a more robust view of the ministry of all believers does not arise

26. The Reformed–Pentecostal bilateral dialogue underlines that the "decentralization" of ministry and the participation of all believers must be understood alongside the ministry of ordained ministers ("Word and Spirit, Church and World," §25) and hence not as competitive to it.

27. Faith and Order Commission, *What Are the Churches Saying about the Church? Key Findings and Proposals from the Responses to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 236 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), §42.

28. Paul Meyendorff, "The Priesthood of the Laity," in *Christ at Work: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Vocation*, ed. A. Bezzerides (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006), 227.

29. John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997; orig. 1985), 221.

30. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 152–53.

31. Meyendorff, "The Priesthood of the Laity," 225.

only from Orthodox theology, but also from Roman Catholic theology, which has a high view of laity,³² as well as from Protestant theology, which has always emphasized the implications of the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

Interestingly, the baptismal presuppositions of this doctrine are not always clearly articulated in Protestant theology. Although Protestant churches agree that baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit are foundational in Christian life, they do not always unpack all their presuppositions and implications for the understanding of unity and mission.

For example, usually evangelicals and Pentecostals tend to focus on invisible unity: the unity based on the common identity of Christians as children of God, the common salvation offered by Jesus Christ to all who believe in him,³³ and the spiritual unity they share through their incorporation in the body of Christ “by faith alone”—a faith by which all share in the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2).³⁴

While evangelicals and Pentecostals do not use explicitly baptismal terms to describe this spiritual unity, what they essentially describe is unity by virtue of their common baptism in the Spirit (which, in most evangelical churches, is considered as synonymous with regeneration). Hence, their emphasis on the invisible spiritual baptism is accompanied by an emphasis on invisible spiritual unity.

This does not mean they do not value visible unity, but they understand it differently: not as a synonym of sacramental or institutional unity but as missional cooperation. As the prominent evangelical document *The Cape Town Commitment* states, “while we recognize that our deepest unity is spiritual, we long for greater recognition of the missional power of visible, practical, earthly

32. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, is a significant expression of this, as it underlines (§12) that the whole church, the whole people of God, is filled with the Holy Spirit and shares in the prophetic office of Christ.

33. Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment*, §I.8, <https://lausanne.org/content/ctcommitment>.

34. While commenting on the bilateral dialogues of the Roman Catholic Church with the World Evangelical Alliance on this issue, Petrosyan correctly points out that Christ also willed “the founding of visible churches into which people are incorporated by (water) baptism” (Tiran Petrosyan, “Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on the International Bilateral Dialogues of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 [Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023], 52).

unity.”³⁵ Nevertheless, such an understanding of visible unity still does not address the roots of division; it just takes a detour to avoid them. For this reason, the emphasis for further missional cooperation needs to be considered as complementary to (and equally needed with) visible ecclesial unity. After all, this is exactly the mysterious beauty of ecumenism: the realization of a pilgrimage where one can feel the invisible spiritual unity one shares with fellow pilgrims while at the same time working to figure out how this can be connected to the visible eucharistic unity towards which they are in pilgrimage.

Authority and Discernment

The relationship between pneumatology, ecclesiology, and authority is a major issue. In one sense, all authoritative decisions need to rely upon the Spirit’s guidance: whoever can claim that they are being guided by the Holy Spirit can claim authority over their own position or decision. The declaration of the apostolic synod of Jerusalem that “it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28) is a typical example of the connection between Spirit and authority.

Here, though, lies one major challenge: What happens when everyone claims to be speaking by the authority of the Spirit? Some connect the Spirit with councils, others with reading the Bible, and still others with personal experience. How can one discern what is true? Authority and discernment are therefore closely related to each other. How can someone understand the leading of the Spirit, especially since the Spirit blows where it wills? (John 3:8).

TCTCV calls this guiding of the Spirit “the living Tradition.” It affirms that scripture is normative and that the Holy Spirit still guides the members of the church (§11–12). This then provides an interesting comparison to the position Pentecostals take on this issue in their bilateral dialogues, where they affirm that

35. *The Cape Town Commitment*, §IIF.1. The same approach is central in all three foundational statements of the Lausanne Movement, including *The Lausanne Covenant* (<https://lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>), §7 and Conclusion; *The Manila Manifesto*, §9; and the Conclusion of *The Cape Town Commitment*. Pentecostals echo this approach (“Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §128); at the same time, they also express some skepticism about the extent to which some forms of visible unity (including regional judicatories or denominations) enable relationships among congregations (“Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §136).

“the Spirit of God continues to speak in and through the Church” today.³⁶

There is, however, a major point of divergence as well. In *TCTCV*, a significant part of chapter 3 focuses on the role of ministry (ordained ministry, threefold ministry, and oversight) and, by implication, of authority in the church. Although many bilateral dialogues in which Pentecostals participate do have some references to these topics, many of them do not examine the role of ministry by itself but in reference to the understanding of the leading of the Spirit and of the process of discernment. In other words, from a Pentecostal viewpoint, the topic of the leading of the Spirit is not just a subset of pneumatology but also (and primarily) a subset of ecclesiology and of the broader discussion on the sources of authority.³⁷

Pentecostals also extend the call to discernment not only to every believer, but also to each congregation and to the whole church,³⁸ thereby acknowledging both the individual and communal dimensions in the search for the leading of the Spirit.³⁹ Hence, the church is described as “the community of the Holy Spirit’s leading” and “the community of the Spirit’s gifts.”⁴⁰

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The body of Christ has members with various gifts of the Holy Spirit: as Martzelos observes, “the variety of gifts that adorn the members of this body . . . constitutes a basic and necessary condition for the achievement of a functional communion and relationship among them, in order to build and safeguard the charismatic unity of this body.”⁴¹ Through the variety of the gifts, the Spirit creatively contributes to the institutional organization of the church—and so institutions and gifts are not considered as antithetical but as “the fruit of the

36. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §35; “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §103. Echoing a classical evangelical view, *The Lausanne Covenant* also affirms these same ideas, while at the same time focusing particularly on scripture as the way through which the Spirit leads the church (§2).

37. Boukis, “Ecclesiological Insights into *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* Based on the International Bilateral Dialogues of Pentecostals with Reformed and Lutheran Churches,” 34.

38. “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §106.

39. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §26; “Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §107.

40. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §36.

41. Martzelos, “Ecclesiology, Pneumatology and Spirituality in the Orthodox Tradition,” 288.

active presence and energy of the Holy Spirit.”⁴²

While all Christian traditions confess the important role of gifts in the life of the church, over the last century the Pentecostal movement has emphasized that it is not just “one” aspect of the church but even one of its marks. As the Reformed–Pentecostal dialogue puts it, Pentecostals “tend to identify the faithful Church as the community where Jesus Christ is lifted up, the Word of God is preached and obeyed, and where the Spirit’s gifts are manifested in the lives of believers.”⁴³ This ecclesiology of “word and gifts” reflects the profound centrality that gifts have in Pentecostal ecclesiology.

While all Christian traditions agree on the importance of spiritual gifts such as teaching, exhortation, and leadership, the same is not the case on the use and role of the so-called miraculous gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. From a Pentecostal viewpoint, spiritual gifts such as healing, prophesying, casting out demons, speaking in tongues, and other charismata enrich the lives of persons and the life of the community of faith and are signs that God is with God’s people and that his power is revealed through such manifestations of grace.⁴⁴ It is exactly the use of these gifts, however, that has become a controversial issue between churches.

The issue of the continuity of these gifts is not a “Pentecostal” disagreement (as is often perceived) but rather a “Protestant” disagreement, since, apart from non-charismatic Protestants, the majority of Christians (including Catholics, Pentecostals, Orthodox, and, to a certain extent, charismatic Protestants) do acknowledge the continuity of (most of) these gifts today, even if they do not fully agree on their content and function.

There are, however, at least four major issues at the heart of the controversy over these gifts, which raise broader challenges: the role of authority, discernment, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the possibility of the miraculous.

Authority is the most important challenge: whoever claims to have the Spirit (or speak by the power of the Spirit) essentially claims authority: thus, the way a church understands the role of gifts like apostleship or prophecy plays a major role in how these gifts relate—both to the institutional offices of ministry as well as to the authority of scripture (and Tradition). Some bilateral dialogues of Pentecostals have started building some convergence on this issue, but many

42. Martzelos, “Ecclesiology, Pneumatology and Spirituality in the Orthodox Tradition,” 289.

43. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §39.

44. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §51. See also *Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, §19–20.

aspects still need to be further explored.⁴⁵ Finding the correct balance between the charismatic and the institutional aspect of the church is a key challenge: not just for Pentecostal churches but for all Christian traditions, as it affects the entire sphere of church life, including issues of authority, decision making, worship, spirituality, and numerous other areas.

A second major challenge is that of discernment: even since the apostolic era, many problems related to the practice of miraculous gifts had their deeper roots in the lack of discernment: for example, it is astonishing that while the apostle Paul gives an extensive teaching on the spiritual gifts on 1 Corinthians, he is silent about them in 2 Corinthians, even though he is addressing the same charismatic people. This silence is astonishing. It should make us wonder whether the real problem in Corinth was not the gifts themselves but one other thing that is common in both epistles: the lack of discernment. The same people who wanted to discern prophecies in 1 Corinthians could not discern genuine teaching in 2 Corinthians and were prone to false teachers. People who could not discern biblical teaching (written revelation) wanted to discern the supernatural (oral revelation). People who did not have enough ability for “natural discernment” wanted to exercise spiritual discernment. Sadly, this lack of ability of discernment is still very present in many churches today. The same is true of the presence of super-apostles (2 Cor. 11:5) who were claiming that their “power” was a sign of their blessing, while the apostle Paul argued that God’s power is perfected in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

Thus, the existence of “super-apostles” (or contemporary superstar preachers) who promise prosperity and consider weakness as “lack of faith” is nothing new. Similarly, the tendency to believe fake teachings (or fake news) is diachronic in all ages—in fact, today we live in *the* most educated and informed era of human history and yet we keep realizing (in daily conversations, on social media, etc.) that common sense is not as common as we would think (or wish) it to be.

Here lies the heart of the problem: contemporary discussions on discernment assume (implicitly or explicitly) that the average person has the ability for “natural discernment” (common sense), which people also use to discern on

45. For example, in the Reformed–Pentecostal bilateral dialogue, Pentecostals agree that all prophetic gifts must always be discerned and that they are never allowed to compete with scripture (“Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §94). While this point certainly explains the superiority of scriptural revelation over any other form of revelation, it does not fully explore the further implications of how a doctrine of continuing revelation can be compatible with the classical Reformed doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* and how this plays out practically in the ecclesial and personal life. The same can be said about the question of what it means for a church to talk about the existence of apostles today.

practical issues in their daily lives. It is also assumed that the average Christian has the ability for spiritual discernment, as the Holy Spirit now dwells in him or her. The apostle Paul seems to assume in 1 Corinthians 6:4-5 that even the least in the church could discern—only to realize some time later that the lack of discernment in Corinth was going so horribly wrong that he had to write two other epistles to the Corinthians because they were not discerning the teachings of false apostles. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 6:4-5, Paul *seems* to be asking, “Isn’t everyone able to discern?” but the mere existence of 2 Corinthians seems to be answering, “Well, apparently not.”

Of course, the above do not mean that discernment is impossible and common sense is gone. What they suggest is that, when one reads 1 Corinthians in light of 2 Corinthians, one realizes that discernment (even in the New Testament era) has never been a “simple” task, performed in idealized situations where “everyone” (even alone, in an individualistic spirituality) can discern everything. It is exactly the realization of our human limitations that allows us to read passages like 1 Corinthians 6:4-5 not as universal standards (“everyone can discern correctly on his or her own”) but as a calling (“everyone should be able to discern”—just as in other passages there is the calling that everyone should live a holy life, without that meaning that the believer who lives a holy life will be perfectly holy and sinless). It is exactly the realization of human nature and sin that helps us see the above verses in perspective: not as something that exists *de facto* in every believer but as something to which every believer is called, and exactly because nobody can discern perfectly, everyone needs one another. Hence, the communal and institutional dimension of discernment are key and must be perceived not as antithetical but as inextricably and vitally connected to the individual and charismatic dimension of it.

A third major challenge is the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an experience linked with some form of external “evidence”⁴⁶—most frequently, speaking in tongues.⁴⁷ While Pentecostals agree that “no single gift or set of gifts

46. From a Pentecostal viewpoint, the purpose of this evidence is “to provide the power necessary for Christians to be the compelling witnesses that Jesus had predicted in Acts 1:8” (*Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, §35). This empowerment “includes divine calling, equipping, commissioning, and the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit throughout mission” (“Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §66).

47. While *TCTCV* makes multiple references to baptism in water, it only indirectly addresses baptism in the Spirit (the term itself does not appear at all, and it is only implied in §41). This is obviously a major omission from a Pentecostal perspective, as for Pentecostals, the Spirit baptism is a key moment, after which “a believer may expect the flowering of spiritual gifts of a variety of kinds, such as tongues, healing, words of wisdom, and prophecy” (*Lutherans and Pentecostals Together*, §19).

is normative for every believer, every congregation or every church in every time, or place,⁴⁸ they also make a distinction between the *gift* of tongues (which is not for all Christians) and the *experience* of tongues, which all Christians not only *can* have, but also *should* have. The word “should” is exactly the heart of the challenge because it entails (or implies) that those who do not have this experience lack something. In recent years, some interesting solutions have been proposed, not least the idea that the “evidence” of Spirit baptism may not necessarily be only tongues but other spiritual gifts as well.⁴⁹ These broader understandings of Spirit baptism can be traced back as early as the writings of the founders of the Pentecostal movement, such as William Seymour. As Harvey Cox observes, there was a point where, in reaction to criticism of his ministry on racial grounds, Seymour began to think that “it was not tongue speaking but the dissolution of racial barriers that was the surest sign of the Spirit’s pentecostal presence and the approaching New Jerusalem.”⁵⁰ While, obviously, this statement must be read in context with the broader teaching of Seymour on Spirit baptism, it is still an interesting observation worth further exploration.

Now, such positions are indeed very helpful towards building convergences with other Christian traditions, as all Christians can agree that every believer has at least one spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:4-7). At the same time, such positions reveal a problem with the Pentecostal distinction between the *gift* of tongues and the *experience* of tongues: if tongues is a gift, not everyone will speak in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). The whole distinction of the experience of tongues obviously attempts to solve this problem (“not everyone can have the gift, but everyone can have the experience”), only to create another problem when one says that “it could also be another gift, not necessarily tongues” (using again the category of “gifts” while describing the “experience” which is “not a gift”). Thus, here lies a contradiction: Is it a gift or not? It cannot be a gift and “not a gift” at the same time. Either one will make the distinction of the experience of tongues and will stick to it, without connecting it to any gift (even to the gift of tongues), or one will essentially merge the two categories, saying that upon receiving the Holy Spirit, each believer has the experience of receiving at least one gift (any gift),

48. “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §54.

49. As Catholic theologian Killian McDonnell put it, speaking in tongues may be “preferred” but not the “normative” gift. See Killian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991).

50. Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 63. See also chapter 7 of this volume (102–104), where Gastón Espinosa unpacks this idea further.

arriving at where McDonnell, Seymour, and many others suggested.

Finally, the fourth challenge has to do with the possibility of the miraculous or the supernatural in each tradition. While usually this is one of the first points of divergence that is mentioned, the truth is that the previous three issues are much more foundational differences. The majority of Christians in the world (Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostals) have never stopped holding a worldview open to the miraculous; only a tiny minority rejects the miraculous as altogether impossible, and an increasing number of mainline and evangelical Protestants are adopting what could be described as “an open but cautious view.”⁵¹ Hence, the building of further convergence on this issue seems to be relatively more feasible in the long term than the previous three.⁵²

Mission as Vocation

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are to be used not only inside the church (to build up the church and each other) but also for the mission of the church to the world. As Haight observes, the role of the church in history is to make God present and known in the world, not only through the word and sacraments, but also through the Spirit in the lives of church members.⁵³ This observation is crucial, as it points out one broader common mistake: often, discussions on ecclesiology focus predominantly (or even exclusively) on the reality of the church as a gathered community and not also as a scattered community. This is partially understandable because it is in the gathered assembly where most of our differences come up. Yet, at the same time, this betrays the top-down approach to ecclesiology that often prevails (from the perspective of ministers) and is not complemented by a bottom-up approach (from the perspective of the faithful), which would be helpful not only for the sake of balance but above all for a more robust missiological approach.

To put it differently, in most churches, depending on the tradition, the

51. Robert L. Saucy, “An Open but Cautious View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, eds. Stanley Gundry and Wayne Grudem, Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 97-148.

52. Robeck helpfully underlines here that “knowledge is not limited solely to the realms of reason and sensory experience, but also through holistic engagement which recognizes the presence of the sacred throughout life”; he highlights the need for the church “to embrace a holistic worldview or understanding of life that speaks to the physical, psychological, spiritual, and material needs of people” (Robeck, “An Introduction to Pentecostal Identity,” 307).

53. Haight, *Christian Community in History*, 436.

faithful typically spend about one, two, or three hours per week together at church. Nevertheless, each week has 168 hours. This means that the time of gathered community represents about 1 percent of human life, while the time of scattered community represents 99 percent. Without a doubt, this 1 percent is the climax; the par excellence time where we expect an encounter with God. However, if the church cannot link this 1 percent with the 99 percent (and how the former transforms the latter), it will be simply “a spirituality of the 1 percent”: most believers will have no idea how their faith and their ecclesial identity transform their daily lives.

A helpful solution towards addressing this ecclesiological, spiritual, pastoral, and missiological challenge could be found in a spirituality of vocation. This spirituality flourished especially during the Reformation as an implication of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which entailed that by virtue of their royal priesthood, Christians cannot only pray directly *to* God, but can also work *for* God. And “working for God” no longer meant only working in a church or monastery; as Luther underlined, the breakdown of the sacred/secular divide meant that a Christian could work for God in every sphere of society, wherever God called him or her.

This understanding of vocation/calling is also found in the invitation of the apostle Paul: “let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you” (1 Cor. 7:17). This was further unpacked by various classical Protestant theologians, who argued that Christians had multiple vocations (in the family, the culture, the workplace, etc.); it is in these vocations where sanctification and discipleship happen.⁵⁴

Similarly, Calvin argued that each believer is summoned to a vocation⁵⁵ and thus, as evangelical theologian Alister McGrath points out, “mundane labour became an integral part of Calvin’s spirituality, lending a new meaning to the medieval monastic slogan *laborare est orare*, ‘to labour is to pray’ ... For the first time the ordinary everyday activity of even the most petty producer was given a religious significance.”⁵⁶ This whole spirituality of vocation, then, expressed a significant dimension of the Reformation principle *Soli Deo gloria*: the aim of Christian life was to glorify God alone in all spheres of society. This theology and

54. Gene Veith, “Vocation as the Christian Life,” *World Magazine* 25:17 (2010), <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/geneveith/2010/09/vocation-as-the-christian-life>.

55. See, for example, *Institutes* IV, xiii, 3.

56. Alister McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993), 233.

spirituality of vocation has since been further unpacked over the years.⁵⁷ One of the most important missiological implications of this doctrine is that mission is done not only through preaching the gospel and serving the society, but also by living out one's vocation in every sphere of society.

This spirituality of vocation is not confined to Protestantism but can be a point of ecumenical convergence. For example, the Roman Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council articulated a strong theology of vocation by declaring that all Christians are missionaries⁵⁸ through their active participation in the playing out of the church's mission: "For by its very nature the Christian vocation is also a vocation to the apostolate⁵⁹ ... the member who fails to make his or her proper contribution to the development of the church must be said to be useful neither to the church nor to himself."⁶⁰ This is particularly important, not least because it connects the concepts of vocation, ministry, mission, and laity all in one sentence.

Similarly, the Orthodox Church in the Holy and Great Council of Crete in 2016 articulated a similar idea, although in a different way: while the word "vocation" does not appear anywhere in the official document *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World*,⁶¹ the whole concept of vocation is clear in it: numerous references in the document stress the need for the church to work for justice and peace in economy (F3), politics (C4), ecology (F10), science (F11–12), and various other fields.

By situating these fields in the broader context of the mission of the church, the document essentially declares that the mission of the church is not confined

57. One of the most famous expressions of it is found in the writings of neo-Calvinist theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!" See James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 488.

58. Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes*, Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, §4, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

59. Roger Haight (*Christian Community in History*, 393) suggests that the term "apostolate" here should be considered as another word for "ministry."

60. Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, §2, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html.

61. The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, *The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World: The Contribution of the Orthodox Church in Realizing Peace, Justice, Freedom, Fraternity and Love between Peoples, and in the Removal of Racial and Other Discriminations*, Crete, 2016, <https://holycouncil.org/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world>.

to the “traditional” understanding of mission but also involves a holistic understanding that expands to the whole of human life. It also makes obvious that this missional work will not be accomplished by ordained clergy or “traditional” missionaries but through lay Christians who work in these fields, by following their calling to serve God’s mission in them. Thus, while this document generally talks about the mission of “the church” (without making an explicit link to how the mission of the church applies to the life and vocation of each believer), this connection is essentially done implicitly.

The above concepts tie in beautifully with those encountered in the consultations organized by the Faith and Order Commission in recent years. One interesting example is the workshop that the Commission organized during the 2018 CWME World Conference on Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania. The broader theme of the conference was “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship,” which in itself linked the pneumatological, ecclesiological, and missiological dimensions of discipleship. It was in this broader context that some African theologians elaborated further on this connection, noting that the concept of vocation has two dimensions: a primary one (each Christian is called to live as a disciple of Christ—hence the core mandate of the Christian vocation is discipleship)⁶² and a secondary one (vocation as “the call to follow Jesus in a specific way of life in a particular context”).⁶³ In this way, vocation and discipleship are essentially seen as absolutely interconnected, with one leading to and flowing from the other.

Discipleship is also connected to ministry: as all believers are disciples, they all need to be empowered for ministry (not in the sense of ministry office, but ministry function—what we are called to do as Christians). Under this viewpoint, the role of ordained ministers is not merely to preside during the worshipping assembly but also to train and mobilize disciples and equip and empower them

62. Christian Tsekpoe, “Discipleship and Ordained Ministry in the Church of Pentecost, Ghana,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 215–16.

63. Rufus Okikiola Olubiyi Ositelu, “Discipleship and Ordained Ministry in The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 211.

to do God's mission in their daily lives.⁶⁴

This approach to discipleship as building communities of ministers and being sensitive to the continuous work of the Spirit can then lead to a creative new approach to mission: instead of talking about “doing outreach,” it introduces an incarnational approach to evangelism and defines mission as “living here” and being a blessing to the people around us. This spirituality of mission as “living here” is what enables believers to live “ecclesiology in real life.”⁶⁵

Mission as Encounter

As can be understood from the preceding points, the spirituality of encounter does not inform only our view of the worshipping assembly, but also our view of mission. Because Christians have encountered the living Christ, they go out to the world so that the world can encounter the living Christ reflected in their lives. Transformed by the liturgy, Christians partake in the task of the “liturgy after the liturgy,” and just as they anticipated the presence, the manifestation, and the authority of the Holy Spirit in their midst when they were gathered, they can anticipate it when they are scattered and living out the priesthood and prophethood of all believers in the world.⁶⁶

Thus, the people of God, transformed by the Holy Spirit through their sanctification, and empowered by the Spirit's gifts to minister to the world, go out by the power of the Spirit to bring about a holistic mission in word and deed,

64. Jerry Pillay, “Discipleship and Ordained Ministry,” unpublished presentation from the workshop “Discipleship and Ordained Ministry,” WCC CWME World Conference on Mission and Evangelism (Arusha, Tanzania, 12 March 2018).

65. All the concepts of this paragraph are derived from Nicta Lubaale Makiika, “Discipleship and Ordained Ministry,” unpublished presentation from the workshop “Discipleship and Ordained Ministry,” WCC CWME World Conference on Mission and Evangelism (Arusha, Tanzania, 12 March 2018). Most concepts of that presentation can be found in Nicta Lubaale Makiika, “Walking with One Another in Mission: A Journey of African Independent Churches,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 227–35. This description of discipleship resembles in many ways the one found in bilateral dialogues of Pentecostals with the Reformed, where discipleship is described as “communal, centered in worship and expressed in Christian practice” (“Experience in Christian Faith and Life,” §49).

66. Robeck, “An Introduction to Pentecostal Identity,” 305.

proclamation and social engagement⁶⁷ and vocation. In this way, they follow Christ's calling to the church to bear witness to the whole world about reconciliation achieved by God the Holy Trinity, healing of one's body and soul, and newness in the Spirit of God.⁶⁸

In all these, the Holy Spirit is the principal agent in establishing the kingdom and in guiding the church so it can be a servant of God's work in this process⁶⁹ and a river from which life flows towards the nations by virtue of the Spirit's work in us.⁷⁰

Therefore, the church as a community of the people who are saved, sanctified, baptized in the Holy Spirit, healed, and servants of the kingdom serves its mission by proclaiming the good news, by working in the society, and by making disciples who live out their vocation in their daily lives. And as the Spirit leads them in their mission, the world can encounter the triune God in their lives and be inspired to join this community of worship, discipleship, and witness,⁷¹ be immersed in its *koinonia* with God and with each other, and abide in that community of encounter, enjoying God forever and carrying on the mission of reflecting this encounter to the world.

67. *TCTCV*, §59, 64. While *TCTCV* emphasizes the need for Christians to fight for justice and peace, the bilateral dialogue of Pentecostals–Reformed also raises the need to fight beyond the forces of evil and sin (“Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §77).

68. Jack Khalil, “Evangelism and Proselytism,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 190.

69. Pablo Andíañach, “*The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and the Mission of the Church: A Latin American Methodist Perspective,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 190.

70. Elizabeth Salazar-Sanzana, “Recognizing Us on the Road: Contributions of Pentecostalism on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 1, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 234 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 121.

71. See *TCTCV*, §2, with *The Manila Manifesto*, §8, *The Lausanne Covenant*, §11, and “Word and Spirit, Church and World,” §42.

APPENDICES

Resources on Ecumenical Dialogues of Pentecostals and Evangelicals

A Word on the Reports from the Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostals

On 7-21 February 1991, the World Council of Churches (WCC) convened its 7th Assembly, held in Canberra, Australia. The Rev. Emilio Castro, a Methodist minister from Uruguay, recognized the need for the churches to hear from the Holy Spirit about the way forward. With the recent opening of Eastern Europe, with greater freedom being granted to Orthodox churches, and with the enormous growth of Pentecostals in Latin America and elsewhere, Castro proposed that the WCC pray simply, “Come, Holy Spirit.” In the end, the central committee approved the longer title, “Come, Holy Spirit – Renew the Whole Creation,” fearing that the invocation might invite too much controversy.

The assembly heard considerable discussion on a greater need for discernment and the discerning of spirits. Among these discussions, a portion of Section III, “Spirit of Unity – Reconcile Your People,” reviewed the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. In the end, they made ten recommendations to the assembly.¹ Within one year, Huibert van Beek was asked to serve as program secretary of the Office of Church and Ecumenical Relations. He convened a number of consultations in Asia, Latin America, and Europe with the intent of bringing Pentecostals into a closer relationship with the WCC. One significant result of these consultations was the formation of the Joint Consultative Group (JCG), approved at the WCC’s 8th Assembly, held on 3-14 December 1998 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The JCG is a dialogue between various member churches of the WCC and representatives from various Pentecostal denominations around the world. In

1. Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report of the Seventh Assembly* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 107–108.

one sense, it is a bilateral dialogue between the WCC and Pentecostals, while at times, it acts as a multilateral discussion.

The following three reports completed and presented at the assemblies in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Busan, South Korea, and Karlsruhe, Germany, have not yet been published. While the first round, which ran from 2000 to 2005, set the larger agenda for what would follow, participants were free to choose the topics they addressed. During the second round, from 2007 to 2012, participants addressed issues of ecclesiology and reported their findings on the historic marks of the church. In the report of the third round, from 2016 to 2022, the JCG told of its journey together and turned its attention to *koinonia* – the church as a community of believers, sharing a common baptism, the common task of undertaking mission and making disciples.

While none of these documents made reference to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (which was published in 2013), they do offer insights into ecclesiology. In fact, with many participants from the global South and/or from Pentecostal churches participating in these dialogues, these reports offer interesting contributions towards a global vision of the church. Hence, the editors of this volume believe that these previously unpublished reports represent some constructive thinking from the JCG that is worthy of consideration by Faith and Order. We also hope they will find their way into the next volume of *Growth in Agreement*, published by WCC Publications.

Report of the Joint Consultative Group (WCC–Pentecostals), 2000–2005, to the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Porto Alegre, Brazil

Recommendations to the Assembly

We are grateful to those who over the years have encouraged and engaged in dialogue in order to seek the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ by working for the healing and reconciliation of all Christians. With regard to relationships between WCC [World Council of Churches] member churches and Pentecostal churches,¹ we would like to recognize the work of the churches and of groups such as the Christian World Communions, the Global Christian Forum, and Christian Churches Together (USA), to name a few, and commend them for their ongoing work. Yet, there are places in the world where dialogue is not taking place, and it is our hope to encourage the churches in those places to consider the value of these dialogues.

It is our hope that in the future, both the WCC member churches and

1. This language is consistent with the WCC Toronto statement of 1950. Cf. “The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches, WCC Central Committee, Toronto, 1950,” in Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope, eds., *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 463–68.

Pentecostal churches will strengthen their relationships by developing a genuine mutual interest in learning about and from one another.

1. We **recommend the continuation of the JCG** [Joint Consultative Group] with the goal of building relationships through ongoing theological conversations and studies (focusing on themes of the nature of the church, mission, understanding charismatic gifts, sacraments, and the nature of scripture, as well as others as they arise) with the hope of delving deeper into our respective theologies and the education of our respective constituencies. The JCG should also endeavour in its work to respond to and cooperate with WCC commissions (such as Faith and Order and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism) and other programmatic areas whenever possible.
2. We recommend the expansion of this type of dialogue in the following ways:
 - a. At the level of regional, sub-regional, and national councils of churches whose purpose could be similar to that of the JCG, namely, to build relationships through education and theological conversations. At each level, this dialogue could take place with the cooperation of the respective ecumenical bodies (i.e., the Regional Ecumenical Organizations [REOs]). The WCC should take an initiating role in this dialogue by contacting these councils of churches to encourage dialogue and cooperation and provide the names of members of the JCG in the region to act as resource persons who would be willing to share their experiences.
 - b. Through initiatives by individual members of the JCG, preferably through their respective ecclesial affiliations.
 - c. Through ongoing dialogues with the Christian World Communions (such as the bilateral theological consultations).
 - d. By engaging and cooperating in diaconal and practical work together through the various Christian development and aid organizations and Bible societies. We recognize that this work is already taking place in some regions.
 - e. Through dialogue within academic institutions via
 - i. consultations on Pentecostalism and ecumenism (which would include academics and denominational leaders);
 - ii. the exploration of ways to introduce the study of ecumenism into the training programmes of Pentecostal seminaries;
 - iii. the exploration of ways to introduce the study of Pentecostalism into the training programmes of ecumenical

- and denominational institutions of member churches; and
 - iv. publication of journals (whereby the work of Pentecostal scholars would be included in theological journals, and Pentecostals would continue the development of their own ecumenical journals) and websites with the purpose of advancing theological studies and educating all constituencies.
3. We **recommend to Pentecostal churches** that they
- a. foster intra-Pentecostal dialogues (specifically a North/South dialogue);
 - b. encourage dialogue with WCC member churches at local and national levels; and
 - c. encourage dialogue between Pentecostal churches who are members of the WCC and who are not members of the WCC.
4. We **recommend that the WCC and its member churches**
- a. plan consultations on Pentecostalism and related themes and include Pentecostals in the participation and planning of these consultations as part of their programmatic work;
 - b. build relationships with Pentecostal churches at local and national levels; and
 - c. enable more Pentecostals to become members of the commissions and advisory groups of the WCC and take a greater part in its programmatic work.

Introduction

The JCG was created on the basis of the following decision of the WCC assembly in Harare:

The eighth assembly approved the proposal of the February 1998 executive committee to form a WCC-Pentecostal joint working group and asked the central committee to monitor the process.

On the basis of consultation between the WCC and Pentecostals since the seventh assembly, the assembly recommended that some of the tasks of this joint working group be:

- a. consolidating existing relations and broadening the range of WCC and Pentecostal constituencies involved;
- b. initiating studies and exchange on issues of common interest,

- including controversial issues;
- c. exploring forms of participation in the spirit of the CUV document² which are not primarily based on formal membership in the WCC;
- d. encouraging REOs and NCCs [National Councils of Churches] to explore possible ways and forms of collaboration.

In making this recommendation, the eighth assembly recognised the important contribution of Pentecostal churches currently members of the World Council of Churches.³

On the basis of the assembly's decision, the central committee, in its meeting in Geneva in 1999, appointed the members of the JCG. Rev. Dr Bruce Robbins was appointed as co-chair from the WCC side, and the Rev. Dr Cecil M. Robeck Jr was appointed as co-chair from Pentecostal side. The JCG was accompanied from the WCC staff side by Hubert van Beek, Church and Ecumenical Relations (CER), until his retirement (Johannesburg meeting), and then by Jacques Matthey.

At the February 2005 central committee meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland, the committee received an interim report from the JCG and adopted the following recommendations:

The Committee recommends that the JCG present its official report for the Assembly to the Executive Committee meeting in September 2005.

The Committee recommends the continuation of the JCG and endorses its goal to build relationships between the Pentecostals and member churches of the WCC. The Committee commends the directions for the conversation suggested, including the themes of the nature of the church, mission, understanding charismatic gifts, sacraments, and nature of Scripture.

The Committee recommends that the Assembly Planning Committee (APC) find ways to enable Pentecostals to participate in the WCC Assembly in 2006.

2. "Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches: A Working Draft for a Policy Statement" (Geneva: World Council of Churches, November 1996).

3. Diane Kessler, ed., *Together on the Way* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999), 168.

The JCG appreciates the affirmation of the central committee and carries its own recommendations to the assembly as contained within this report.⁴

Response to the Harare Recommendations

The assembly in Harare had high expectations of the WCC–Pentecostal dialogue, as is reflected in its recommendation. The Joint Consultative Group asks for some understanding that it could not deal at once with the entire depth and width of the agenda it was given. Patience is necessary, so that the dialogue may be fruitful.

a) The JCG has gone through an intensive process of building relations between its members, all of whom have consistently reported back to their churches and constituencies. Following each meeting, interim reports have been shared with the WCC central and executive committees, which has allowed for regular information and involvement of the members of these governing bodies. By virtue of its existence, and the work it has been able to achieve, the JCG has demonstrated that a dialogue between the WCC and Pentecostals is timely and potentially promising. The JCG has thus fulfilled to some degree its first task, of “consolidating existing relations and broadening the range of WCC and Pentecostal constituencies involved.”

Pentecostal team members have provided regular reports on the activities of the JCG in various ways and at different levels. Many have reported directly to the heads of their denominations. Others have reported to their academic societies or educational institutions. This has resulted in a growing openness to receiving the work of the JCG by a number of Pentecostal churches.

b) The JCG has undertaken and pursued a discussion on the issue of unity, especially during its meetings in 2002, 2003, and 2004. It has done so on the basis of Bible studies, presented by members of the group, which provided the input for the reflection of the day. It has developed methodologies for its meetings, which could be adopted by other groups engaging Pentecostals and WCC members. The group has been able to deal openly, and in a constructive spirit, with controversial issues, both those emerging in the discussions on unity and those confronted in conversations on misconceptions and prejudices on both sides. The JCG has thus responded to some extent to its second task, of “initiating studies and exchange on issues of common interest, including controversial issues.”

c) The JCG has discussed on various occasions the issue of participation of

4. Cf. pages 341-43 of this report.

Pentecostals in the life and work of the WCC. It has made two specific recommendations: to Faith and Order on involvement of Pentecostal theologians in the Plenary Commission, 2004; and to the central committee on participation of Pentecostals in the 9th Assembly. However, the JCG has not had the time and was not well equipped to engage in a systematic reflection on its third task, of “exploring forms of participation in the spirit of the CUV document which are not primarily based on formal membership in the WCC.”

d) The JCG has not been able to deal with its fourth task, of “encouraging REOs and NCCs to explore possible ways and forms of collaboration.”

In responding to the recommendation of the 8th Assembly, the JCG recognizes the important contribution to its work of its members representing Pentecostal member churches of the WCC.

The WCC and Pentecostals

1948–1998: A Bird’s-eye View

The World Council of Churches was founded in 1948 by historic Protestant churches, the Anglican churches, and several Orthodox churches. Delegates from 147 churches primarily from Europe and North America attended the first assembly, and there were no Pentecostal churches present at that meeting. It was not until 1961 when the majority of the Orthodox churches joined, and a large number of churches from what was then called the Third World. Many of these had grown out of Protestant and Anglican missionary work, but there were also two autochthonous Pentecostal churches from Chile: the Pentecostal Church of Chile and the Pentecostal Mission Church. They were the first, and their decision to apply for WCC membership was remarkable, because by that time the leadership of the classical Pentecostal denominations in North America and Europe had taken its distance from the ecumenical movement. Over the years, a few more followed their example: one other church from Chile, two from Argentina, one from the USA (which no longer exists), one from Angola, one from Kenya. Their presence in the WCC is very significant. On the other hand, their number and size are tiny compared with the several hundreds of Pentecostal denominations today in the world, and their hundreds of millions of members. One large Pentecostal church from Brazil did join the WCC in 1969, and it looked [for] a moment that a breakthrough was going to happen. But it had no impact on others, and the church withdrew again after a few years, following the untimely death of its founder.

The WCC, now composed of over 340 member churches of all the main

Christian traditions except the Catholic Church, is “a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures.” It understands itself as an instrument of the churches. One of its first foundational documents, the so-called Toronto Statement, adopted in 1950, states explicitly that the WCC is not, and does not intend to be, a super church. It has no authority over the churches. Another of its basic principles, called the Lund principle, is that the member churches commit themselves to do together all that in their own understanding of being church they can do together—and respect each other in all other things. As the WCC was approaching its 50th anniversary in 1998, it reflected once again on its vision and understanding, and affirmed its fundamental calling to be a fellowship of churches, praying, sharing, and acting together, bearing one another’s burdens, and seeking the unity that their Lord Jesus Christ prayed for—so that the world may believe. On that occasion, the WCC also stated that the fellowship was not complete as long as the Catholic Church on the one hand, and the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches on the other hand, were not part of it.

For many years, the relationship with Pentecostal (and Evangelical) churches outside its membership was not high on the agenda of the WCC. There were no compelling reasons. Its basic policy was—and still is—to welcome churches that apply, but not to go out and win them for membership. The council was growing, it was affirming its place as the main worldwide church body among the non-Catholic traditions, it was strongly supported by its member churches and fully occupied with its programmes and activities. In addition, in the ideologically divided world of the Cold War, the official statements of the WCC and the teachings of the Pentecostal churches expressed very different, if not opposite, theological and political perspectives. For the WCC, Pentecostals were part of the conservative Evangelical movement, with which a dialogue was hardly possible, and, in the eyes of many, useless. There were some contacts. The WCC and the Assemblies of God often worked together behind the scenes in post-war Europe, especially in the relocation of refugees, and in aid programmes for those left homeless, and without adequate places of worship. Beginning in 1961 this relationship changed, in part due to the pressure coming from various Evangelical leaders and organizations. As a result, the Assemblies of God adopted an anti-ecumenical policy directed at the WCC. Other Pentecostal churches affiliated with the Pentecostal World Conference soon joined the Assemblies of God in an act of solidarity.

Later on, some conversations took place with international organizations like the World Evangelical Fellowship (now Alliance) and the Lausanne Committee, especially after the assembly in Nairobi in 1975. Pentecostal leader

David du Plessis was at the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952 and attended all the WCC Assemblies from Evanston (1954) to Vancouver (1983). From 1978 to 1983, the WCC sub-unit on Renewal and Congregational Life organized a dialogue with charismatics of which the high point was a consultation at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in 1980. But none of these conversations led to a sustained effort of overcoming the prejudices and establishing relationships between the WCC and Pentecostals.

In 1991, the WCC held its assembly at Canberra with, for the first time, a pneumatological theme: “Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation.” This was also the time when some awareness began to emerge in WCC circles of the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism, especially in Latin America. Obviously, the assembly could not study a Spirit theme without taking into account this reality of the Pentecostal churches. The issue was entrusted to the section of Faith and Order, in which Pentecostal theologian Cecil M. Robeck Jr participated. With his help, a number of recommendations were formulated, aiming at dialogue, study, and Pentecostal involvement in the WCC, which were approved in plenary.⁵ The same assembly also approved the creation of an Office of Church and Ecumenical Relations (CER). In the distribution of work after the assembly, the responsibility for building relationships with Pentecostals was given to this office. CER organized a series of consultations with Pentecostals and representatives of WCC member churches, in several parts of the world, from 1994 to 1997. Some of this was building on earlier work done from 1988 onward by the Latin America desk of the WCC, especially with indigenous Pentecostal churches in Latin America. The CER office also developed relations with Pentecostal churches through visits, invitations, and other opportunities.

It should also be noted that since 1989, there has been Pentecostal representation from outside the membership of the WCC on the Plenary Commission of Faith and Order and, more recently, on its standing commission, in a consultative capacity.

The fruits of these various efforts were brought together at a meeting between the WCC and Pentecostals, in November 1997, at Bossey. This was also the last of the series of small consultations, and it was attended by the WCC general secretary. It was this group which, unanimously, formulated the proposal for a joint working (later: consultative) group between the WCC and Pentecostals, to be submitted to the 1998 assembly. In the ensuing months, the WCC

5. See Report of Section III, “Spirit of Unity – Reconcile your People,” in Michael Kinnamon, ed., *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report, Seventh Assembly* (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 96–111, in particular 107–108.

governing bodies gave their agreement, and the 8th Assembly of the WCC at Harare in December 1998 officially approved the formation of the Joint Consultative Group.

Criticisms and Prejudices

From the side of Pentecostals outside WCC membership, the main criticisms include a) that among WCC member churches there are those which deny certain historic doctrines; b) that it has replaced concerns for evangelization and mission with the work of social concern, and c) the fear that the ecumenical movement might become an instrument of the Antichrist.

As already noted, one of the strong objections in the WCC is that Pentecostals are conservative, if not fundamentalist. Some churches go as far as to consider Pentecostal groups to be “sects.” Another frequently heard accusation, particularly after the political changes in Central and Eastern Europe, is proselytism. More generally speaking, Pentecostal churches are perceived as divisive, fragmented, underdeveloped in terms of theology and ecclesiology, only interested in church planting and winning souls, and above all, anti-ecumenical.

The dialogue process that has been set in motion has not done away with these criticisms and prejudices. But as far as the WCC is concerned, it has had the effect that the issue is more often on the agenda, through the procedures of reporting and decision making. On the one hand, this has meant that the negative voices speak more loudly and frequently. On the other hand, it offers opportunities for explanation, learning, and correcting misconceptions, which did not exist before. Positively, there is a growing recognition that the sheer number of Pentecostals, and their vitality, does not allow the WCC to ignore them any longer. Another factor which has contributed to more openness is the impact of Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement on the life of many churches. In some parts of the world, Pentecostal churches and WCC member churches are coming together more closely, e.g., Korea, South Africa. Altogether, a “space” has been created for a more serious engagement between the WCC and Pentecostals.

The Experience of Pentecostal Member Churches

For the Pentecostal member churches of the WCC, the experience of journeying with other sister churches has been a witness of faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and also a common witness of unity so that the world may believe (John 17:21), a witness emphasizing unity in diversity. It has enabled these

churches to join in fellowship with other churches, peoples, and nations in response to the challenge to unite efforts and talents in the search to overcome social, racial, economic, gender, and religious differences. The journey together has been an experience of overcoming prejudices and opening up to what is new, of being available on a basis of equality, confronting challenges in common, and allowing [participants] to be guided by the Holy Spirit. It has also made it possible to be exposed to what is unfamiliar and different, engage in conversations without prejudice, grow closer to one another and accept one another, as well as to join hands in diaconal work.

On the one hand, the ecumenical experience has fostered a widening of the intellectual and spiritual horizon of the Pentecostal member churches. It has enriched these churches, helping them to realize that Christianity is much wider than their Pentecostal tradition. On the other hand, much progress is still to be made with regard to their participation in the working structures of the WCC, which has been small up to now. In this respect, the Pentecostal churches associated with the WCC regret that they are not always acknowledged on an equal level with the other member churches and that Pentecostal participation is still rather poor. However, they trust that through specific efforts and responses to common challenges, this situation can be reversed, for the sake of greater equality, Christian commitment, and the ecumenical calling.

The Pentecostal member churches in the WCC regret the absence of their Pentecostal sister churches who are not part of this fellowship and would like them to join in the ecumenical journey.

Description of Journey and Process

First Meeting in Hautecombe (2000)

The first meeting of the Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostals took place on 19–23 June 2000, at the Abbey of Hautecombe, France, under the leadership of the two co-moderators, Rev. Dr Bruce Robbins and Rev. Dr Cecil M. Robeck Jr.

Team building was an important part of this first meeting. The members shared with each other their personal stories and spoke about their churches and their countries. Time was also taken for Bible studies, introductions to Pentecostalism, the ecumenical movement, and the history of relationships between the WCC and Pentecostals. Following these, the group focused its attention on understanding its task, on issues it would want to deal with during the time of

its mandate, on methodologies, and on the planning for the next few years.

The JCG adopted the following purpose:

Seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in response to the invitation of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, we have come together. We believe the purposes of our group are:

to search for better ways of understanding one another;
to look for new opportunities for mutual learning and action;
to share our experience of Christian witness with one another;
to discuss our challenges with the hope of moving beyond
them;

to share what we will learn with our respective churches,

leading to our affirmation of the common life in the Spirit.

“Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ”
(Ephesians 5:19-20).

Several suggestions were made regarding ways in which the group could do its work. Besides the academic method of preparing and reading papers for discussion which is used in many dialogues, other forms of dealing with issues were proposed, such as narrative, oral theology in a setting of prayer and celebration, workshops, small groups, etc. Bible studies provided a context of exchange and discussion. Creative ways of reporting would be essential in order to share the findings and experiences of the group as widely as possible.

Second Meeting in Quito (2001)

The members of the group gathered for their second meeting at the Seminario Sudamericano, a seminary of the Church of God (Cleveland) in Quito (Ecuador), to continue a journey of coming to know each other. The context of Latin America and time with the Pentecostal host community deepened and challenged the encounter because of the dynamic life of the church in that place. The theme was “Perceptions of One Another.” The members discussed their concerns and views of one another through presentations and through

reflection on a variety of topics. Additionally, the group worshipped and studied the Bible together. The members also learned of the work of churches throughout Latin America. They visited the Latin American Council of Churches (Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias [CLAI]). They participated in an educational meeting at an Assemblies of God Seminary, and they had many informal contacts with the seminary communities they visited.

The presentations and the discussions about the theme demonstrated the work that needs to be done among all the participants, their churches, and the organizations from which they come. Participants need to learn about each other, challenge each other's perceptions and prejudices, and listen and learn through the encounter. They listed the misconceptions about each other from both sides and discussed these thoroughly.

This meeting was characterized by long theological and sometimes emotional and painful debates concerning theology and ecclesiology. Questions arose, such as: "Is Pentecostalism fulfilling the function of 'an addition to and/or correction of' the existing traditional theologies; or is it a new theology with its own structure and overview of theological problems?" and "How do the Pentecostal churches reconcile the process of institutionalization with the emphasis on the move and work of the Spirit?" On the other side, the Pentecostal members conveyed that they noticed "a lack of recognition of the Pentecostal narrative tradition as a legitimate theological method upon which we can base our theological reflection" and "a lack of awareness about the vast diversity of sociological and cultural background present within the Pentecostal movement and its impact on the process of formation of Pentecostal theology."

The members discussed also the themes "mission and evangelism" (with the special focus on healing, proselytism, and the dialogue with non-Christian religions) and "spirituality and worship" (e.g., about informality and spontaneity, the place of the Eucharist, contextualization of worship).

Third Meeting in Seoul (2002)

The participants gathered for their third meeting in the Kwang Lim Methodist Retreat Center, north of Seoul, Korea. The theme of the meeting was "The Unity of the Church." The theme was introduced from a Pentecostal perspective and from a WCC perspective. Following these presentations and discussion in plenary, the two teams (i.e., the WCC team—representatives from WCC member churches, which included Pentecostal churches; and the Pentecostal team—representatives from Pentecostal churches which are not WCC members) met separately to formulate questions to each other. The questions

were shared in plenary and subsequently discussed in the two teams with the purpose of drawing up some initial answers. This was followed by another round in plenary to present the answers and engage in further dialogue. It was the first time the group used such a methodology.

Examples of questions posed to each other were (from the WCC side): How do the Pentecostal churches understand and live out the marks of oneness and catholicity of the churches? How does Pentecostalism understand its own unity, locally, nationally, or internationally? What changes in the life and work of the WCC churches would be helpful for the Pentecostal churches to come closer to the WCC churches? And from the Pentecostal side: How different are the concepts of unity between the WCC member churches? Are these differences greater than with the Pentecostals? And: According to the Toronto statement (1950), the WCC cannot decide for the member churches on matters of doctrine or ecclesiology.

The venue provided an opportunity for exposure to Pentecostalism in Korea and to learn about the life of the churches in that country. The members of the group attended worship at the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, pastored by the Rev. David Yonggi Cho, which is the largest congregation in the world and is part of the Korean Assemblies of God (KAG). They also participated in a theological symposium held at another KAG church in Seoul. The Korean Assemblies of God was willing to organize and host a meeting in which their ecumenical concerns could be voiced in the name of “Ecumenicals and Pentecostals.”

Bible studies were held throughout the week of meetings to maintain a grounding in scripture for all of the sessions. The Epistle to the Ephesians was chosen as the subject for the study since it related well to the overall theme of unity. Reflections focused on the interaction of the Bible with participants’ lives as well as close exegetical study of particular passages within their own historical context. They also provided a way for the members to come to know one another better and have a glimpse of how scripture and its study is used within the various traditions represented around the table.

The group discussed the meaning of some of the challenges of the churches in an attempt to discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches. The comments focused in particular on the numerical growth in some of the “younger” churches and the decline in older, “historic” churches, the fragmentation among Pentecostal churches, and what these dramatic changes mean for the understanding of unity.

As a result, the members of both teams committed themselves to utilizing the position each member held within their church to promote the idea of

relationship between the Pentecostals and the WCC. These opportunities could also be used to help allay some of the misconceptions and stereotyping.

Fourth Meeting in Cleveland (2003)

The fourth meeting took place at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee, USA, on the theme of unity. The group went back to the same Bible passages as in Seoul to expand the reflection and help the group develop its dialogue on unity from this biblical input. The group followed a daily pattern of Bible study in plenary, discussion in small mixed groups (three WCC members, three Pentecostal members), discussion in teams (WCC, Pentecostal), and back in plenary to share the findings and take the reflection further. This worked well. Sometimes the Pentecostals from both teams gathered to discuss their specific topics and to help in overcoming problems which emerged in the whole group.

Some of the important issues which emerged were the “non-theological” factors of disunity (e.g., racism, economic injustice, gender) and especially the question of discernment of the workings of the Spirit. How do we know if the Spirit is at work or that human interests are dividing the church? Pentecostals are deeply convinced that the Pentecostal/charismatic movement is the work of the Spirit, that through it God is “shaking” the church to wake her up. They detect in the attitude of the “historic” churches toward them always an attitude of rejection, the assumption that they are the guilty ones who have to repent.

Lee University, where the group met, belongs to the Church of God (Cleveland), one of the larger Pentecostal denominations in the USA and in the world. The invitation to meet at their university came through the intermediary of a Pentecostal member of the group. It could be a sign of openness, maybe of change that is slow, but real. The group had encounters with the faculty of the School of Religion (a department of the university) and with the Theological Seminary (directly attached to the church and in charge of training for the ordained ministry), and was welcomed in the worship service on Sunday in the local church near the campus.

The conclusion of this meeting was: trust between Pentecostals and the WCC is still to be built on both sides. Pentecostals have the experience of being excluded and sometimes it looks as if they, the excluded, are expected to make sacrifices for the sake of unity. Yet, all believers have as an imperative the response to the claim of unity of the people of God found in scripture. All those who are in Christ are one in Christ. Is it possible to mutually recognize mistakes and repent and forgive, and then make a new start? The emphasis of the group was on the virtues of patience (with each other and with the process) and perseverance

and persistence in the quest for unity. It was a process of transcending differences and breaking out of our ways of thinking.

In relation to the question of uniformity, the diversity of the Pentecostals and the diversity in the WCC were noted. On both sides, the differences are sources of growth and enrichment. On both sides, they affirm oneness in Christ, and yet lack of unity makes us equally vulnerable. It was noted that sensitivity in understanding each other is necessary. Pentecostals have sometimes the impression that they are always perceived by the historic churches as the wrong ones who cause division. There are examples showing this attitude on the part of historic churches. They claim to be the older, stronger, more mature churches. Pentecostals seldom perceive in the historic churches a posture of openness and willingness to admit that mistakes are on both sides. In the group, they agreed to make themselves vulnerable to one another.

Fifth Meeting in Johannesburg (2004)

For the fifth time, the members of JCG gathered in Kempton Park Conference Centre, Johannesburg, in September 2004. Since after this meeting some members should participate in the Pentecostal and Charismatic World Conference in Randburg, this date and venue was chosen.

Characteristics for this Johannesburg meeting were the acquaintance with the specific South African shape of Pentecostalism in relation to their political and social struggle in former times and at present. The encounter with Frank Chikane (a Pentecostal minister), the director of the office of the president of South Africa, gave many insights in this specific context. The visits to the Crystal Christian Ministries in Eldorado Park and Grace Bible Church, Soweto, were very impressive.

As in the programme of the meetings before, the Bible studies played a main role in this gathering. Five Bible studies about 1 Corinthians 11, 12 and 14 indicated the direction of the discussions. Especially, the gifts of the Spirit and unity of the people of God were the main discussion points in this meeting. It became clear that Pentecostalism cannot be limited to speaking in tongues.

In the meeting, the group discussed the issues sometimes in a provocative way. Here is an example of direct questions which were posed to both teams:

To the WCC team: “If the Pentecostals were to reach out to embrace the ancient and not-so-ancient churches, would you, churches of the WCC, remain condescending, as if we do not really need those ‘strange’ Pentecostals, with all their rather ‘unpresentable’ ways and ‘indecorous’ enthusiasms? Or have you the courage and obedience to follow the teachings of scripture and honour them for

what they represent of Christ?”

And to the Pentecostal team: “Isn’t it true that the Pentecostals, however, need the traditional churches with their riches of doctrine, worship, and continuity with the whole story of the body of Christ? If they were to reach out to embrace you as brothers and sisters in Christ, would you shrink back, stand aloof on the grounds of the full gospel? Or would you welcome the embrace, and honour your brothers and sisters in Christ, for all their perceived weaknesses in mission-effectiveness or scriptural faithfulness?”

From some information, it became clear that at the grassroots (and national) level, relationships often seem easy, but at international and institutional levels, there are more difficulties. Problems were mentioned in relation with examples taken from two different regions. In Latin America, the situation is different.

The group discussed proposals for the continuation of future work in dialogues on three levels: the multiplying of the dialogues at regional levels; the centennial of the Azusa Street revival in 2006 as an opportunity for a public event signifying from the WCC side a willingness to change one’s attitude; and theological discussions on common faith, on themes such as fullness of life vs. prosperity theology, proselytism, etc. A decision was made about the nature and content of the report to the WCC assembly in Porto Alegre. A narrative style and approach was welcomed by the group.

Sixth Meeting in Cairo (2005)

The sixth meeting took place in June 2005 at St Mark Center of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Cairo. This final gathering of the group was structured around Bible studies on John 13–17. The members discussed themes such as the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us, the call of Christ to serve each other, the essential place of love in the Christian life and spirituality, and the prayer of Jesus for his disciples about their perseverance in service and unity. In the daily worship, the group gave witness and thanks for their growth in unity, faith, and commitment.

The great hospitality of the Coptic Orthodox Church gave to this final meeting of the group a special flavour. The members visited the old Coptic churches of Cairo and attended the Sermon Celebration of H.H. Pope Shenouda III in Cairo’s St Mark Cathedral. They met the Pope personally after the Sunday ceremony in Alexandria’s St Mark Cathedral and shared with him the results of this specific dialogue. The group was impressed by the Christian presence of the Coptic Orthodox in Egypt, a Muslim-majority country. They also met the monks of the St Bishoy monastery.

During the meetings and the meals in the Center and on the Nile, the members of the group prepared the final report of their work. During this detailed work, several discussion points emerged: the nature of the Church, the meaning of the Toronto declaration of the WCC, the indication and explanation of the growing dialogue between the WCC and the Pentecostals, the misconceptions about each other, the reality of the relations, and the hope for future development of the dialogue.

The group was able to finish the report in a very open atmosphere of friendship and agreed on a common statement titled *Affirming Our Faith Together*. Several members of the group will be present at the WCC assembly in Porto Alegre.

Affirming Our Faith Together

Since 2000, in response to the mandate of the 1998 WCC assembly held in Harare, Zimbabwe, the Joint Consultative Group has brought together representatives from a range of WCC member churches and from a range of Pentecostal churches from around the world. When we members of this group first came together, in Hautecombe, France, we came with our fears, stereotypes, and apprehensions, as well as with our confidence and hope. As we have prayed together, listened together to the proclamation of the word of God, engaged in Bible studies and in dialogue with one another, we have enjoyed a genuine sense of community with one another.

Our time spent in prayer and Bible study and our testimonies of the work that God has done and continues to accomplish in our lives have revealed that each of us shares a deep personal devotion to God, and each of us has manifested a desire to act according to the will of God. We have been able to address many of the stereotypes that have contributed to our divisions, misunderstanding, and misconceptions. We have changed many of the false images about one another, and we have set to rest many of our apprehensions.

We have come to realize that we have much more in common than we had realized when we first came together. All of us understand that there is only one Church. It is not our Church, but rather, the Church of our Lord, Jesus Christ. It is he who has called us together and has called us to be the body of Christ, and it is to him that we give our love, devotion, and allegiance. We recognize him as the head of the Church. It is also the case that, through our mutual acceptance of one another in our prayer and work together (Eph. 4:2-3), we have come to recognize that we are all Christians. We have confessed Jesus Christ to be our Lord and Saviour according to the scripture,

and we have sought to follow him. We have called upon the Holy Spirit, the giver and sustainer of life, to be with us throughout the journey. We have also come to see the light of Christ in one another and therefore are, as St Paul says, “members of one another” (Rom. 12:5).

Each time we have gathered together, we have prayed together. In our prayers, we recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit, and we have prayed to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who hears our prayers. We have also made it a regular practice to read and study the scriptures together. We find in the scriptures an unparalleled authority for the ongoing life of the church and its members. We have been taught, challenged, strengthened, encouraged, and comforted by the words of scripture as they have been inspired in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Though not always in agreement about the ways and methods of reading and interpreting the scriptures, we continue to grow in our appreciation of the varieties of ways in which scripture is understood. We are not yet in agreement on the meaning of all biblical texts but have come to understand that these writings, inspired by the Holy Spirit, bear richer meanings than we originally thought. We have been able to learn from one another throughout our Bible studies.

In our time together, we have been touched by the richness of the diversity among us. We come from many places. We come with varied histories. We come from many denominations with different expectations. We come from many races and ethnic communities, and we come as older and younger men and women. We have therefore come to appreciate the gifts that each other brings to the dialogue. We have come to recognize more fully the diversity that fills the Church of Jesus Christ. We have come to see that place must be made for each one to share within the whole body that which God has given to him or her (1 Cor. 12ff). Our work together has been marked by this sharing, and our report of our meetings has been touched in some way by each of us. We believe that before God, we stand as equals, regardless of our differences and diversity. We recognize that while the various gifts that we bring are important, their value is enhanced by the realization that together, they contribute as a whole to the one body of Christ.

All of us agree that we are to proclaim the goodness of God and the good news of the gospel to the world. Through what God has done for us in the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, we have been given new life in Christ and therefore have gained entry into the presence of God in a new way. We have been empowered for the life and work that God has so generously given to us and have hope for the future. There can be a particular emphasis upon proclaiming this message of salvation and hope

through Jesus Christ by word of mouth. Another emphasis is the demonstration of the reality of this message through the testimony of signs and wonders. Alternatively, there can be an emphasis upon proclamation through a ministry of consistent living or by ministering through various acts in the world that are performed in the name of Jesus Christ. Most would embrace more than one emphasis. We have come to appreciate that, while these different methods originate in the example of Jesus Christ, our practice must always be tested against Christ's ministry. We realize, therefore, that we need to become aware of the various forms by which the gospel is proclaimed and should develop, for the sake of our dialogue, a method of discussion that is intent on gaining knowledge rather than criticizing one another.

In our discussions, it has become clear to us that the present divisions in the Christian community hinder the work and witness of the church in the world. These divisions confuse those who look to the gospel for hope. We feel many Christians, including ourselves, have failed to live up to the common calling to be sisters and brothers in Christ, who love one another, submit to one another, and seek to build up the entire body of Christ. The central message of the gospel is that all be healed and reconciled to God and to one another through Jesus Christ. We recognize our own culpability in not heeding this message to its fullest.

The question of the discernment of the Spirit has emerged on several occasions in our discussions. How do we know if it is the Spirit that is at work in us and in our communities, or whether what we claim to be the Spirit working in us is not of human interests? How do we know where the limits of our faith and our actions should be placed? We were in agreement that these questions are important but also very difficult to answer. We have not yet agreed on a common understanding of the criteria that might be used to discern the Spirit and set boundaries, nor have we always been clear about who has the authority to do so. We recognize that Christ has taught us not to judge one another (Matt. 6), while at the same time the scriptures call us to discern the spirits, to test the fruits of our actions, and to enter into discipline within the Christian community. As we have listened to each other, we have come to understand the centrality of these issues for our dialogue and the necessity to continue wrestling with these questions.

Issues that Challenge Us Further

Throughout our time together, we have discussed the various teachings of our respective churches and the perceptions that we have of one another. Even

though we have met regularly for the last six years, the group has just begun to address the many differences and concerns that were raised at our first meeting. What has also become clear is the diversity within each respective group, WCC and Pentecostal; the representatives from the World Council of Churches' member churches held differing understandings of specific theological teachings, as did the representatives from among the Pentecostals. This fact added to the richness of our discussions and the complexity of ordering our meetings.

The following are among the areas which need to be addressed more extensively by the JCG in the future:

1. Inadequate understandings of one another still exist and need to be explored more fully. What is perhaps more relevant, though, is the need to share what we have learned from one another with our respective communities.
2. There were initial discussions on the issue of mission and evangelism. The importance of dialogue between churches concerning evangelism, respect for one another's churches, and proselytism cannot be overestimated. The group is committed to addressing the tension among us and exploring ways that we might be able to work together in mission.
3. The gifts of the Holy Spirit (*charismata*) are of interest to many members of the group. What are they? How are they defined? How are they manifested? How are they recognized?
4. The sacraments emerged as an area for further discussion. The churches recognize the significance of the sacraments in various ways. What is the role of the sacraments in the life of the church?
5. Even though the group dedicated much time to the study of scripture, more work needs to be done with regard to the different ways in which scripture is interpreted and understood.
6. Spirituality was a main theme throughout our work over the past six years. Our discussions looked at the variety of ways in which the work of the Spirit is discerned. How do we discern the work of the Spirit? What criteria have our respective churches developed for determining the work of the Spirit?
7. And finally, the overarching question that emerged during our discussions addressed the extent to which World Council of Churches' member churches and Pentecostal churches see each other as "churches." In our discussions on Christian unity, we asked: What is the nature of the Church? Who are the members of the Church? What is church and what is not? What or who is the ultimate authority in the Church? What

are the criteria by which an individual church recognizes another as church?

These issues are presented by our group to those who will take up the task of continuing this conversation. The Joint Consultative Group sees these issues as the emerging concerns that will help guide the future dialogue between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals.

Presentation of the participants in the Joint Consultative Group (from both teams)

Co-moderators

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WCC:

Bruce Robbins
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Cecilia Castillo Nanjarí
Pentecostal Mission Church (Chile)

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Paul Goodliff
Baptist Union of Great Britain

Nahed Fahim Habashy
Coptic Orthodox Church

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Korean Methodist Church

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Katjarina Pastukhova

Belorussian Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church

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Despina Prassas

Ecumenical Patriarchate; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Mariette Razivelo

Malagasy Lutheran Church (Madagascar)

Report of the Joint Consultative Group between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches [2007–2012, to the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Busan, Republic of Korea]

World Council of Churches EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Bossey, Switzerland 5-8 March 2013
Document No. 14

The executive committee is asked to receive and forward the report of the Joint Consultative Group between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches to the assembly (cf. approved recommendation 19 of the programme committee of the central committee of 28 August – 5 September 2012, GEN PRO 10).

The report of the Joint Consultative Group reflects the work of the group between the period 2007 and 2012. It is prepared as a resource for the Busan assembly with advice and recommendations for how to strengthen the dialogue between the fellowship of WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches around the world.

The report bears witness to the JCG members' attempt to understand one another better and to bear witness to differing theological convictions. It contains theological reflections from the different traditions of the group members. It is neither an authoritative declaration of any of the churches involved nor a confessional agreement on doctrinal issues. It is offered to those who are interested to learn more about the work of the JCG.

1. The Story of the JCG

The Joint Consultative Group (JCG) between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches (WCC) was established by the Harare assembly in 1998, recognizing the growing need to consolidate existing relations and create new ones; to initiate study on issues of common interest; to explore different forms of participation; and to encourage collaboration.

The first round of JCG discussions, which took place from 2000 to 2005, were reported to the Porto Alegre assembly in 2006. From the beginning of its mandate, the JCG has sought.

- to search for better ways of understanding one another;
- to look for new opportunities for mutual learning and action;
- to share our experience of Christian witness with one another;
- to discuss our challenges with the hope of moving beyond them;
- to share what we will learn with our respective churches;

leading to our affirmation of the common life in the Spirit.

The Porto Alegre assembly received the JCG report and recommendations; endorsed the continuation of the JCG; and recognized “the visible contribution of the Pentecostal churches in

the dynamically changing Christian landscape, and the importance to the ecumenical movement of engaging in mutual learning and sustained dialogue with the Pentecostal churches.”¹

The second round of JCG discussions was inaugurated in 2007 under the leadership two co- moderators—Rev. Dr Cecil M. Robeck, on behalf of the Pentecostal church members, and Rev. Jennifer S. Leath, on behalf of the WCC church members. The group, which was comprised of two teams of equal size, included both continuing and new members (Appendix 1).

2. From Porto Alegre to Busan

The JCG met annually between 2007 and 2012, building on the relationships and hard-earned trust developed during the first round of conversation. Each meeting helped to deepen dialogue but also to engage with national churches and local congregations—both Pentecostal churches and WCC member

1. Report of the Policy Reference Committee, “*God, in Your Grace . . .*”: *Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2007), 281.

churches—making every effort to learn from and share with local churches through dialogue, fellowship, and prayer.

In 2007, the JCG met in Baar, Switzerland, at the Focolare Centre, which allowed for significant exposure to this charismatic community within the Roman Catholic Church. The meeting introduced a new group of members to the history and work of the JCG; and provided space for discussion on the ecclesial gifts of charisms and sacraments.

The group set as its agenda from 2007 to 2012 continued theological dialogue on the nature and mission of the church based on a study of the marks of the church as affirmed in the Nicene- Constantinopolitan Creed - the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

In 2008, the JCG met in Helsinki, Finland, to discuss the oneness of the church. The meeting was held at the Orthodox Sofia Conference Centre and provided space for discussion with the Finnish Ecumenical Council, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Orthodox Church in Finland, and the Finnish Pentecostal Movement.

In 2009, the JCG met in Hong Kong, China, to discuss the holiness of the church. It met with the Hong Kong Christian Council, the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, and the Pentecostal Holiness Church of Hong Kong.

In 2010, the JCG met outside Geneva, Switzerland, to discuss the catholicity of the church. Meeting at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute provided an opportunity for interaction with Bossey students and faculty, the Orthodox Centre at Chambesey, and newly elected WCC leadership.

In 2011, the JCG met in Riga, Latvia, to discuss the apostolicity of the church. The JCG coincided with a meeting of the European Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Association and provided the opportunity to meet with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia, the Pentecostal Church, and the United Bible Society.

The JCG returned to the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in 2012 to complete its report to the Busan assembly.

3. The Lessons the JCG Learned from Holding These Conversations

The JCG is encouraged that WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches are finding more opportunities for dialogue, common prayer, and serving Christ together. From its experience, over two periods of conversation, the JCG bears witness to its experience of a methodology that has enabled the work to be fruitful and offers this to any others engaged in such conversations.

- A. Fruitful ecumenical conversations benefited from certain commitments from the outset, especially that both teams in the conversation:
- i) set their work in the context of daily prayer and the study of Scripture together;
 - ii) were granted the time, energy, and finances necessary to see the process of conversation through to completion;
 - iii) gathered team members who represented a genuine and thoughtful cross-section of the constituencies intended to be at the conversation table; assigned persons who were personally secure, self-aware, and knowledgeable of and committed to the positions held by their tradition, yet open to new insights and lessons from their conversation partners in such a way that change in our perceptions of one another is possible;
 - iv) enlisted those with the necessary gifts to facilitate the process of conversation and with the broadest possible inclusion of all participants throughout the process.
- B. The conversation benefitted from the partners making commitments about how they will work together. It worked best when both parties shared an attitude of humility, honesty, and openness about what they bring to the table, accompanied by personal faithfulness to the gospel. Once that commitment was made, a fruitful conversation benefitted when participants:
- i) set aside presuppositions, stereotypes and apprehensions about one another;
 - ii) set goals together in a spirit of mutuality that led to the desired conclusion of time spent together;
 - iii) developed a mutually agreeable methodology by which these goals may be reached and assessed;
 - iv) resisted unilateral actions intended to favour oneself or one's tradition;
 - v) resisted the temptation to idealize one's own tradition without also acknowledging its weaknesses;
 - vi) resisted the temptation to portray the weaknesses of the dialogue partner without considering its strengths as well;
 - vii) were willing to represent fairly and accurately, with love and respect, the breadth, depth, differences within, and nuances of

one's tradition to the best of one's ability, whether or not one identifies with them completely.

- C. Fruitful ecumenical conversation required a personal commitment and openness by all participants. It provided an opportunity for participants to grow spiritually and to grow together. In this conversion process, participants found it necessary to:
 - i. listen to and to pray for one another with the mind and the heart so that genuine understanding between all parties became possible;
 - ii. share together in learning and teaching;
 - iii. Take on assignments intended to contribute to the goals of the conversation;
 - iv. Hold the best interest of the other participants at heart.

- D. Fruitful ecumenical conversation benefited from the commitment of all participants to act upon the knowledge that is received in the conversation process, anticipating that all participants would attempt to:
 - i. bring into their lives and the lives of their ecclesial bodies what has been learned in the conversation;
 - ii. be open to promoting further conversations within their own constituencies;
 - iii. speak only the truth in love about the other tradition, once it has been honestly and candidly explained;
 - iv. report to the appropriate ecclesial bodies the fruit (both positive and negative) of the time spent in conversation honestly and in a timely manner;
 - v. communicate these findings in as clear a language as possible in order to facilitate their reception by the broadest possible audience; and
 - vi. recognize the limitations that conversation alone brings to the quest for Christian unity while celebrating the gifts or new possibilities that issue from that conversation.

4. What the JCG Sought to Achieve

The basic goals of the JCG were (1) to introduce JCG members to a particular model and context of ecumenical dialogue (a joint consultative group); and (2)

to prepare JCG members to introduce others from their respective churches to different ways of being in dialogue across Christian traditions. To achieve these objectives, it was necessary to develop a methodology that allowed room for personal growth and mutual encouragement.

The group was composed of equal numbers of WCC and Pentecostal members, including pastors, professors, church leaders, and lay people from around the world. Some were experienced ecumenists, while others were new to ecumenical dialogue. It was a dialogue of Christians who could represent their traditions and the experience of their churches. It was not only a dialogue between WCC member churches and Pentecostals, but an experience of intra-WCC and intra- Pentecostal discussion.

Because of its grassroots diversity, the JCG had to find ways of being in dialogue that brought the gifts of every person to the table. The group quickly developed an interdisciplinary approach that included personal testimonies, prayer, Bible study, theological dialogue, and engagement with local churches all working together to help explore the theme of discussion.

The JCG also served as a switchboard for sharing updates on international, national, and local developments in ecumenical dialogue, helping to nurture a number of significant opportunities for dialogue between WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches.

Through its interdisciplinary approach, the members of the JCG celebrated many points of common faith, but also navigated the tensions of theological, historical, and experiential difference in understanding the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

5. Dialogue Centred on Shared Resources

The method and choice of topics for discussion drew more upon shared resources of faith, than theological issues and ecclesial positions alone.

One thing that all JCG members held in common was a deep faith and belief in Christ as God and Saviour. This was strengthened by sharing personal testimonies of faith in Christ, particularly at the beginning of the journey but also through deepened sharing along the way. Common faith was also nurtured by praying together daily using the songs, prayers, and stories of each member's tradition.

The JCG chose to discuss a topic that each member loved and cared for dearly—the church. Moreover, it chose to talk about the church using the ancient and common affirmation that the church is one, catholic, holy, and apostolic, as professed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (Appendix 2).

In talking about the church, the JCG looked to a common source for understanding—the Bible. As much time was spent studying Bible passages relevant to the mark of the church under discussion as was spent discussing theological position papers. The common story of the people of God helped to steer the discussion towards common affirmations about the church (Appendix 3).

In a spirit of love, we prayed the Lord's Prayer and shared our common faith through the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

In a spirit of love, we invited each other to share in and become part of our faith journeys. In a spirit love, we reflected on scripture as the common word we share.

In a spirit of love, we considered theological and historical accounts of our church traditions.

In a spirit of love, we encouraged and were encouraged by the churches we encountered.

6. Observations from Our Discussion on the Church

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed professes the church to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. These are commonly referred to as the “marks of the church.” It is what Christians believe to be true about the church in every time and in every place. The profession is a source of shared faith in the triune God, binding the faithful together.

The Church is One—The creed professes that the church is one. This affirms what already exists in Christ and what will be forever. It is grounded in and reflects the nature of the holy Trinity. It was important for early Christians to affirm their unity in Christ to deepen their experience of fellowship in the Holy Spirit and to proclaim their faith in the triune God.

The church is one because the holy Trinity is one. The church is one in Jesus Christ. There is one church, one people of God, one body of Christ, one gospel, one baptism, one communion of saints. Like the creed, these affirmations of faith from the life of the early church offer a clear vision of the church as one (Eph. 4:4-6).

Today, the oneness, or unity, among Christ's followers is expressed in many ways. It can be experienced in sharing, in fellowship, in communion and through sacraments (e.g., baptism and eucharist); it can also be expressed in prayer, through common service, and continuing Christ's mission in the world to proclaim the love of God for all creation. It is a state of being and act of doing.

And yet, there are many differences in how churches around the world

understand the oneness of the church, how they seek to make their unity in Christ visible, and how they bear witness to this mark of the church. The differences emerged through history, are expressed in theology, and are visible in different ecclesiologies. In spite of these differences, unity is understood as a gift and a calling, rooted in common faith in Jesus Christ and with a common purpose in worshipping God and proclaiming the faith of the gospel in the triune God.

The Church is holy—The claim that the church is holy is a claim made by faith. That claim is made in our confession of the creed (*credo* = I believe). This faith claim is based upon the fact that the God of Abram, Isaac, Jacob, the triune God, has revealed himself to be holy (*kadosh/hagios*). He is the Holy One of Israel. Holiness originates in God and is freely communicated by him through the Spirit to his creation, in various times and places, and especially to those engaged in serving him, the church of Jesus Christ. The church as both the body of Christ and as community is holy because God has communicated his holiness to the church. Our participation in this holiness is made possible by our participation in the life of the triune God, through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus (Col 1:22) through the Holy Spirit. We have been cleansed through the “washing of water with the word” (Eph 5:26-27). We are the temple of God, indwelt by his Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3.16-17), and sustained by our life in Christ. It appears that all of us agree on these basic truths.

Where we have found differences among us is in the link that some make between the holiness of the individual Christian (understood as a process of sanctification) and the holiness of the church. The question is frequently asked, if the church is “without spot or wrinkle” (Eph. 5:27), how do we account for sin among the saints? That we, members of the body of Christ, are called to live lives that are holy (1 Pet. 1:13-21), lives that are worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1-3) is not in dispute. Standards of personal holiness, however, are often in dispute, as is the place of discernment and discipline within the life of the holy community.

The Church is catholic—The mark of catholicity, from the Greek *kath'holou* meaning “as a whole” and “universal,” evokes a sense of totality, wholeness, integrity, perfection, and—with respect to the church—universality and ecumenicity. Given this etymological foundation, catholicity signifies and celebrates the presence of the risen Christ and affirms the true faith in the face of heresy and schism.

Catholicity is also understood by some members of the JCG as a task of the church, not merely a possession of the church. The JCG agrees that this mark is also related to God’s mission. However, different perspectives surfaced concerning the mission of the church with respect to catholicity. Pentecostal, Protestant, and

Orthodox traditions have their own internal understandings of fullness and integrity.

At the conclusion of the meeting during which the JCG considered the mark of catholicity, the JCG developed the following affirmation in a spirit of togetherness.

We affirm that catholicity is the gift of the triune God to the church in its universality of time and space. The church is wherever and whenever there are those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and includes all those who have held this faith throughout the ages, inclusive of particularities such as age, social condition, gender, race, or ability. The church, in its catholicity, expresses its life through worship and God's mission, making Christ known, pursuing justice and compassion for the sanctification of all of creation and making "every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This obedient response to the call of God is only possible in the power of the Spirit, recognising the love of God that transforms us, and in humble dependence upon God's grace.

Pentecostals understand catholicity in terms of the "full gospel" in relation to the Lord's promise to give life in fullness (John 10:10); he is Saviour, the one who baptizes in the Spirit, the Healer as well as the coming King. The JCG reaffirmed that the WCC does not exist as "the *una sancta* of which the creeds speak," and so does not embody catholicity in this way, but as a fellowship of churches calling one another towards a "mutual accountability" as they embody faith in Christ and fulfil the call of catholicity.

The Church is apostolic—When we affirm that the church is apostolic, we begin with the triune God, the Father who both sent (*apostello*) his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to bear witness to the truth in God and also sends the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we root our apostolic claims in Jesus Christ who, as the Father sent him, sends his disciples into the world to bear witness (*martyria*) to the truth that we have come to understand as the gospel. That truth was made manifest in his incarnation, his death, and his resurrection. In a sense, all those who identify with Christ are carriers of the gospel message (*evangelion*). The living out of this common calling is made manifest in word and deed, and in our common *koinonia*. Still, Jesus chose the twelve, in a unique way, to carry the message of truth, to set the church in order, to guard the "good treasure entrusted to you with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us," (2 Tim 1:14) and to pass it along to the faithful of the next generation (2 Tim 2:2) and hence, to all generations.

The message that is to be guarded was embodied first in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus himself, but it also exists in the affirmations of faith such as may be found in 1 Cor. 12:3 (“Jesus is Lord!”) and 1 Cor. 15:1-11, the things of first importance. The apostle’s affirmation shows these truths as being rooted in scripture, which provides evidence that in Christ we are confronted by God’s eternal plan, and through Christ, we stand in continuity with the whole church. In the early church, the affirmations first given by the apostles (Jude 3) were entrusted to those on whom the apostles had laid their hands, consecrating them as bishops, who were asked in turn, to pass them along to the next generation. These basic teachings became the “rule of faith.” They embodied the essence of that “deposit of faith” in written form, which has been passed along to each generation. As time passed, the essence of this “rule of faith” became enshrined in the creed, now commonly confessed by much of the church. Thus, Christ, scripture, the creed, and the ongoing teachings of the church understood as “tradition” provide the content and the context for the apostolic affirmation. The ministry keeps the faith of the church and experiences the faith through the liturgical or worship life and the practices of the church and its members. It appears that all of us may agree on these basic truths.

Where we have found differences among us is rooted in our separate histories. We do not all agree on how this passing of the deposit of faith is safeguarded. We do not necessarily agree on the sacramental or the charismatic character of the ministry, the limits on who is a minister, the role of succession in guaranteeing the “deposit of faith,” or whether there is an unbroken chain of succession. We do not all agree on a common understanding or interpretation of the scriptures or the place and meaning of apostolic life that may be evidenced by fruit (Gal 5:22-23) and charisms (1 Cor 12:8-10) of the Holy Spirit. Nor do we necessarily agree on how best to proclaim the deposit of faith that has been given to the church. These differences are not only between the WCC and Pentecostal members of the JCG, but also among WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches.

Pentecostals have been committed to the proclamation of the apostolic faith since their inception. Many Pentecostal denominations incorporate the term “apostolic” in their name (e.g., Apostolic Faith Mission). In addition to their commitment to apostolic faith, Pentecostals contend that the apostolicity of the church is also closely related to apostolic life (Acts 4), apostolic work (John 14:12), and apostolic power manifested in spiritual gifts as well as “signs and wonders” (Acts 2:4).

7. Unexpected Fruits

The JCG quickly affirmed that patience is a virtue when it comes to encouraging WCC member churches and Pentecostals to be in dialogue. Though patience is still needed, there were a number of unexpected fruits that the JCG helped bring to harvest during the past years. Though the JCG cannot claim to have planted these fruits, its members did help to nurture them with the hope that each fruit will increase the efforts to encourage dialogue and common witness.

- In 2010, the WCC general secretary delivered greetings to the Pentecostal World Congress gathered in Stockholm, Sweden. An exchange of invitations has ensued for the Pentecostal World Congress and the WCC assembly, both taking place in 2013. The recognition and encouragement of dialogue at this level helps to highlight our need for one another.
- New bilateral conversations have emerged between Baptists and Pentecostals; between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Pentecostals. In addition to the existing dialogues involving Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed with Pentecostals, these new conversations are a sign that deeper dialogue between church traditions is possible. In addition, there are many local and national conversations that reach the church at a grassroots level, i.e., forums for praying together, reading the Bible together, and engaging in common diaconal work. The commitment to these conversations helps to build mutual understanding.
- The Global Christian Forum (GCF) has made tremendous inroads in introducing church leaders from the Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical, and Pentecostal traditions to one another. The relationships made through the GCF have nurtured many new developments and continue to help to deepen the broadest relationships.
- The invitation to hold the 10th Assembly of the WCC in Busan, South Korea was endorsed not only by the WCC member churches in Korea, but by all the member churches of the National Council of Churches in Korea, including the Pentecostal Church. The invitation signifies an important change in relationships.

8. Member Testimonies

Given the importance of personal testimonies to the JCG methodology over the years, members of the JCG were invited to respond to the following three questions at the end of the journey:

- What have you learned from our work together?

- How have you been transformed through our work together?
- What are the challenges for the church that have been clarified through our process together?

While responses to these questions varied, the testimonies were positively provocative and reflect an overwhelming and unanimous celebration of this virtue—the development of personal relationships of mutual love provide a sure foundation for the mutual understanding upon which inter-church, ecumenical dialogues rely—and the mutual understanding inter-church, ecumenical dialogues generate. When we grow in relationship with one another, we grow in love for one another; when we grow in love for one another, we grow in understanding of one another.

We learned that we must take the time to grow in love for one another in our diversity.

We were transformed and reoriented towards a common hope.

We gained a deeper understanding of the challenges we face together as Christians.

Recommendations

On the occasion of the assembly in Busan, the JCG prepared the following recommendations to the WCC member churches.

Recognising that together WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches confess faith in the Triune God according to the scriptures; together these churches are called to be a response to Christ's prayer for the unity of his believers, so that the world may believe in God's saving love for all creation; and

Recognizing also that JCG conversations in recent years have produced promising results, which should continue for the sake of common witness in the world and deeper mutual understanding between churches;

R1. The JCG recommends that efforts should be maintained to encourage conversation between the member churches of WCC and Pentecostal churches that are not members of the WCC.

A. Involvement in the work of the WCC

R2. The WCC should continue to involve Pentecostal leaders, pastors, lay people, and theologians in strategic ways that help the fellowship of WCC member churches to encounter the Pentecostal movement.

R3. Recognizing the growing significance of Pentecostalism in the world, the

JCG recommends the participation of Pentecostals in WCC commissions be strengthened, i.e., Faith and Order, Mission and Evangelism, International Affairs.

R4. The JCG recommends that collaboration in the area of theological education, ecumenical formation and youth initiatives continue, e.g., through theological education networks (ETE and WOCATI), the Bossey Ecumenical Institute and ECHOS (youth commission).

R5. The JCG recommends, that a Joint Consultative Group is maintained as a platform for monitoring the rapidly developing conversations (formal), dialogue (informal) and encounters between WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches.

R6. Acknowledging that there are Pentecostal churches that are members of the WCC, the JCG recommends that consideration be given by the WCC to the most appropriate ways of their engagement in this process of encounter and conversation, in consultation with its Pentecostal conversation partners.

R7. Recognizing the value of the diversity on our and teams and the contributions each participant was able to make, we recommend that the WCC along with its Pentecostal partners in the JCG maintain and continue to strive towards balanced participation.

B. Conversations among Pentecostals

The Pentecostal movement is diverse, global, and growing. The JCG would like to encourage the Pentecostal World Fellowship to continue to endorse the theological exchange between churches.

C. Conversations, dialogues, and encounters at national, regional, and global levels

Though the WCC and the PWF offer global leadership, it is also important to encourage dialogue between national churches, between world communions and among church leaders.

Where WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches have engaged in dialogue at a national level, great progress has been made.

R8. The JCG recommends that churches around the world should be encouraged to be in conversation on a national and regional level, finding new ways to express common faith in and common witness to Christ.

The bilateral dialogues and conversations between world communions and Pentecostal churches have helped to deepen theological discussions.

R9. The JCG recommends that global church traditions be encouraged to continue dialogue and conversations that lead to deeper mutual understanding, solving existing problems between the churches and healing of divisions.

R10. Recognizing the Global Christian Forum brings leaders together from

many church traditions, establishing relationships through the Forum that have helped initiate many new opportunities for churches to deepen their ecumenical encounter, therefore, the JCG recommends that these efforts be encouraged.

Appendix 1

Participants in the Joint Consultative Group World Council of Churches

Rev. Jennifer S. Leath (2007 to 2012), Co-moderator
African Methodist Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr Lesley Anderson (2007; 2009 to 2012)
Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas

Ms Kyriaki Avtzi (2008)
Ecumenical Patriarchate

Father Ioan Chirilá (2007 to 2012)
Romanian Orthodox Church

Rev. Dr Paul Goodliff (2007 to 2012)
Baptist Union of Great Britain

Rev. Marjut Haapakangas (2010 and 2012)
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Rev. Tuija Elina Mannström (2007 to 2008)
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Dr Konstantinos Kenanidis (2009 to 2012)
Ecumenical Patriarchate

Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou (2007 to 2012)
Church of Greece

Rev. Dr Cephas Omenyo (2007 to 2012)
Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Dr Xanthi Morfi (2011)
Ecumenical Patriarchate

Rev. Iára Müller (2007 to 2011)
Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil

Rev. Eric S.Y. So (2007 to 2009; 2011)
Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China

Sr Mother Superior Theoxeni (2007)
Ecumenical Patriarchate

Pentecostal Team

Rev. Dr Cecil M. Robeck, Jr (2007 to 2009; 2011 to 2012), Co-moderator
Assemblies of God

Rev. Dr Japie Jimmy LaPoorta (2007 to 2012), Co-moderator in 2010
Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

Dr Kimberly Ervin Alexander (2008 to 2012)
Church of God

Dr Miguel Alvarez (2010 to 2012)
Church of God

Rev. Dr Teresa Chai (2008 to 2012)
Assemblies of God

Rev. Dr Harold D. Hunter (2007 to 2012)
International Pentecostal Holiness Church

Rev. Dr Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (2007 to 2012)
Finnish Pentecostal Movement

Rev. Connie Karsten-van der Brugge (2008 to 2012)
United Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches

Dr Jean-Daniel Plüss (2010 to 2012)
Swiss Pentecostal Mission

Dr Paulson Pulikottil (2007 to 2012)
Indian Pentecostal Church

Bishop Stephen Safwali (2007 to 2012)
Antioch Bible Church

Rev. Dr Frederick Ware (2009)
Church of God in Christ

Observers from the WCC Youth Commission, ECHOS

Dr Connie Ho Yan Au (2009)
Mr Nikos Kosmidis (2008)

Appendix 2

Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed²

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate
from the Virgin Mary

2. *Em tua graça: Resources for Praise and Prayer*, 9th Assembly, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2006).

and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried;
on the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven.
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
he will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father;
with the Father and the Son
he is worshiped and glorified:
he has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen

Appendix 3

Biblical texts used by the JCG to help discuss the marks of the church

The Church is One

- Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35
- Acts 15
- Ephesians 4:1-16
- Philippians 1:3-11

The Church is Holy

- Hebrews 12:1-5
- Isaiah 6:1-13
- Leviticus 19:1-37
- 1 Peter 2:1-10
- Acts 10:9-20, 34-48
- Philippians 1:2-5(11)

The Church is Catholic

- Ruth 1:15-17; 4:13-17
- Acts 11:27-30
- John 15:1-17
- Revelation 7:9-17
- Philippians 3:12-16

The Church is Apostolic

- John 20:21 and Luke 10:1-20
- Numbers 11:16-17; 23-30
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 and 2 Corinthians 11:5-30
- 2 Timothy 1:6-7 and Titus 1:5-9
- Acts 2:42-47
- Philippians 4:2-9

Report of the Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostals [2016–2022, to the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Karlsruhe, Germany]*

Introduction

The Joint Consultative Group (JCG) is a platform for discussion, mutual encouragement, understanding and cooperation between Pentecostal churches and member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The report of the JCG reflects the work of the group between 2016 and 2022. It is prepared as a resource for WCC 11th Assembly with recommendations for how to strengthen the dialogue between the WCC fellowship of churches and Pentecostal churches around the world.

Previous WCC assemblies received the reports of the JCG and endorsed the continuation of the group. The Porto Alegre Assembly (2006) recognized “the visible contribution of the Pentecostal churches in the dynamically changing Christian landscape, and the importance to the ecumenical movement of engaging in mutual learning and sustained dialogue with the Pentecostal

* This report was originally published in the *Resource Book, World Council of Churches 11th Assembly, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2022* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 97-106.

churches”.¹ Speaking of the Council’s broader church relations, the Busan Assembly (2013) recommended the WCC “explore methodologies for engaging the wider ecumenical movement and international organisations in a pilgrimage of justice and peace”.²

The following report bears witness to the JCG members’ attempt to understand one another better and to learn from their different theological traditions. It is neither an authoritative declaration of the churches involved, nor a confessional agreement on doctrinal issues. It is a resource for anyone who wants learn more about the work of the JCG.

1. The Story of the JCG – Moving in the Spirit

The Harare Assembly (1998) established the Joint Consultative Group between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches, recognizing the growing need to consolidate existing relations and create new ones; to initiate study on issues of common interest, to explore different forms of participation; and to encourage collaboration.

The first round of consultation, which took place from 2000 to 2005, established a common mandate:

- to search for better ways of understanding one another;
- to look for new opportunities for mutual learning and action;
- to share our experience of Christian witness with one another;
- to discuss our challenges with the hope of moving beyond them;
- to share what we will learn with our respective churches;
- leading to our affirmation of the common life in the Spirit.

Building on the relationships and hard-earned trust developed during the first round, a second round of consultation, which took place from 2007 to 2012, studied the marks of the church as affirmed in the Nicene Creed – One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. The study identified considerable common ground on the nature of the church, while providing space to discuss different experiences

1. Report of the Policy Reference Committee, “God in your grace ... Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches” (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2007) 281.

2. Report of the Programme Guidelines Committee, “Encountering the God of Life, Official Report of the Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches” (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014) 246.

of being the church.³

A third round of consultation took place from 2016 to 2022 under the leadership of two co-moderators – Rev. Prof. Dr Cecil M. Robeck (Assemblies of God), on behalf of the Pentecostal church members, and Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou (Church of Greece), on behalf of the WCC church members.

During its third round, the JCG sought to deepen its dialogue on the church by addressing discipleship and formation through the lead question “How does the Holy Spirit work in the church to form disciples that transform the world?”

Since it began, the experience of the JCG has affirmed that growing together in Christ requires humility, honesty and openness. The JCG has developed some “best practices” to encourage its conversation:

1. The JCG is comprised of two teams of equal size representing WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches. Each round of the JCG has included both continuing and new members.
2. Sharing faith stories – stories of coming to faith in Christ, of being nurtured in faith and of life in the church – is a methodology for building relationship rooted in understanding one another as followers of Christ. Every JCG meeting opens with sharing.
3. Interdisciplinary methods and shared resources – the JCG uses complementary methodologies that include prayer, bible study, theological presentation and discussion to address central themes and correlates. The JCG spends as much time studying relevant Bible texts as discussing different theological positions.
4. Encounter with local communities – the JCG intentionally meets in locations where it can engage with local communities and churches as a methodology to strengthen its learning, amplify its outcomes and encourage the reception of its work.
5. Broader ecumenical movement – the JCG serves as a “switch board” for sharing ecumenical developments that can help nurture dialogue between WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches. Every JCG meeting includes sharing about the members’ engagements with bi-lateral dialogues and other relevant ecumenical platforms.

3. *Resource Book*, World Council of Churches 10th Assembly, Busan, 2013 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 151-163.

2. From Busan to Karlsruhe: Our Pilgrimage Together

The JCG met regularly between 2016 and 2019. In-person meetings were not possible between 2020 and 2022 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2016, the JCG executive met in Geneva, Switzerland to develop an agenda for a third round of consultation seeking to amplify the outcomes of its work and strengthen relations between WCC and Pentecostal churches. The study on discipleship and formation was partly inspired by the invitation of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) to recommit to witnessing to Christ together towards life and the opportunity to offer a unique perspective on discipleship and evangelism.

In 2017, the JCG met in Pasadena, California, USA at Fuller Theological Seminary. The meeting was an opportunity for dialogue with Pentecostal scholars and the leadership of the seminary. It also included visits to the historic locations and churches associated with the Azusa Street revival of 1906-1909, considered by many as the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement.

The discussions in Pasadena explored four aspects of JCG study on discipleship, including 1) discipleship as holistic evangelism, 2) discipleship as a life-long process of growing into Christ, 3) discipleship nurturing faith through the power of the Holy Spirit and 4) the transforming power of the Gospel to bridge the gap between church and secular life.

In 2018, the JCG met in Arusha, Tanzania in connection with the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism under the theme “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship”. The members of the JCG joined the conference as participants, sharing their experience with the broader ecumenical movement and contributing to the development of the “Arusha Call to Discipleship”.

The JCG met for one and a half days after the conference to share insights from the event and to continue reflecting on discipleship and formation. The discussion inspired the JCG to return to the topic of baptism and discipleship, recognizing the importance of baptism as an invitation to follow Christ in discipleship.

In 2019, the JCG met in Switzerland at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute outside Geneva. The meeting included prayer, fellowship, and discussion with Bossey students and faculty, as well as Sunday worship with different Orthodox communities at the Chambésy Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

As agreed in Arusha, discussions at Bossey focussed on the relationship between baptism and discipleship, looking at common biblical resources from the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, and Pauline literature. The JCG also discussed

different theological perspectives and the convergence text on Baptism published by Faith and Order in 1982 (BEM).

The JCG was to have met in 2020 in Denver, Colorado, USA at Iliff School of Theology to conclude its discussion and prepare its report to WCC 11th Assembly. Because of the pandemic, the JCG was not able to meet again in person. The executive group resumed working online in 2022 to complete the JCG report.

3. Observations from Our Discussions: Learning through the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit and discipleship: what did we share, learn and observe

Words like discipleship, sanctification and spiritual growth denote the Christian journey into deeper communion with God and service to the world. In each case the presence of the Holy Spirit empowers us to become participants in the Divine nature by grace (2 Peter 1:3-4) and to be equipped for practical and Christ-like service in, through and beyond the church.

The source of discipleship – The JCG celebrated that discipleship in the name of Christ started on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21, 32-33, 38-39) and that the journey to a mature Christian life continues throughout one's lifetime. Pentecost reminds the disciple that God is present in Christ and through the Holy Spirit in communion with others (Acts 2:42).

If the churches want to heed God's call to mission, then a holistic understanding of discipleship is necessary in which the role of the Holy Spirit is essential (Romans 8:14). The Holy Spirit works salvation in Christ, who directs us into sanctification for the glory of God, and calls us into service for all of creation (Mark 16:15).

Discipleship happens in communion – There was strong agreement that the work of the Holy Spirit as speaker of truth, as healer and as transformer empowers Christian discipleship (John 16:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:9; Romans 12:1-2; Acts 1:8). The Spirit produces godly fruit through the believer (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit makes Christ present (Matthew 18:20) to renew us in the image of God, inspiring us to worship, read and study scripture, share in fellowship and serve. However, in the same way that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31), we were reminded that no one can claim the Holy Spirit for their own purpose, rather, with humility, we receive all gifts from the Holy Spirit for service according to the will of God.

In our times of prayer and Bible study, we shared as members of the JCG

how the Holy Spirit prompted us to serve with the gifts that we have been given. We joyfully agreed that it is the same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God that is activating these gifts for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). Through meeting, sharing and learning together, we have realized that we are on the path of discipleship together, regardless of our diverse histories and church affiliations. The love of God that has been put into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) empowers us to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3) and move together as disciples following Christ (John 17:22-23).

Discipleship is contextual – Christ calls us into discipleship *in* our particular time and situation. Hence every Christian should also be willing to be transformed through the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:25). As we learn to listen to each other and seek to be open to the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31; Revelations 3:22) we also begin to speak with one voice about issues that concern our church families.

Discipleship is costly – Christian discipleship has its price because it does not stop at personal transformation. In obedience to the gospel (Luke 14:27), it aims to transform the world in and through Christ-like ways.

Baptism and discipleship: what did we share, learn and observe

The JCG acknowledged that a discussion of baptism presupposes the need for baptism. All of us agreed that prior to our conversion we live in a “corrupted” or “sinful” state. We need salvation. For some that begins at the point of baptism, the moment when chrismation also takes place – the time and place where what has been received through the Holy Spirit, becomes active in the life of the one that is baptized. For others, salvation may come at another point such as when one believes, realizes that she or he is a sinner, repents, confesses and desires a new life in Christ. It is at this point that the Holy Spirit comes to indwell the believer.

Baptism may be understood as an ordinance – something the believer does out of obedience to God. It may be understood as a sacrament – a means through which or whereby God pours out divine grace upon the person being baptized. One can view baptism as both a sacrament and an ordinance. Many who receive adult baptism think of it in this way. Baptism seems to act as a place or moment of promise, with God promising to forgive sin and give the Holy Spirit. At the same time, either the community or the individual makes promises as well. God never fails to keep His promises.

We listened to one another tell about our experience of baptism:

- Some were baptized as infants, while others were baptized after making

a confession of faith.

- Some received extensive catechesis before being baptized, while others received catechesis after being baptized.
- Some were admitted to the Lord's Supper or Eucharist after they were baptized and confirmed, while others were admitted following a confession of faith, but prior to baptism.

We agreed that the Holy Spirit is at work in the world, drawing people to God (John 6:44; John 16:13-15). We spent time discussing the various sequences of Baptism practiced by our respective churches. This discussion led to questions like “when do we receive the Holy Spirit?”

- Some contended that the Spirit comes at the point of baptism, while others stated that the Spirit comes when conversion takes place as evidenced by a confession of faith.

When an infant receives baptism, others become responsible for carrying the memory of that baptism. That responsibility rests with the community of faith. Those who receive baptism later – children, youth or adults who make a confession of faith followed by baptism – will have personal memories of their baptism. The community of faith is part of that baptism and they too carry the memory of the act.

- In both cases, the community plays a role in baptism, demonstrating that baptism is intended to be a communal event, welcoming the candidate into the Christian community.
- In both cases, baptism is part of a spiritual journey or pilgrimage in a life-long process (Isaiah 35:8). Even so, this journey includes or begins with an awakening or call.

Regardless of when baptism takes place during the journey of our spiritual life, it is a testimony or witness that identifies us with Christ. Our formation in Christ is accomplished through a number of rites, rituals, hymns, the study of scripture and discipleship training, all of which are intended to make us better followers of Christ. It is an ongoing process of living life according to the example of Christ and through sanctification we are being perfected in our journey with God. In a sense, baptism is not something to which we submit, it is a beginning that comes to completion when we stand face-to-face before Christ.

One of the WCC members asked, “Which is more important – baptism in water or baptism in the Spirit?” The Pentecostal response was to affirm they are

not in competition. It is not a matter of which comes first or which is more important. Rather Pentecostals distinguish between the two. What is clear, is that when one becomes a Christian, one receives the Holy Spirit (Romans 8.9), leading to a deeper communion with the Triune God. Baptism in water is done in obedience to Christ, and for the sacramental Pentecostals of which there are some, it brings a manifestation of God's grace as well. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is also a foundational experience available in the Christian life that brings power to that life, and an ability to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, making that ministry effective.

Another WCC member recalled that there is connection between baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit that is *metanoia*. Another observed that when we speak about baptism in water, we mean both water and Spirit. It is the new birth. It is the renewal of human nature, the clothing with Christ and becoming a member of the church (Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13). But a member of the Pentecostal team quickly responded, "Baptism in the Spirit is not the same as baptism in water."

At that point, we were reminded that the JCG exists as a platform to learn about each other and to learn from one another. There are things we have in common theologically and there are portions of our mystical life that differ between us and which we do not yet understand in the other.

Certainly, the New Testament favoured the baptism of those who confessed their faith in Jesus, without explicitly excluding infant baptism or prohibiting it. Our discussion on baptism reminded us of the value of the ecumenical study, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM). The breadth of differences expressed within the wider fellowship of WCC member churches also exists between the WCC and Pentecostal members of the JCG. As such, BEM makes it possible for all of us to accept the mutual recognition of baptism, according to our tradition. It is equally important to remember that the practice of baptism and discernment of who is a candidate for baptism developed for many centuries before the infant baptism became a common practice in the church. The JCG concluded its discussion, noting the desire to learn more from one another regarding baptism in the Holy Spirit.

4. Unexpected fruits: Surprised by the Spirit

Since it began, the JCG has affirmed that patience is a virtue when encouraging WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches to express their understanding of unity in Christ. At each meeting JCG members shared from their wider ecumenical experience, noting progress in relationships, dialogue, and

cooperation. Some highlights included:

- In 2010 and 2013, the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) and the WCC exchanged invitations to participate in their respective global events. The tradition continued with the participation of WCC leadership in the Pentecostal World Conference in Brazil (2016) and Canada (2019) as well as the participation of PWF leadership in the WCC central committee meeting in Norway (2016) and Switzerland (2018). The global visibility of WCC and PWF relations helps strengthen dialogue, mutual recognition, understanding and cooperation at national and local levels.
- The bilateral dialogues and conversations between Pentecostals and other church families have continued to flourish, i.e. with the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed traditions. The Roman Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue, the oldest such bi-lateral, celebrated 50 years in 2022. The various dialogues and conversations have each helped to broaden ecumenical engagement with Pentecostal churches, making it possible not only to work together and pray together but increasingly to act together.
- The Global Christian Forum (GCF) promotes Christian unity and strengthens relations among church leaders from all church families. It is officially supported by four “pillars” entrusted with the facilitation of the GCF – Roman Catholic Church (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), Pentecostal World Fellowship, World Council of Churches and World Evangelical Alliance. The GCF is the broadest ecumenical forum of its kind and the support of its four pillars encourages similar forums at regional and national levels.
- The Pentecostal World Fellowship, at its meeting in Calgary, Canada (2019), agreed to establish a Christian Unity Commission to facilitate and coordinate PWF involvement in ecumenical activities, including dialogues in which the PWF is represented officially. This offers hope for deeper collaboration in the future between the PWF and the WCC.
- In 2022, the WCC central committee received the Apostolic Faith Mission Church of South Africa as a WCC member church. The church, which was formed by missionaries from the Azusa Street Mission, is one of the oldest Pentecostal churches in the world. It is the first PWF member church to join the WCC. The church was represented in the first two rounds of the JCG.

5. Continuing in the Spirit: Transforming Discipleship (Recommendations)

The JCG celebrates the growing recognition of trust between WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches based on their faithful witness to Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The JCG encourages the continued involvement of Pentecostal churches in the life and work of the WCC. Because of its encounters with students and faculties, the JCG encourages ecumenical collaboration in theological education and formation to strengthen relations at the local level.

For more than two decades, the WCC has sponsored the JCG with the significant participation of individuals representing Pentecostal churches. Given the signs of growing rapprochement between the WCC and the PWF, the JCG recommends the following:

- *R1. The World Council of Churches and the Pentecostal World Fellowship's Christian Unity Commission, as parent bodies, agree to continue the Joint Consultative Group as platform for discussion, mutual encouragement, understanding and cooperation between the member churches of the WCC and the PWF, each appointing a co-moderator and an equal number of members.*
- *R2. The Joint Consultative Group, in its fourth round, should continue to study the Holy Spirit and Discipleship, with a focus on the importance of Spirit Baptism in our different traditions.*
- *R3. The Joint Consultative Group, should continue with the "best practices" established by previous groups, including sharing faith stories; interdisciplinary methods that include prayer, Bible study and theological discussion; as well as meeting in locations that provide opportunities for encounter with local churches and communities.*
- *R4. The Joint Consultative Group should give particular attention to the formation of a new generation in a concerted effort to be an intergenerational platform to promote unity and common witness in Christ.*

6. Members and Biblical Texts

Biblical Texts

"Ministry of the church – the church in the world" (Luke 4:16-20)

"Ministry of the church in the world – go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19-20)

“Ministry of the church in the world – what disciples are called do” (Acts 4:32-35)

“Ministry of the church in the world – passing on the faith” (2 Tim. 2:1-2 and 1 Cor. 15:1-11)

“Ministry of the church in the world – raising up leaders in response to Christ’s prayer” (John 17:21; Mark 10:35-45; Phil. 2:5-11)

“Ministry of the church in the world – directions for the future” (Rev. 1:19)

WCC Team

Co-Moderator:

Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou

Church of Greece (2016, 2019, 2022)

Ms Kyriaki Avtzi

Ecumenical Patriarchate (2016- 2022)

Paul Goodliff

Baptist Union of Great Britain (2016-2019)

Rev. Dr Jerry Pillay

Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (2017-2019)

Rev. Dr Jennifer S. Leath

African Methodist Episcopal Church (2017-2022)

Dr Katsiaryna Pastukhova

Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) (2017)

Pentecostal Team

Co-Moderator (2016-2017, 2019-2022)

Rev. Prof. Dr Cecil M. Robeck, Jr

Assemblies of God

Co-Moderator (2018)

Dr Jean-Daniel Plüss

Swiss Pentecostal Mission (2016-2022)

Rev. Dr Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

Finnish Pentecostal Church (2017-2019)

Rev. Dr Teresa (Tess) Chai
Assemblies of God (Malaysia/Philippines) (2018)

Rev. Dr Paulson Pulikottil
Indian Pentecostal Church (2017, 2019)

Rev. Dr Christopher (Crip) Stevenson
Church of God (Cleveland, TN) (2017-2019)

Rev. Dr Miguel Alvarez
Church of God (Cleveland, TN) (2018-2019)

Guests:

Dr Douglas Chial (2016-2022)
Hielke Wolters (2016)
Archbishop Vahan Hovanesian (2017)
Rev. Carietta Jackson (2017)
Bishop Mary Ann Swenson (2017)
Rev. Dr Amos Yong (2017)
Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit (2019)
Rev. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus (2019)
Dr Vasile Octavian Mihoc (2019-2022)

Reports from the International Ecumenical Dialogues of Evangelicals and Pentecostals

Editors' Note: During the meetings of the Faith and Order Commission between 2015 and 2023, the Commission demonstrated a growing interest in studying and interacting with Evangelicals and especially with Pentecostal churches and scholars around the world. As can be seen in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church*, we have worked with the Commission to open up discussions that we believe will need further study by the Faith and Order Commission. Most people do not know that Pentecostals have been in dialogue with the Catholic Church for over 50 years. They have also participated in dialogue with the World Communion (formerly Alliance) of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and the World Council of Churches through the Joint Consultative Group. Below you will find references to the places where the reports of these dialogues are available. We hope they will act as resources for everyone interested in studying them as well as for the future terms of the Commission on Faith and Order as it continues its study of these churches that have been underrepresented in past studies.

Reports from the International Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Evangelicals

“The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, 1977–1984,” in *Deepening Communion: International Ecumenical Documents with Roman Catholic Participation*, eds. William G. Rusch and Jeffrey Gros (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 425–78.

“Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of *Koinonia*: Report of the International

Consultation between the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Alliance (1993–2002),” in *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998–2005*, eds. Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Thomas F. Best, and Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA, Faith and Order Paper No. 204 (Geneva: WCC Publications/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007). It is available at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/evangelici/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese1.html>.

Reports from the International Dialogues between the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostals¹

“Final Report of the Dialogue between the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Leaders of Some Pentecostal Churches and Participants in the Charismatic Movement within Protestant and Anglican Churches, 1976,” in *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, eds. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, Ecumenical Documents II (New York: Paulist Press; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1984), 422–31; “Final Report of the Dialogue between the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Leaders of Some Pentecostal Churches and Participants in the Charismatic Movement within Protestant and Anglican Churches, 1972–1976,” in *Deepening Communion: International Ecumenical Documents with Roman Catholic Participation*, eds. William G. Rusch and Jeffrey Gros (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 367–78; Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, eds., *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on the World Level, 1982–1998*, Faith and Order Paper No. 187 (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 713–20; in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (1990), 85–95; and in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostal and Christian Unity, Vol. 1: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 101–12.

“Final Report of the Dialogue between the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostals, 1977–1982,” in William G. Rusch and Jeffrey Gros, eds., *Deepening Communion:*

1. All reports from the Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue may also be found at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo.html>.

International Ecumenical Documents with Roman Catholic Participation (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 379–97; in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (1990), 97–115; in Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, eds., *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on the World Level, 1982–1998*, Faith and Order Paper No. 187 (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 721–34; and in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostal and Christian Unity, Vol. 1: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 113–32.

“Perspectives on *Koinonia*: The Report of the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 1989,” in Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* N. 75 (1990/IV), 179–91; in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 12:2 (1990), 117–42; as “Zicht Op ‘Koinonia’: Internationale Dialoog Pinksterkerken/Rooms-Katholieke Kerk – Derde Fase (1985–1989)” in *Kerkelijke Documentatie* 121, 19:9 (Nov. 1991), 29–46; and in “Perspectieven op *Koinonia*,” in *Parakleet* 11/39 (Fall 1991), i–xii. It was also published in Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, eds., *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982–1998* (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 735–52; and in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostal and Christian Unity, Vol. 1: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 133–58.

“Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: The Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue, 1990–1997, Between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders,” in Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* N. 97 (1998/I–II), 38–56; in *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2:1 (Jan. 1999), 105–51; in *One in Christ* xxxv:2 (1999), 158–90; in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 21:1 (Spring 1999), 11–51; in Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, eds., *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982–1998* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), 753–79; and in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostal and Christian Unity, Vol. 1: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 159–98. It was published in French in *Service d’information* N. 97 (1998/I–II), 38–57; in Portuguese in

Diálogo Católico-Pentecostal: Evangelização, Proselitismo e Testemunho Comum (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1999); in Spanish as “Evangelización, Proselitismo y Testimonio Común,” *Diálogo Ecueménico* 108 (1999), 103–52; and in German with all previous reports in *Pfingstler und Katholiken Im Dialog: Die vier Abschlussberichte einer Internationalen Kommission aus 25 Jahren*, eds. Norbert Baumert and Gerhard Bially (Düsseldorf: Charisma, 1999), 59–95.

“On Becoming a Christian: Insights from Scripture and the Patristic Writings with Some Contemporary Reflections—The Report from the Fifth Phase of the International Dialogue between Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders and the Catholic Church (1998–2006).” This document was published in English in Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* N. 129 (2008/III), 162–215 and in French in *Service d’information* N. 129 (2008/III), 163–219; in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostal and Christian Unity, Vol. 2: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 95–216; and in *Growth in Agreement IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 2004–2014*, eds. Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA, John Gibaut, Jeffrey Gros, FSC, and Despina Prassas (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2017), 1:401–70.

“‘Do Not Quench the Spirit’: Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church: Report of the Sixth Phase of the International Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (2011–2015),” in Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* N. 147 (2016/I), 47–62. The document is available in English at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-del-documento-in-inglese.html> and in French at <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-del-documento-in-inglese/testo-del-documento-in-francese.html>.

Reports from the International Dialogues between Reformed and Pentecostals

“Word and Spirit, Church and World: The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 1996–2000,” in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 23:1 (Spring 2001), 9–43; in *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 2:1 (January 1999), 105–51; and as “Word and Spirit, Church and World: Final Report of the International Pentecostal–

Reformed Dialogue,” *Reformed World* 50:3 (September 2000), 128–56. It was published in Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Thomas F. Best, and Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA, eds., *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998–2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 477–97; and in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity: Documents and Critical Assessments* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 199–227. It is available at http://ecumenism.net/archive/docu/2000_pent_warc_word_spirit_church_world.pdf.

“Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community and Justice: The Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 2001–2011.” This document is available in *Reformed World* 63:1 (March 2013), 2–44; in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostal and Christian Unity, Vol. 2: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 217–67; and in Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA, John Gibaut, Jeffrey Gros, FSC, and Despina Prassas, eds., *Growth in Agreement IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 2004–2014* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2017), 2:111–40. Copies of the English text are also available at http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj21/WARC_2011d.html.

“Called to God’s Mission: Report of the Third Round of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 2015–2020.” It was published in *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 23:2 (2020), 5–41; in *Pentecostal Education: A Journal of the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education* 61 (Spring 2021), 55–86; and in *Reformed World* 69:1 (August 2021), 117–48. It is available at <http://www.epcra.ch/papers.html>.

Reports from the International Dialogues between Lutherans and Pentecostals

“Lutherans and Pentecostals Together: Report of the Preliminary Dialogue between Lutherans and Pentecostals” (Strasbourg: Institute for Ecumenical Research; Pasadena: David du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality; Zurich: European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010), in Wolfgang Vondey, ed., *Pentecostal and Christian Unity, Vol. 2: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 35–47; it was published as “Lutherans–Pentecostals: Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue,” in *Growth in Agreement*

IV: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 2004–2014, eds. Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA, John Gibaut, Jeffrey Gros, FSC, and Despina Prassas (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2017), 2:73–110. It is available at <https://ecumenical-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Lutherans-and-Pentecostals-in-Dialogue-Text-FINAL.pdf>.

“The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me’: Report of the First Round of the International Lutheran-Pentecostal Dialogue.” This round of the dialogue was completed at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California (Sept. 27, 2022). It was unanimously approved by the Lutheran World Federation Council in June 2023. It was published as: The Lutheran World Federation and Pentecostal World Fellowship, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” International Lutheran-Pentecostal 2016-2022 Dialogue Statement (Geneva: LWF, 2023). It is also available at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/resources/publication-spirit-lord-upon-me> and at <http://www.epcra.ch/papers.html>.

Reports of the Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals

“Report of the Joint Consultative Group (WCC–Pentecostals), 2000–2005, to the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Porto Alegre, Brazil,” in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 341-63; in *Pentecostal and Christian Unity, Vol. 2: Continuing and Building Relationships*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 48–69.

“Report of the Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals” [2007–2012, to the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Busan, Republic of Korea,] in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2023), 365-82.

“Report of the Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostals” [2016–2022, to the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Karlsruhe, Germany,] in *Towards a Global Vision of the Church: Explorations on Global Christianity and Ecclesiology*, Vol. 2, eds. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, Sotirios Boukis, and Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Faith and Order Paper No. 239 (Geneva:

WCC Publications, 2023), 385-96; and in *Resource Book: World Council of Churches 11th Assembly, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2022* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 97–105.

Contributors

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Prof. Dr Ulrike Link-Wieczorek is a Protestant systematic theologian who worked as a professor at the University of Oldenburg in Germany until the end of March 2023. Her main research has been on African and Korean theology, on British theology of incarnation, and on theology of reconciliation. She studied theology to become a teacher of religion and taught students who also wanted to become teachers. Link-Wieczorek is a member of the Commission on Faith and Order, representing the Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Deutschland, and since 1994 has been a member of the “Deutscher Ökumenischer Studienausschuss.” She is on the board of the journal *Ökumenische Rundschau*.

Prof. Dr Georgios Martzelos is a member of the Church of Greece, a member of the Commission on Faith and Order, and director of the postgraduate programme of theological studies of the University of Neapolis Paphos, Cyprus. He was a professor of theology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, and is a former governor of Mount Athos and director of the Patriarchal Foundation of Patristic Studies.

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commission and the editorial board of the Polish Ecumenical Bible. Since 2006 he has been involved in ecumenical dialogue: both bilateral (Catholic–Baptist World Alliance, 2006–2010) and multilateral (as a commissioner of the Roman Catholic Church in the WCC Commission on Faith and Order).

His Grace Bishop Tiran Petrosyan is the Pontifical Legate of Central Europe and Sweden of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. From 2013 to 2017, he was a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. He was involved as well in the Lausanne–Orthodox Initiative and is a member of the Council of Churches of Austria and the Council of Eastern Orthodox Churches of Austria. Bishop Petrosyan studied at the Faculty of Catholic Theology (Chair of The Theory of Theology and Liturgical Studies) at the University of Vienna.

Rev. Dr Cecil M. Robeck, Jr is an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God. He serves as senior professor of church history and ecumenics and is special assistant to the president for ecumenical relations at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, USA. He has been engaged in ecumenical work for 40 years, most notably with the National Council of Churches in the USA, the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, the World Council of Churches, the Secretaries of Christian World Communions, the Global Christian Forum, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Lausanne Movement, and the Lutheran World Federation. He has been a member of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order since 1989.

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What does it mean to be the Church within the contemporary context of world Christianity?

As a part of the reception process of the convergence document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV)*, the ecclesiology study group of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order undertook a landmark task. The commission broadened the ecclesiological table by opening a wide range of conversations on global Christianity and ecclesiology. This broadening included perspectives from various regions (especially Asia, Africa, and Latin America), denominational families (such as evangelical, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and independent churches), and forms of being church (such as ecclesial movements, new forms of monasticism, and online churches) which have not always been clearly or strongly represented in the discussions on the way to *TCTCV*. Thus, the study group took the opportunity to explore the understanding of ecclesiology held by such churches and engaged in fruitful theological reflection with them.

This series of two volumes offers a taste of the insights, contributions, lively dialogue, diverse perspectives, and mutual exchange of ecumenical gifts between the members of the commission and theologians from all around the world, which took place through a series of international consultations between 2015–22.

Most interestingly, although various aspects of ecclesiology from these regions and denominational families may initially seem distant from, or even incompatible with, more “traditional” ecclesiologies, dialogue with them unearthed much common ground, which ultimately led to significant growth in convergence.

This second volume offers a taste of this growth in convergence through the commission’s interaction with theological perspectives from evangelical, Pentecostal, Charismatic and independent churches. The fruit of this work is offered with the hope that it will contribute towards a clearer, global vision of the Church in the 21st century.