

Two movements of the Holy Spirit of the 20th century: can they come together after 100 Years?

The Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Unity

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Introduction

Both Pentecostals and Ecumenicals see the movements they advocate as among the most significant developments of the 20th Century in the Christian world. They also see their movements as major works of the Holy Spirit. But until recent years only a small number have grasped the importance of both movements. For most of the 20th century, the two movements have rarely interacted and often took little or no cognizance of the other's existence. This situation did not change much when in the second half of the 20th century, the distinctively Pentecostal blessing and experience spread beyond Pentecostal circles in what became known as the charismatic movement. In this paper I am presenting the charismatic movement as a kind of extension and diversification within one current of the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly neither movement came into being to address the question of Christian unity on its own. The ecumenical movement arose out of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 and the realization by so many Christian missionaries of the disastrous effects of Christian division. They knew that denominational rivalry and the lack of love between the missionaries were serious obstacles to the work of evangelism in spreading the gospel of Christ. The Pentecostal movement dating as a worldwide movement from 1906 arose out of a search for deeper life with God and for greater effectiveness in mission. It came into being through outpourings of the Holy Spirit experienced as Pentecost renewed today.

I: Why the Lack of Pentecostal - Ecumenical Relations

From Pentecostal Side: On the Pentecostal side, there was no conscious rejection of the movement for unity stemming from the Edinburgh conference of 1910, because the early Pentecostals were hardly aware of it. I am not aware of any references to Edinburgh 1910 in early Pentecostal literature.¹ There was little penetration by the Pentecostal movement of the historic churches open to the ecumenical movement and even less in the USA than in Europe.² The experience of rejection, particularly by denominations of a more Evangelical character, strengthened the sectarian tendencies to Pentecostal isolation and a lack of fellowship with other Christians.

When the Pentecostal movement arose at a time when major tensions had developed in the Evangelical world, particularly in North America, concerning the influence of biblical criticism and liberal tendencies in theology. The Pentecostals instinctively sided with the more conservative reaction, that was mostly receptive to the relatively new system of pre-millennial dispensationalism. This current manifested a major interest in the fulfilment of biblical prophecy and gave rise to twelve booklets

1 Professor Allan Anderson indicated at the Conference that he knew of just two instances.

2 The early Pentecostal leaders who remained in their churches of origin were not influential figures in their own churches though Jonathan Paul of Germany was better known than the others because of his involvement in the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung* (the German expression of the Holiness movement). However, the rejection of the Pentecostal movement as "nicht von oben, sondern von unten" [not from above but from below] in the Berlin Declaration of 1909 tended to marginalize Paul within that constituency.

entitled “The Fundamentals” (1910 - 15).³ The Pentecostal sympathy was rooted in their strong sense of eschatological urgency and the imminence of the Lord's coming in glory. The strong Evangelical representation at the Edinburgh conference came from the more moderate Evangelicals, who had embraced the slogan “The Evangelization of the World in this Generation”, but who were unsympathetic to dispensationalism and conservative fundamentalism. So the Evangelical element in ecumenical origins, represented above all by the American Methodist, John R. Mott, came in time to be largely forgotten, a loss that itself formed part of the declining focus on evangelism within the ecumenical movement as the century developed. So next year besides the celebrations of the centenary of the ecumenical movement, there will be Evangelical celebrations of the Edinburgh Conference without any reference to the ecumenical movement, but simply as an important missionary event.

From Ecumenical Side: On the ecumenical side, there was little awareness of the Pentecostal movement. In its origins the ecumenical movement was a coming together of leaders with major responsibilities in their churches and mission agencies, at a time when the Pentecostal movement was in an inchoate formative stage without as yet having leaders with clear-cut responsibilities and with only a few small missionary societies. In this way, the ecumenical movement was particularly a movement of the educated and the articulate, that was to develop in two main thrusts, Faith and Order (theological and doctrinal) and Life and Work (with a focus on common action in society), neither of which corresponded to concerns on the heart of the first Pentecostals.

It was not until the writings of Lesslie Newbigin in the 1950s that there was an ecumenical voice recognizing the importance of the distinctive Pentecostal way of being Christian. Newbigin's creative approach arose from his experience as a missionary leader in India, where he was impressed by the vigour of the Pentecostals.⁴ While Newbigin's book was well received, it does not appear to have influenced other ecumenical leaders much in this direction.

Moreover, the first generation of Pentecostals were not very interested in theology or in structures, and indeed there were definite currents of opposing the Spirit to the mind and of opposing the freedom of the Spirit to all structures and institutions. The first Pentecostals were generally from the lower strata of society and came from “the wrong side of the tracks”. Their concerns, their experience and their sources of information were much different from the world of the participants at Edinburgh.

In the stark contrasts between the two origins, eschatology dominated the Pentecostal pioneers, whereas it was not a marked feature among advocates of ecumenism.

Points of Affinity

Despite this lack of mutual contact and awareness, the two movements had some concerns in common.

1. *A Heart for Christian Unity.* Many early Pentecostal leaders that the pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit creates a spiritual unity among the Spirit-baptized and a sense of unity being an imperative of the Spirit. Mel Robeck has reminded us more than once that William Seymour

3 In one way, this linkage made little logical sense, because the strict dispensationalists argued that the gifts of the Spirit were only for the foundational period of the Church, the position now known as “cessationism”.

4 Newbigin's urging of the “pentecostal” element as one of the three necessary ingredients of a renewed and restored unity was articulated in his book, *The Household of God*, though it should be noted that by the term “pentecostal” he was referring to those Christian groupings for which experience of God, especially of the Holy Spirit, is the defining characteristic, thus including Pentecostals, Quakers and the Holiness movement under this heading.

had a vision for Christian unity: “We stand as assemblies and missions all in perfect harmony. Azusa stands for the unity of God's people everywhere. God is uniting His people, baptizing them by one Spirit into one body.”⁵ Cees van der Laan has written about the ecumenical vision of the Dutch Pentecostal pioneer, Gerrit Polman, in his book, *Sectarian against his Will*. As the movement began to organize and also to fragment, the original attention to unity became much reduced and attenuated.

2. *A Concern for Missions* In its first years, the ecumenical movement had a strong concern for missions and evangelism, two central Pentecostal themes from the outset. After all, the initiative for the Edinburgh conference came from the missionary world, so the conference was entitled “The Edinburgh Conference on World Missions”. The ongoing concern for missions led to the formation of the International Missionary Council, which was not integrated into the WCC until 1961. There was little sign at that time of the emphases that later in the century would alienate the Evangelical constituency, though the decision, coming from “high Anglican” pressure, to regard Latin America as already evangelized through the Roman Catholic Church did divide and weaken the initial Evangelical support for the unity thrust that emerged from the Edinburgh Conference.

II: The Growing Alienation of the Two Movements

1. *The growing dependence of Pentecostals on Evangelical Doctrine and Categories.* Despite the fact that the fiercest critics of the nascent Pentecostal movement came from the Evangelical ranks, it proved very difficult for the Pentecostals to escape the Evangelical net. They found themselves with little option but to utilize Evangelical theological categories to present their own convictions. The reasons for this are not hard to find. First, the Pentecostals had few theological skills or even interest in academic work, so as the Pentecostal denominations were formed and needed to draw up doctrinal statements, they took over Evangelical formulations with a couple of addenda on baptism in the Spirit, often with initial evidence, and healing through the atonement. Second, Pentecostals understood their movement as a Revival in continuity with Evangelical revivals, though they saw the Pentecostal revival as “revival plus”. They were able to take over Evangelical doctrinal statements because they shared fundamental convictions about basic doctrines like the authority of the Scriptures, atonement through the cross, the necessity of personal conversion and knowledge of Jesus and the priority of evangelism.

Further, the eschatological scenarios of pre-millennial dispensationalism were attractive to the Pentecostals because of their sense of eschatological urgency, despite the cessationism inherent to these theories. All these factors contributed over a couple of generations to growing rapprochement between Pentecostals and conservative Evangelicals. This coming together was, we may say, consummated with the formation in the USA of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942, in which Pentecostal denominations were participants from the beginning. This subsuming of Pentecostalism under the wings of Evangelicalism was at its zenith during the “reign” of Thomas Zimmermann as general superintendent of the (American) Assemblies of God (1959 – 85). This close association meant that Pentecostal attitudes to the ecumenical movement were largely determined by Evangelical responses, especially in the Western world.

Because the pattern of Evangelical relationships to other Christians is primarily determined by doctrinal criteria, the close association of Pentecostals with Evangelicalism meant that Pentecostal

5 *The Apostolic Faith, Jan.1907*, cited by Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2006), p. 96.

attitudes to ecumenism were less able to benefit from the “gut instinct” in Pentecostals to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit among all who believe in Christ Jesus.

2. *The deeper Alienation dating from the 1960s.* It was in the 1960s that a deeper alienation of the Evangelical world from the ecumenical movement developed that has remained with us ever since. Several factors contributed to this alienation:

- * The secularizing trends in the mainline Churches of Europe and North America welcomed into the WCC; this was the decade of John Robinson's *Honest to God*, of Harvey Cox's *The Secular City* and various works on “the death of God”.
- The growing ecumenical focus on the world and society illustrated in the Church & Society conference of 1966; the Uppsala Assembly of 1968 with slogans such as “the world sets the agenda. This led to a decentring of the Church (there is a necessary de-centring of the Church but any de-centring that weakens the mandate for evangelism is disastrous).
- * The world-centred agenda was also reflected in the Liberation Theology coming out of Latin America and that found expression in the controversial WCC Programme to Combat Racism granting funds to movements recognizing a proper use of violence, which demonstrated to Evangelicals the rightness of their suspicions about the WCC.
- At this time the “ecumenical” churches opted for dialogue as the right way to relate to the major non-Christian religions, a move that was accompanied by a marked reduction in the practice if not immediately in their official commitment to missionary work.
- This was precisely the period of the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 65) which led to the entry of the Roman Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement. This increased Evangelical and Pentecostal opposition. .

III: The Advent of the Charismatic Movement

But interestingly, at the same time as the Evangelicals were becoming more alienated from the ecumenical movement the charismatic movement was coming on the scene. Although there was from a very early date a “non-denominational” segment within the charismatic movement, it was first seen as a renewal movement within the historic Churches. Beginning within the Protestant communions in the 1950s, it only became visible as an identifiable movement in the first half of the 1960s. Then in 1967, it spread to the Roman Catholic Church, where to most people's surprise it was received and welcomed more quickly than in any other communion.

By this time, the Pentecostals were allergic to all ecumenism and the relationship issue they had to face was not about the ecumenical movement, but how to respond to the “neo-Pentecostals” as the charismatics were first called⁶. Some Pentecostals were suspicious and many were cautious, but from an early date a few bolder spirits embraced what one of them, Donald Gee, had termed “Pentecost outside Pentecost”. This phrase expresses an immediate acceptance, recognizing as “Pentecost” this work of the Holy Spirit in non-Pentecostal contexts. Gee was showing this openness from the 1950s, but his information was coming from reports sent to him by his Pentecostal friend, David du Plessis,

6 It was only in 1963 that the term “charismatic” was first used in this connection and it then took a few years for this to become the accepted designation.

one of the great ecumenical figures of the 20th century. Du Plessis understood from the 1950s on that his life's calling was to witness to this “new pentecostal outpouring”, both to the Pentecostals and to the Churches. In effect the ministry of du Plessis, from 1960 until his death in 1987, was threefold: first, telling the Pentecostals and the charismatics that this was the same blessing that had been poured out at Azusa Street at the beginning of the Pentecostal movement; second, informing church leaders about the Pentecostal movement and the amazing spread of the charismatic movement throughout the world; third, urging the charismatics not to leave their churches, but to remain as instruments of renewal. Robeck has noted the increasing hostility to the ecumenical movement of some Pentecostal denominations, particularly in the U. S. Assemblies of God and the Church of God.⁷

Protestant Response. Among those impacted by the charismatic movement, many in the Protestant churches tended to be unsympathetic to the ecumenical movement sharing many of the negative attitudes of the Pentecostals. This was often less true of the leaders than of ordinary church members, particularly with Anglicans like David Watson of England and Archbishop Bill Burnett of South Africa, and of Lutherans like Arnold Bittlinger and Larry Christenson. But hardly any Protestant leader who identified with the charismatic movement was significantly active in regular ecumenical activity.⁸

Catholic Response. The one group of charismatic Christians to experience charismatic renewal as inherently ecumenical were the Catholics. First, for many Catholics their first experience of relating to other Christians was in charismatic groups and at charismatic conferences. Second, charismatic Catholics readily understood the unexpected outbreak of charismatic renewal within the Roman Catholic Church as a fulfilment of Pope John's prayer for a “new Pentecost” and a first-fruits of the fundamental renewal that had been the goal of the Second Vatican Council. Since the Council represented the official Roman Catholic acceptance of the ecumenical movement, the charismatic Catholics naturally interpreted their new experience with other Christians in ecumenical terms. But most importantly, charismatic Catholics from the start understood charismatic renewal as for the renewal of the whole Church, though this was not always understood in ecumenical terms.

IV: Why Charismatic Contribution to Ecumenism has been disappointing

Looking back, we might have expected that the charismatic Christians within the “ecumenical Churches” would have played a bigger role in bridging the gap between the two movements. This did not really happen then or in what remained of the twentieth century. Why was this? Several reasons can be suggested:

- * Initial Response to Profound Experiences with the Lord. The new charismatics had typically experienced a spiritual upheaval with their baptism in the Spirit. Following the normal psychological pattern of clear-cut conversion experiences, their immediate focus was on God, on Christ and on what is evidently “spiritual”. Most ecumenical activity did not look very spiritual or dynamic, being focused more on dialogue and common action than on seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit in prayer.
- * Despite the early example of Lesslie Newbigin, there were hardly any significant theological writings from the Protestant side.⁹ However, when the movement spread to the Catholic Church,

7 See Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. “Pentecostals and Christian Unity: Facing the Challenge”, *Pneuma* 26/2 (2004), pp. 307 – 338; see especially footnotes 23 – 26.

8 When some charismatic leaders addressed theological issues, they tended to concern issues arising within charismatic renewal or relations with Evangelicals, as with the Fountain Trust statement on Word and Spirit in the UK (1977).

9 There were some important biblical studies ranging from the academic work of James Dunn to the more popular

several theologians were baptized in the Spirit,¹⁰ and others were sympathetic, but few were deeply involved in ecumenical work.¹¹ The scholar-participants were largely focused on their professional studies. The ecumenical specialists were involved either in theological dialogue or in practical forms of ecumenical collaboration, and in neither were charismatics much in evidence.

- Despite the recognition of the ecumenical character and significance of the charismatic movement in the first two Malines Document sponsored and/or written by Cardinal Suenens of Belgium, these statements seem to have had minimal subsequent influence. In May 1974, a group of theologian-participants and sympathetic observers gathered by Cardinal Suenens produced a document entitled “Theological and Pastoral Orientations on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal” that stated: “It is evident that the charismatic renewal is a major ecumenical force and is de facto ecumenical in nature.”¹² There was an awareness then that the origins of CCR in many countries had an ecumenical character. Although a subsequent booklet of Cardinal Suenens on *Ecumenism and Charismatic Renewal*¹³ developed this point in more detail, it had surprisingly little long-term effect on the renewal movement.¹⁴
- In Europe and North America, which largely shaped the theology of the historic Churches, there was a lack of openness to the significance of supernatural and preternatural phenomena and a widespread denial in practice, and sometimes in theory, of the possibility of “miracles” in today's scientific and technological world.¹⁵ This rationalist suspicion of the “miraculous” also extended to conservative Evangelical sources, who differed radically from more “liberal” scholars on the possibility of miracles in the New Testament, but who either denied the miraculous today on cessationist grounds or were simply highly cautious and suspicious in this area. The rationalist influences on Evangelical thinking also influenced many charismatic Protestants. Thus they often interpreted the Scriptures in a fundamentalist manner and they frequently adopted the dominant Pentecostal theology of baptism in the Spirit. But in relation to ecumenism, many understood the spiritual unity they were experiencing as from the Holy Spirit in contrast to the merely human efforts to achieve unity that they attributed to the ecumenical movement. These attitudes were no doubt encouraged by the lack of support the charismatics experienced from their denominations, which also led to many leaving to join Pentecostal or non-denominational assemblies. As we will note in due course, it is only as the Western Christian world is waking up to the “shift to the global south” that a greater openness to the Christianity of the southern hemisphere is developing.

None of the Protestant Churches affirmed the charismatic movement with any recognition of its

scholarship of Arnold Bittlinger.

10 For example, Fr Francis Sullivan, SJ, Fr Domenico Grasso, SJ and Fr Robert Faricy, SJ, all of the Gregorian University in Rome; Fr Albert (later Bishop) de Monléon, OP from France; Fr Paul Lebeau, SJ from Belgium; Fr Donald Gelpi, SJ, Fr Robert Sears, SJ (USA), Fr John Haughey, SJ; and Fr Edward O'Connor, CSC (USA); Fr Alday Carrillo (Mexico). There were also biblical scholars such as Fr George Montague, SM (USA) and Fr Francis Martin (Canada and USA).

11 One theologian to be involved with charismatics and in ecumenical dialogues was Fr Kilian McDonnell, OSB from the USA

12 *Theological and Pastoral Orientations on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal* (Word of Life, 1974), p. 49.

13 Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, *Ecumenism and Charismatic Renewal: Theological and Pastoral Orientations*: Malines Document 2, (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1978).

14 A perusal of Catholic ecumenical journals and literature of the following decade will show very little treatment of this topic. One exception was *One in Christ*, which published some of the early papers from the Catholic – Pentecostal dialogue. This came from the influence of an editor, Dom Benedict Heron, OSB, who had become a zealous advocate of charismatic renewal.

15 It was this mentality that helped to contribute to the tragedy of the African archbishop, Emmanuel Milingo, who following his baptism in the Spirit discovered that he had unusual gifts of healing.

importance. The many statements issued by Protestant denominations almost all gave a reluctant permission for its existence and warned against the dangers. They typically paid much attention to the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, and indicated that their major concern was abandonment to the irrational. By contrast, the Catholic responses from many episcopal conferences barely mentioned speaking in tongues. With ecumenical involvement being so new to the Roman Catholic Church, there was a concern that Catholic ecumenical involvement be properly monitored and under the close guidance of church authority. The spontaneous character of charismatic renewal and the rise of many inter-denominational groups quite independently of any church initiative, raised real fears of what the French graphically described as an “oecuménisme sauvage” that one may translate as “wildfire ecumenism”. This raises a very important question about church control and openness to the Holy Spirit to which we shall need to return.

- Few people in the early years grasped the importance of the charismatic movement for unity as a grass roots phenomenon impacting large numbers of ordinary church members. By contrast, the ecumenical movement as it had developed had become particularly the preserve of church leaders and theologians, with interested support from the more highly educated sectors of the Church.
- Lastly, the church authorities themselves did not see the ecumenical potential of the charismatic movement. The Protestant communions were very guarded in their response to the charismatic movement, being more deeply influenced by rationalist and secularist assumptions and so being particularly suspicious of glossolalia as something quite irrational. The Roman Catholic Church, while being remarkably open to this renewal, especially at the top level, treated CCR as one among many new Catholic movements¹⁶ and often saw the ecumenical component as a potential problem more than as a source of blessing. Although Cardinal Suenens had spoken very positively of the renewal's ecumenical potential, he was entrusted by Pope Paul VI with the task of ensuring that CCR was properly integrated into Catholic life. This focus militated in practice against any real encouragement of the ecumenical dimension, a focus that was somewhat intensified under the bishop appointed in the Vatican to succeed Suenens as “official overseer” of CCR. This lack of awareness was vividly illustrated in the new Ecumenical Directory published by the Vatican in 1993 which astonishingly made no mention whatever of anything charismatic.¹⁷

V: New Signs of Hope: Changing Patterns in the last Twenty Years

Within the Ecumenical World. Despite this unpromising history, many signs have appeared in the last twenty years indicating a new openness on both sides of the chasm. Within the historic Churches and ecumenical movement, several factors have been contributing to a re-thinking. First, the rapid growth of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity, especially in the Two-Thirds world and a decline in historic Christianity, especially in the West, has meant that a steadily smaller percentage of the world's Christians are supporting the ecumenical movement. This decreasing credibility of the organized ecumenical movement, and particularly of the World Council of Churches, have alerted many to the urgent need to bridge the gap between the historic ecumenical churches and the Evangelical – Pentecostal world.

Second, there has been increasing recognition that the official ecumenical movement has reached an impasse. Even those valuing the achievements of official ecumenical dialogues the most have been seeing that something more is needed to move the whole movement forward. Part of the frustration so

¹⁶ More recently, these movements have become known as “new ecclesial movements”.

¹⁷ This is also true of the otherwise excellent and creative encyclical letter of John Paul II on unity, *Ut Unum Sint* (1995).

widely felt comes from the slowness of the Churches to respond positively to the real fruits of these dialogues. To date, the only ecumenical accord to have been endorsed by both commissioning Churches is the Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith (1999). However, the enthusiasm aroused by this document has waned as it seems to have had very little practical effect on Lutheran-Catholic relations. This slowness points to the lack of deep desire in the Churches for the transformation that unity will require and the complacency over their present state and situation. One positive response to this frustration is the rise of what is being called “receptive ecumenism” that focuses on the question: “What are the gifts that we can receive from the other Churches?”¹⁸ This focus restores a forward-looking dynamic to ecumenical encounters, but it is too early to say what effect this focus will have on the actual functioning of the official ecumenical dialogues.

Third, the Church world of the West is becoming more aware of “the shift to the global south”, vividly described in the books of Philip Jenkins.¹⁹ While Walter Hollenweger had been saying this for years, it is people like Jenkins (and to a lesser degree Harvey Cox) who have been insisting that the Christianity of the twenty-first century shows clear signs of being overwhelmingly Pentecostal-charismatic in character. The university world is finally beginning to recognize the importance of Pentecostal studies with the setting up of professorial chairs and/or centres devoted to these studies.²⁰ Hence, there is now a greater market for the work of scholars like Allan Anderson.

Fourth, as the causes for the ecumenical malaise are examined, there is a new appreciation for “spiritual ecumenism”. In fact, the “spiritual ecumenism” stemming from the life and ministry of the Abbé Paul Couturier of Lyon, France (1881 – 1953) had a central place in the ecumenical teaching of the Second Vatican Council (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, paras. 6 – 8). If this emphasis had been more heeded, many of the Evangelical and Pentecostal objections to ecumenism might have been allayed, for the teaching of Couturier was strongly christocentric, rooted in prayer and submission to the will of Jesus Christ, and it made repentance and conversion central to the ecumenical task. Couturier called for an ecclesially-christocentric approach to ecumenism instead of the ecclesiocentric patterns that had previously controlled Catholic thinking. For Couturier and for the Fathers of Vatican Two “spiritual ecumenism” was not the prayer department of an organized movement, but was the heart of all work for unity. This focus was taken up again by Pope John Paul II in *Ut Unum Sint* (1995). Though, John Paul II did not present his letter as a corrective for the ecumenical movement, in effect the ecumenical dialogue he commends is often a vision of what dialogue could and should be rather than a description of the movement as it had actually been. For example, the Pope wrote that “Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an 'exchange of gifts'.” (*Ut Unum Sint*, para. 28). He wrote about “examination of conscience” leading to the confession of sin as being a constitutive element in ecumenical dialogue.²¹ John Paul II's call for a Catholic confession of the sins of the past, first in 1994 and repeated in *Ut Unum Sint*, is of huge significance, for the lack of any clear-cut confession of past sin from ecumenical dialogue helps to explain why real progress has been so slow.

Often initiatives outside the official ecumenical structures have pointed the way for the future. The continuing influence and impact of the Taizé community in France and of their annual youth conferences in major European cities show that a truly ecumenical vision for deep reconciliation and healing can and does inspire young Christians. The ecumenical community at Bosé in the Italian Alps

18 See Paul Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: exploring a way for contemporary ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

19 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*

20 E.g. in Birmingham, Amsterdam, Bangor, Heidelberg, Uppsala.

21 The first dialogue in which the Catholic Church has been engaged to introduce the confession of past sin into their exchanges was the Catholic – Mennonite dialogue, only inaugurated after 1995.

is making a major difference to Catholic – Orthodox relations. The informal Catholic – Protestant dialogue group in France known as the Groupe des Dombes, which Couturier helped to launch, has always combined worship, prayer and theological discussion, issuing in later years several remarkable documents, of which one of the most significant is entitled *For the Conversion of the Churches*.

Also of major significance for the unity of the Church is the unexpected reappearance of Jewish expressions of faith in Jesus the Christ. At the time of Vatican Two, several Catholic ecumenists urged that the Jewish question was intra-covenantal and that the schism between the Church and the synagogue was the first and prototypical schism within the Church. While this position became unfashionable and indelicate with the rise of Jewish-Christian dialogue, the issue is raised again with the spread of the Messianic Jewish movement, which is largely charismatic. This phenomenon reminds the whole Church that the model of reconciliation into one body presented by Paul is of Jews and Gentiles reconciled through the cross (Eph. 2: 14 – 16) so that the Gentile members become co-heirs, co-members and co-sharers in the promises with the Jewish disciples (Eph. 3: 6).

Directly Involving the Evangelicals and the Pentecostals. There have also been significant developments in the Pentecostal and Evangelical worlds that affect attitudes to Christian unity. One is that since the 1980s the Evangelical world has become much more strongly permeated by the charismatic element. Many Evangelical churches and institutions have opened up to the ministry of healing and of other spiritual gifts, as well as their worship focusing more on praise. While there is still widespread suspicion of the Catholic Church among Pentecostals and Evangelicals, the experience of fellowship with charismatic Catholics has undoubtedly changed many perceptions. One can often see a process taking place from an initial acceptance of charismatic Catholics as genuine Christians to a re-evaluation of attitudes towards the Catholic Church and its heritage. It is probably this factor that has facilitated Evangelical and Catholic cooperation in the defence of traditional Christian values and standards in the face of a more secular and permissive society, as with the group “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” in the USA.

The forms of Catholic – Evangelical collaboration and fellowship though not yet the norm have been multiplying over the last two decades. The most developed to my knowledge is the Round Table (*Weg zur Versöhnung*) in Austria that involves most Evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic groups with Catholic and Lutheran charismatics in a committed and structured relationship. Youth with a Mission has developed a network called Kerygma Teams to work with Catholic communities for the evangelization and formation of Catholics.²² In Nanterre, Paris and in Hyderabad, India, the Catholic bishop has washed the feet of prominent free church charismatic leaders and vice versa.²³ In Sweden, free charismatic Ulf Ekman, leader of a large network Livets Ord (Word of Life), is regularly working with the Catholic bishop of Stockholm. The same currents have contributed on a wider basis to the coming together of several new Catholic movements with renewal groupings from the Evangelical and Protestant worlds in the Europa auf dem Weg congresses held in Stuttgart, Germany, in May 2004 and May 2007.

As all in EPCRA will know, the last twenty years have seen the rise of a genuine Pentecostal scholarship, both biblical and historical, with an increasing number of calls for the formation of a distinctively Pentecostal hermeneutic, theology and self-understanding that would mark out the Pentecostal movement clearly from conservative Evangelicalism.²⁴ This development, as yet not

22 Kerygma Teams is working in several European nations, in India, Ghana and Australia.

23 The bishop of Nanterre has written a preface to Carlos Payan's book on healing.

24 This process has been closely linked to the rise and remarkable development of the Society for Pentecostal Studies and

greatly influencing the world of denominational officials in North America, has major significance for the possibilities of the emergence of a genuine Pentecostal contribution to the search for Christian unity. Importantly in the realm of scholarship, as Pentecostal students have frequented the more prestigious universities and are mixing with other Christian scholars, much more open attitudes to ecumenism are developing. This has been particularly evident in the Society for Pentecostal Studies, whose annual conference has had for several years a preliminary session for Pentecostal – Catholic exchange.

But maybe the most significant pointer of all has been the formation of the Global Christian Forum (GCF). Interestingly, this initiative came from the reflections and concerns of leading officials within the World Council of Churches.²⁵ As their website states: “The Global Christian Forum is about bringing into conversation with one another Christians and churches from very different traditions who have little or never talked to each other. It is about building bridges where there are none, overcoming prejudices, creating and nurturing new relationships. We have become convinced that our churches and organizations could benefit greatly from a Forum where they could speak with one another face to face, pray for one another directly, learn from one another, and together gain insights into common problems that could help all to respond to them more effectively.”²⁶ After almost a decade of quiet and painstaking preparation, the first global-level meeting of Christian leaders took place in Limuru, Kenya, in November 2006. The range of participating leaders was astounding, with a strong and significant representation from all parts of the Christian spectrum, including the Evangelical and Pentecostal movements. There were also leaders from the charismatic movement present at Limuru.²⁷ The form taken in the Limuru sessions was carefully agreed in advance, so meetings were focused on participants praying together, on personal witness and sharing without any formalities or use of titles.

VI: The Need for Each Other

The Ecumenical Need for the Pentecostal and Charismatic Contribution. We can identify the following contributions:

- * The Holy Spirit focus of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements leads to an emphasis on the centrality of relationships, first with the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and then with each other in Christ. It insists on the total centrality of the person of Jesus, not on any particular doctrine or ecclesiology and on the unpredictable workings of the Holy Spirit. It requires a greater trust of the Holy Spirit and a letting-go of the mentalities of control that have disfigured and limited the exercise of authority in the Churches. The centrality of relationships means that the approach to unity cannot begin from institutions and structures or even from comparative ecclesiology, but from friendship and mutual respect in Christ. This pattern adopted in the GCF proved acceptable to the Pentecostal participants.
- An important contribution can come from Evangelical-charismatic strategic intercession, that has seen a vast increase in the last twenty-five years. The openness to the Holy Spirit that comes with the exercise of the charisms that Paul calls *charismata pneumatika* makes possible a far more

its magazine *Pneuma*, as well as the later *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*.

25 The idea of a “space” where such conversations could take place originally came from Dr Konrad Raiser in the mid-to-late 1990s. The Forum idea was pursued and developed over many years of relationship-building led by Hubertus van Beek, a retired WCC staff member.

26 www.globalchristianforum.org

27 However, there were no leaders at Limuru from the new charismatic churches and networks.

effective – and targeted – intercession for reconciliation and unity. However this targeted intercession has been focused on reconciliation in conflicts between people-groups, and not on reconciliation between divided churches. The reason is clear: these Christians have realized how the residue of past conflicts hinders effective evangelism today. Though these milieux have not seen the need for reconciliation between church traditions, the methods and principles being practiced are equally applicable to conflict and division between church traditions, e.g. identifying the root-causes of long-standing conflicts, particularly the spiritual component in these roots, prayer journeys of teams with participants from both sides of the conflicts to sites of particular significance in the origins and development of the conflict²⁸, fasting and praying for these journeys.

- There needs to be theological reflection on the phenomenon of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, particularly on the role of revival movements in the renewal of the Church. Only with a positive theology of revival movements will a proper respect for the “free churches” develop within the ancient Churches that connect authentic “churchness” to apostolic succession and recognized eucharistic expression. It does not contribute to the advancement of Christian unity to say other ecclesial bodies are not “churches” in the full sense when nothing is said as to what they corporately represent as works of the Holy Spirit of God.
- There is also a potential contribution from Pentecostal theology, especially with the steady development and growth in quality scholarly studies in the last twenty-five years.²⁹ Maybe the most significant Pentecostal contribution will arise from their distinctive ways of reading and interpreting the Scriptures, which involve the interaction of the work of the Holy Spirit in the biblical text, in the Pentecostal community of faith and in the exegete and reader. This combination not only leads to new insights but it also opens up more sections of the Bible as serious stimulants for theological reflection. There needs to be far more theological reflection of a kind that avoids all rationalistic reductionism on the actual practices developing in Pentecostal and charismatic ministry. If no theological reflection is taking place on the latest popular level developments, then the danger remains of an academic theology that bears little relation to the most flourishing dimensions of Christian mission.
- The ecumenical movement needs the Evangelical and Pentecostal contribution to give an adequate place to eschatology in the quest for Christian unity. Charismatics within the historic Churches can play a major role in bridging the gap between more critical biblical scholarship in the Churches and the more conservative positions among Evangelicals and Pentecostals. For the Holy Spirit is preparing the one Bride among all who have been “called to the one hope” (Eph. 4: 3).

The Pentecostal Need for the Ecumenical Contribution.

- Pentecostals need the ecumenical movement first because this is the most effective antidote to all sectarian tendencies, which easily plague movements of the Spirit. Ecumenical involvement challenges the self-sufficiency of the theologies, which often underpin the sectarian tendencies.
- Constructive relationships with the historic Churches will help to address the individual

28 Among such prayer journeys have been visits to historic sites in the stories of indigenous peoples, or First Nation groups, such as the Aborigines in Australia and Indian tribes in North America; visits to the slave ports of West Africa; visits by British teams to the eleven “colonies” on the Eastern sea-board of the USA; visits to the Nazi concentration camps of Europe.

29 Although North America has led the way, this process is also evident in other continents, perhaps particularly in East Asia.

presuppositions of the Evangelical and Pentecostals worlds. These are closely linked to the divisive patterns and tendencies that prevent these movements making a real contribution to the unity of the body of Christ.

- Pentecostal scholars need the stimulus of the ecumenical movement to develop their own ecclesiology. This is now happening through the Pentecostal theologians who have most engaged with the doctrine and theology of the historic Churches.³⁰
- The Pentecostal churches need to participate in the ecumenical movement to enter into a more adequate vision of the fulness of the coming Kingdom. Pentecostals speak of the “full Gospel”, but they often need to learn about the fulness of which Paul speaks especially in the letter to the Ephesians.
- Ecumenical involvement will challenge the attitudes widespread among Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians that a “spiritual unity” is sufficient that lacks any embodied expression. This is a refusal to accept the embodied character of human life and society and to see the implications of the incarnation for Christian faith and life. The Pentecostal-charismatic emphasis on the Spirit and the Evangelical emphasis on the Word require the complementary witness of liturgical traditions to the “Word made flesh through the Spirit”. Ecumenical involvement will lead in time to a transformation of attitudes towards bodily life, the creation, tradition and institutions.

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