

The Challenge of the Pentecostal Movement and the First Dialogue Results on the World Level

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Introduction

At first glance, it might seem strange that Pentecostals and Lutherans should be talking with one another. On the surface they appear to be quite different from each other. Lutherans have been around since the 16th Century. Most would trace Pentecostal origins only to the very late 19th or early 20th centuries.¹ Lutherans worship according to set liturgies, while Pentecostals freely innovate on the spot. Lutherans often sing stately hymns accompanied by organs. Pentecostals generally sing lively choruses accompanied by hand-clapping, guitars, tambourines, and drums. Lutherans are often viewed as dominantly northern European – Germans, Dutch, and Scandinavians. Pentecostals are more likely to be Latin American or African. It appears that generally speaking, there are significant class differences between them as well. If these stereotypical difference did not provide sufficient reason for some to raise their eyebrows in consternation at the thought of a Lutheran – Pentecostal dialogue, one need only be reminded of Luther’s distaste for anyone that might appear to fall into the category of enthusiasts or *Schwärmer*.²

Many of these differences are more apparent than real, however, and Lutherans have had significant exposure to and interacted with Pentecostals in a number of countries,

¹ See, for instance, Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

² One need think only of Dr. Andreas Karlstadt and the letter that Martin Luther wrote to the Christians of this city. Martin Luther, “Letter to the Christians at Strassburg in Opposition to the Fanatic Spirit,” in Conrad Bergendoff, Ed. and Trans., *Luther’s Works*, 40:65-71.

most notably in Scandinavia.³ They have also had some experience with a version of “Pentecostalism” within the ranks of the Lutheran tradition, namely through the Charismatic Renewal.⁴ For some Lutherans this experience has been quite positive.⁵ In other places the implications of what it means for the Lutheran World Federation to include a church that is highly charismatic such as the Ethiopian Evangelical (Lutheran) Mekane Yesus Church has not yet been fully appreciated. And in some places, such as Pentecostal-rich Brazil, the disagreement over Pentecostalism’s place *within* the Lutheran Church has recently contributed to a break.⁶ Even where Charismatic Renewal within

³ “The Official Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Pentecostal Movement of Finland 1987–1989,” in *Dialogues with The Evangelical Free Church of Finland and the Finnish Pentecostal Movement*. Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 2 (Helsinki, Finland: Church Council for Foreign Affairs, Ecclesiastical Board, 1990), 33–56; Risto A. Ahonen, “Appraisal of the Discussions Between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Pentecostal Movement of Finland,” in *Dialogues with The Evangelical Free Church of Finland and the Finnish Pentecostal Movement*. Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 2 (Helsinki, Finland: Church Council for Foreign Affairs, Ecclesiastical Board, 1990), 57–63. These findings are also published in the Finnish language as: *Päätösasiakirja: Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon ja Suomen helluntaiherätyksen viralliset neuvottelut 1987-1989* (Vantaa, Finland: RV-Kirjat, 1989), 46 pp; Koo Dong Yoo, “Water Baptism and Spirit Baptism: Pentecostals and Lutherans in Dialogue,” *Dialogue* 43:4 (2004), 344-351. In Norway and Sweden, Pentecostals are now members of the Council of Churches. In Finland, they are Associate members.

⁴ J. Elmo Agrimson, Ed. *Gifts of the Spirit and the Body of Christ: Perspectives on the Charismatic Movement* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974; Larry Christenson, *The Charismatic Renewal Among Lutherans: A Pastoral and Theological Perspective* Minneapolis: Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services, 1976; Larry Christenson, Ed. *Welcome, Holy Spirit: A Study of Charismatic Renewal in the Church* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987; Erling Jorstad, *Bold in the Spirit: Lutheran Charismatic Renewal in America Today* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974; John Stevens Kerr, *The Fire Flares Anew: A Look at the New Pentecostalism* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974; Carter Lindberg, *The Third Reformation? Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Tradition* Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983; Paul D. Opsall, Ed. *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church from Biblical Times to the Present* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978; Robert J. Voigt, *Go to the Mountain: An Insight into Charismatic Renewal* St. Meinrad, Inc.: Abbey Press, 1975; Walter Wietake and Jack Hustad, *Towards a Mutual Understanding of Neo-Pentecostalism* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973.

⁵ Hubert Kirchner, Götz Planer-Fiedrich, Matthias Sens und Christof Ziemer, Eds. *Charismatische Erneuerung und Kirche: Im Auftrag der Theologischen Studienabteilung beim Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984; Uwe Birnstein, *Neuer Geist in alter Kirche? Die charismatische Bewegung in der Offensive* Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1987.

⁶ IGREJA EVANGÉLICA DE CONFISSÃO LUTERANA NO BRASIL. *Batismo - Diálogo com o Movimento Carismático na IECLB*. Documentos da Presidência, vol II. Porto Alegre : IECLB, 2006.

Lutheranism has been studied and addressed, it has not always been helpfully addressed.⁷ So at best, the verdict on Pentecostalism and on how best for Lutherans to view Pentecostals until now has been a mixed one.

For the most part, Pentecostals do not fare any better, for they generally do not know much about what it means to be a Lutheran. Pentecostals know of Martin Luther, of course, and historically he has been viewed as a hero, as the first in a line of Reformers and their successors who have helped to bring about the “restoration” of the Church that led to the emergence of Pentecostalism.⁸ With the exception of Scandinavia, Germany, the Netherlands and the upper Midwest region in the United States where Lutherans, including my paternal Norwegian great grandparents immigrated, and in a few countries of Africa (e.g. Tanzania, Ethiopia, Madagascar, South Africa, and Namibia), Latin America (Brazil), or Asia (Indonesia and India) where German colonial interests and Lutheran missionaries became part of the landscape, Pentecostals have seldom had much contact with Lutherans. With the exception of Germany and Scandinavia, Pentecostals probably do not know enough about Lutherans to have strong opinions about them, except that Lutherans are generally associated with the historic mainline churches and as a result, they are all too quickly dismissed by many Pentecostals.

Pentecostals and Ecumenism

⁷ See Kenneth G. Appold, “Lutheran Reactions to Pentecostalism: A U.S. Case Study,” in *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue* (Strasbourg, France: Institute for Ecumenical Research / Pasadena, CA: The David du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality / Zürich, Switzerland: The European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010), 58-84; cf. Kilian McDonnell, Ed. *Presence, Power, Praise: Documents on Charismatic Renewal* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1980), Three volumes.

⁸ The Pentecostal Baptism Restored,” *The Apostolic Faith* [Los Angeles, CA] 1:2 (October 1906), 1.1; Aimee Semple McPherson, “Lost and Restored” in *This is That: Personal Experience, Sermons and Writings* (Los Angeles, CA: The Bridal Call Publishing House, 1921), 501-503; “The Wonderful History of the Latter Rain: Remarkable Repetition of the Acts of the Apostles,” *The Faithful Standard* 1.3 (June 1922), 6.

The subject of ecumenism is hardly a favorite one among Pentecostals. A number of reasons have surfaced throughout the past century that cast light on this subject. The first is that most Pentecostals have accepted a historiography that is deeply rooted in a theory of restoration. The Church began as Christ had wanted it, filled with the Holy Spirit and with charisms being commonly manifested, but there came a time somewhere during the Patristic era (not everyone agrees on when) when the Spirit-empowered Church that Jesus established first among His disciples and then others following the Day of Pentecost, lost its bearings and fell away from the faith. It went its own way for over a millennium, but God began to restore it through the preaching of Martin Luther, and after 400 years, it has been most fully restored in the Pentecostal Movement.⁹ This restorationist approach to historiography helped the Pentecostal Movement to find its place in history at a time when it first appeared on the margins of the Church. While Restorationism tended to separate the Pentecostal Movement from much of the Church because it viewed the rest of the Church as in great need of restoration, this historiographic approach provided the framework for the Movement's *raison d'être*.¹⁰

Secondly, from their perspective and in keeping with this motif of restoration, the emergence of Pentecostalism signaled the soon return of the Lord. This idea was given added impetus by the Pentecostal reading of the prophet Joel. The wish that all of God's people would one day be filled with Yahweh's Spirit and prophesy was the hope of Moses (Numbers 11:29) and the expectation that Yahweh would pour out the Spirit was shared by other Old Testament prophets (Cf. Ezekiel 36:26-27). With Israel undoubtedly

⁹ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Lost and Restored," 509-511.

¹⁰ This general approach to historiography is shared by several other traditions including the Churches of Christ / Disciples of Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons), and Seventh-Day Adventists.

in his mind, the prophet, Joel, had promised that in the “last days” God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-29). Drawing upon this prophetic promise on the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter had announced that the “last days” had commenced, for what the crowd saw and heard at that time was to be understood as a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:17-21). Luke’s redaction of this message seems to have broadened even Peter’s understanding by applying the promise to Jew and Gentile alike, as the narrative of Acts moved from Jerusalem and ultimately to the capital city of the Empire, Rome (Acts 1:8; 2:38-39; 10:1-48; 15:19-21; 19:1-7; 28:11-31). When the Pentecostal Movement erupted upon the scene at the beginning of the 20th Century, its members understood themselves as standing in continuity with this prophecy and its previous applications, believing that it described exactly what they were now experiencing.¹¹ Their conclusion, once again was “this is that” which the prophet Joel had predicted would take place in these “last days”.

Thus, the restoration of the Church through the emergence of this Pentecostal Movement was a signal to them that the world was now living in the final days of history, and that the Lord’s appearing was imminent.¹² Just as Pope Gregory I had apocalyptic forebodings upon his return to Rome from a decade of service in Constantinople at the end of the 6th Century, when he found Rome in ruins¹³ and concluded that the situation was a sign that the return of the Lord was imminent,¹⁴ so too did the earliest Pentecostals

¹¹ “The Pentecostal Baptism Restored,” *The Apostolic Faith* [Los Angeles, CA] 1:2 (October 1906), 1.1; B. F. Lawrence, *The Apostolic Faith Restored* St. Louis, MO: The Gospel Publishing House, 1916.

¹² D. Wesley Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power* Chicago, IL: The Evangel Publishing House, 1910; *Lost and Restored and Other Sermons by Aimee Semple McPherson*, Los Angeles, CA: Foursquare Publications, 1989.

¹³ Gregory I, *Homily on Ezekiel II.6.22*

¹⁴ He observed, “Lo, all the things of this world, which we used to hear from the sacred page were doomed to perish, we see already ruined. Cities are overthrown, camps uprooted, churches destroyed; and no tiller of the ground inhabits our land. Among ourselves who are left, very few in number, the sword of man

embrace their new experience of the Spirit as an eschatological sign that the Lord would return at any moment.¹⁵ From their perspective, this suggested a challenge to the whole Church. As a result, these earliest Pentecostals emphasized the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to live lives of holiness while engaging in evangelism and missionary work. What has resulted in the century since that time is a massive Movement that now covers the earth.¹⁶

Not all Pentecostals embraced a strictly restorationist approach to historiography. Some were ambivalent, embracing Restorationism on the one hand, but also recognizing the Movement's continuity with the larger Church on the other.¹⁷ Still, the restorationist perspective has dominated in the popular apologetic, and it has contributed to a second important concern. In some respects, it has contributed both to judgmental Pentecostal attitudes regarding most historic churches and it has provided them with an explanation for why it was that many denominations viewed them as ranging from aberrant to

incessantly rages along with calamities wherewith we are smitten from above. Thus we see before our eyes the evils, which we long ago heard should come upon the world, and the very regions of the earth have become as pages of books to us. In the passing away, then, of all things, we ought to take thought how that all that we have loved was nothing. View, therefore, with anxious heart the approaching day of the eternal judge, and by repenting anticipate its terrors. Wash away with tears the stains of all your transgressions. Allay by temporal lamentation the wrath that hangs over you eternally. For our loving Creator, when He shall come for judgment, will comfort us with all the greater favor as He sees now that we are punishing ourselves for our transgressions", Gregory I, *Book 3, Epistle 29*. See also, Gregory I, *The Book of Pastoral Rule* 3.40.

¹⁵ On the early Pentecostal perspective see F. Bartleman, *My Story: "The Latter Rain,"* (Columbia, SC: J. M. Pike, 1908), 55-59. See also D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* JPTSupp 10; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

¹⁶ Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, Eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 100.

¹⁷ Frank Bartleman, in "God's Onward March through the Centuries," *The Latter Rain Evangel* 2:10 (July 1910), 2-3; "The Wonderful History of the Latter Rain: Remarkable Repetition of the Acts of the Apostles," *The Faithful Standard* 1.3 (June 1922), 6. Bernard Bresson, *Studies in Ecstasy* New York, NY: Vantage Press, 1966 paints the portrait of continuity by looking for similar experiences through the history of the Church.

demonic.¹⁸ While I do not wish to suggest that the divisions that resulted between Pentecostals and other members of the Church at the beginning of the 20th Century are all the fault of the historic churches (I've known too many sectarian and hard-headed Pentecostals ever to believe that!), such judgments by historic pastors with high levels of visibility at that time clearly contributed to the Pentecostal mistrust of many of the historic churches. And with this mistrust came their judgments. Pentecostals learned to judge historic churches with the same vigorous level of dismissal that they received from these churches.¹⁹ In Latin America, for instance, many Pentecostals still judge Catholics as being little more than idolaters.²⁰

Thirdly, the connection between the rejection that Pentecostals experienced at the hands of the historic churches left many of them with unforgiving attitudes and mistrust toward these churches. When that was placed adjacent to the Pentecostal conviction that

¹⁸ The Methodist pastor and President of the Los Angeles Church Federation, Edwin Ryland, visited the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles. He described the meeting he attended as being marked by “enthusiastic fanaticism”, claiming that some of those in attendance “might lose their reason through over zeal and become dangerous”. See, “Churches Aroused to Action,” *Los Angeles Express* (July 18, 1906), 12 and “Young Girl Given Gift of Tongues,” *Los Angeles Express* (July 20, 1906), 1. The Baptist pastor, Dr. R. J. Burdette pronounced the meetings “a disgusting amalgamation of African voodoo superstition and Caucasian insanity,” in “New Religions Come, Then Go,” *Los Angeles Herald* (September 24, 1906), 7 and “Denounces New Denominations,” *Los Angeles Express* (September 24, 1906), 5. Alma White, the senior Bishop of the holiness denomination called the Pillar of Fire called Pentecostal worship “the climax of demon worship” in Alma White, *Demons and Tongues* (Zarephath, NJ: Pillar of Fire, 1936), 82. She made this association between tongues and the demonic many times, beginning about 1909.

¹⁹ Cf. “Many people today think we need new churches, (that is to say church buildings,) stone structures, brick structures, modern improvements, new choirs, trained singers right from the conservatories, paying from seven to fifteen hundred dollars a year for singing, fine pews, fine chandeliers, everything that could attract the human heart to win souls to the meeting house is used in this twentieth century. We find that they have reached the climax, but all of that had failed to bring divine power and salvation to precious souls. Sinners have gone to the meeting house, heard a nice, fine, eloquent oration on Jesus, or on some particular church, or on some noted man. The people have been made glad to go because they have seen great wealth, they have seen people in the very latest styles, in different costumes, and loaded down with jewelry, decorated from head to foot with diamonds, gold and silver. The music in the church has been sweet, and it is found that a good many of the church people seem to be full of love, but there has always been a lack of power. We wonder why sinners are not being converted, and why it is that the church is always making improvements, and failing to do the work that Christ called her to do. It is because men have taken the place of Christ and the Holy Spirit...” William J. Seymour, “The Holy Spirit: Bishop of the Church,” *The Apostolic Faith* [Los Angeles, CA] 1.9 (July – September 1907), 3.1.

²⁰ Cf. Luisa Jeter Walker, *Peruvian Gold* (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God, Division of Foreign Mission, 1985), 19-20.

they had been brought into existence as an eschatological sign, they began to read contemporary events in light of the warnings that they believed were meant in biblical prophecy. In many ways, the ecumenical movement, especially the formation of the World Council of Churches by these historic denominations, raised grave questions for many Pentecostals. Could it be that the historic churches had been set aside by God because of their hardness of heart? Could it be that this World Council of Churches was playing a prophetic role in these “last days”, a role through which the Antichrist would ultimately be identified as the leader of the Ecumenical Movement?²¹ In my understanding, it sounds a bit like the readings of Rome and the papacy that were shared at times by both Luther and Calvin.²² And yes, in spite of the attempts by some Pentecostals to participate in ecumenical bodies for the sake of advancing the Gospel message around the world,²³ many, though not all Pentecostals came to believe that the Ecumenical Movement, and hence, the historic churches that were part of it were to be avoided.²⁴

²¹ The Assemblies of God took this position in its bylaws, Article IX, B, Section 11 between 1961 and 2005. It read: “The General Council of the Assemblies of God disapproves of ministers or churches participating in any of the modern ecumenical organizations on a local, national, or international level in such a manner as to promote the ecumenical movement because: (a) We believe the doctrinal basis of said movement to be so broad that it includes people who reject the inspiration of Scripture; the Deity of Christ, the universality of sin, the substitutionary atonement, and other cardinal teachings that we understand to be essential to biblical Christianity. (b) We believe the emphases of the ecumenical movement to be at variance with what we hold to be biblical priorities, frequently displacing the urgency of individual salvation with social concerns. (c) We believe that the combination of many religious organizations into a world superchurch will culminate in the religious Babylon of Revelation 17 and 18.

²² Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” translated by A.T.W. Steinhäuser, revised by Frederick C. Ahrens and Abdel Ross Wentz in Abdel Ross Wentz, Ed. *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 36:72; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.7.24

²³ On this subject see Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “The Assemblies of God and Ecumenical Cooperation: 1920-1965,” in Wonsuk Ma and Robert Menzies, Eds., *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies*, JPTSupp. 11 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 107-150.

²⁴ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “A Pentecostal Looks at the World Council of Churches,” *The Ecumenical Review* 47:1 (1995), 60-69.

Evangelicals in the United States were among the first to offer a hand of fellowship to Pentecostals, though that did not come without effort or without a price. The enemies of American Evangelicals became the enemies of American Pentecostals as Pentecostal leaders sought to demonstrate that they could be good Evangelicals. And the level of cooperation that was possible with Evangelicals seemed always to be on Evangelical terms, thereby downplaying the distinctive contributions of Pentecostals to the point that many Pentecostals do not seem to understand the differences that originally made each group distinctive. That realization may carry with it some positive points, but it also carries some very negative ones.²⁵ As a result of this tawdry history and the fears that were engendered through the Cold War, many Pentecostals clearly came to distrust any talk of ecumenism, and American Pentecostals in particular sent their missionaries abroad with anti-ecumenical sentiments. Thus, the way of ecumenical conversation within Pentecostal churches around the world has been marked by many difficulties through the years.

It was David du Plessis, who must be acknowledged as the person who began to pry the ecumenical door open from within the Pentecostal Movement. He began to do so through the role that he played within the Charismatic Renewal when it began to spread across the United States and around the world. His place as a popular speaker across denominational lines endeared him to many within the Renewal and his experiences with

²⁵ On this subject see Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Assemblies of God and Ecumenical Cooperation: 1920-1965," in Wonsuk Ma and Robert Menzies, Eds., *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies*, JPTSupp. 11 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 107-150.

these Charismatics led him to speak on behalf of greater ecumenical openness within Pentecostal circles.²⁶

International Roman Catholic – Pentecostal Dialogue

Following discussions that began in 1970 with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, David du Plessis and Fr. Kilian McDonnell, OSB, launched the International Roman Catholic – Pentecostal Dialogue in 1972. There were so few Pentecostals ready to enter into such a discussion at that time, however, that during that first round (1972-1976) the Pentecostal team was heavily supplemented, one could even say dominated, by the inclusion of Charismatic members from several historic denominations.²⁷ That changed with the second round of discussions (1977-1982) after it became clear that the Classical Pentecostals and some of the Charismatics were at cross purposes on issues as basic as baptism. Since that time, the Dialogue has matured to the point that the sixth round which began in Rome three weeks ago (June 10-17, 2011) is officially recognized by a growing collection of Pentecostal denominations, and participants are now being drawn both from the Pentecostal academic community as well as from the top ranks of denominational leadership.²⁸ Beginning with the publication of

²⁶ On David's life and ministry see David J. du Plessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go* Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, rev. 1970; David du Plessis as told to Bob Slosser, *A Man Called Mr. Pentecost* Plainfield, NJ: Logos International 1977; and David du Plessis, *Simple and Profound* Orleans, MA: Paraclete Press, 1986.

²⁷ Arnold Bittlinger, *Papst und Pfingstler: Der Römisch Katholische – pfingstliche Dialog und seine ökumenische Relevanz* SIHC 16, Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 1978. It included Arnold Bittlinger (Lutheran, Germany), Larry Christenson (Lutheran, USA), David Collins (Episcopal, USA); Athanasios Emmert (Greek Orthodox, USA), Howard Ervin (American Baptist, USA), Jean-Daniel Fische (Reformed, France), Michael Harper (Anglican, England); Francis Whiting (American Baptist, USA); J. Rodman Williams (Presbyterian, USA), and Daniel Tappeiner (USA).

²⁸ The Pentecostal team for the Sixth Round of discussions includes Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. (Professor, Assemblies of God, USA), David Cole (Vice President/Professor, Open Bible Churches, USA/Canada), Nino Gonzalez (District Superintendent/Executive Presbyterian, Assemblies of God, USA), David Moore (Professor, Foursquare, USA), Opoku Onyinah (Chairman/Apostle, Church of Pentecost, Ghana), Joseph Suico (Secretary/Director of World Missions, Assemblies of God, Philippines), Paul van der Laan (Professor, Verenigde Pinkster – en Evangeliegemeenten, The Netherlands), Keith Warrington (Vice

its findings,²⁹ the record of the history and progress of this Dialogue has grown rapidly in recent years.³⁰

The Catholic – Pentecostal Dialogue has accomplished a number of things that would have been thought of as impossible a generation ago. It has become the pre-eminent international ecumenical dialogue in which Pentecostals have participated and it has opened up the way for other important dialogues to follow. The subject of ecumenism is now taken seriously by Pentecostal leaders and the Pentecostal scholars who are entrusted

Principal/Director of Doctoral Studies, Elim Pentecostal Church, England), Simon Chan (Professor/Former Executive Presbyter, Assemblies of God, Singapore), and David Rodriguez (Director of Missions, Church of God [Cleveland], Ecuador/USA).

²⁹ The reports from the first four rounds of discussion may be found in 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, Switzerland: World Council of Churches / Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 713-779 and in Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity: Ecumenical Documents and Critical Assessments* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 101-198. “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 The Pontifical council for Promoting Christian Unity’s *Information Service* N. 129 (2008/III), 162-215; in French in *Service d’information* N. 129 (2008/III), 163-219; Copies of the English version are available online at: http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/pe-rc/doc/e_pe-rc_5-contents.html and at: http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj18/2007RC_Pent_Dialogue.pdf.

³⁰ Jerry L. Sandidge, *Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue [1977-1982]: A Study in Developing Ecumenism* Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 16, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987; Paul D. Lee, *Pneumatological Ecclesiology in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue: A Catholic Reading of the Third Quinquennium* (1985–1989) Rome: Pontifica Studiorum Universitas A.S. Thoma Ag. in Urbe, 1994; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1989)* SLAG 42, Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1998; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Ad ultimum terrae: Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1990-1997)*, (SIHC 117, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1999; Peter Hocken, “Dialogue Extraordinary,” *One in Christ* 24:3 (1988), 202-213; Walter J. Hollenweger, “Roman Catholics and Pentecostals in Dialogue,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 21:1 (1999), 135-153; Kilian McDonnell, “Classical Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue: Hopes and Possibilities,” in Russell P. Spittler, Ed. *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), 246-268; “Improbable Conversations: The International Classical Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 17:2 (1995), 163-174; “Five Defining Issues: The International Classical Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 17.2 (1995), 175-188; John A. Radano, “The Pentecostal-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, 1972-1991,” *MidStream: The Ecumenical Movement Today* 31:1 (January 1992), 26-31; Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue: Some Pentecostal Assumptions,” *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 21 (2001), 3-25; Juan Fernando Usma Gómez, “El Diálogo Internacional Católico-Pentecostal 1972-1998: Reseña Histórica, Presentación Final de la Cuarta Fase: Evangelización, Proselitismo y Testimonio Común, y Perspectivas,” *Medellín: teología y pastoral para América Latina* Vol. 24, no. 95 (September 1998), 449-470.

with the training of pastoral candidates for Pentecostal ministry throughout the world as has been demonstrated by the growing reality of ecumenism in their scholarly meetings and publications.³¹ Ways of speaking about ecumenism within Pentecostal circles have begun to change as a direct result of this dialogue, and the momentum continues to grow for more and deeper ecumenical involvement.³²

Other important achievements of this dialogue have included the acknowledgement that the Holy Spirit has been active in both Pentecostal and Catholic churches, making it possible for mutual learning to take place. In its report titled, “Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness” a major achievement may be found where protagonists on both sides of this very difficult subject, studied the issue in depth, proposed common characteristics by which proselytism could be identified, and proposed solutions. What was of most significance was that they undertook this work *together* and agreed to condemn proselytism *together*, they agreed on many of the reasons for the problem *together*, and they proposed possible ways forward on the issue *together*. Such an issue, like many others, cannot be solved unilaterally. It requires dialogue in order to find the way forward. Only after these things were completed did they then offer their findings to the Church as a whole.

Reformed – Pentecostal Dialogue

The Catholic – Pentecostal Dialogue is not the only one that has developed since 1970. Since at least 1991, Pentecostals have participated each year in the annual meeting

³¹ The Society for Pentecostal Studies, founded in 1972, is an example of this. In March 2002, the Society for Pentecostal Studies took “Pentecostalism and the World Church: Ecumenical Opportunities and Challenges” as the theme of its annual meeting. While it had made room for papers on ecumenical themes for a number of years prior to that meeting, that year, it established a formal track for ecumenical studies that has become a regular feature of the Society. *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* regularly publishes articles on ecumenical themes.

³² In 2006, for instance, the Assemblies of God in the US changed its Bylaw on the subject of Ecumenism from an extremely negative statement to a much more positive statement.

of the Secretaries of Christian World Communions.³³ It was a result of that participation in 1992 that Milan Opočensky, then General Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches approached Pentecostals about a possible dialogue. The following year, he was challenged to offer one compelling reason that might provide impetus for the Pentecostal World Conference to take such a dialogue seriously. At the Secretaries of Christian World Communions meeting in 1994, Dr. Opočensky pointed to the tensions that existed between Presbyterians and Pentecostals in South Korea as a strong reason to begin dialogue. Paul Yonggi Cho, Pastor of the famous Yoido Full Gospel Church and the leading voice of the Korean Assemblies of God was being portrayed by Presbyterian leaders as compromising the Gospel through his preaching on prosperity, and of being involved with syncretism because it was believed that Pastor Cho functioned as a shaman and supported the practice of ancestor worship. Milan wondered if a dialogue between Reformed and Pentecostal theologians could help resolve the tensions between them. We agreed that this was a worthy goal.

In 1995, we brought a small group of Pentecostal and Reformed theologians together in Mattersey, England to explore the possibility of a Reformed – Pentecostal Dialogue. That group agreed that their interests held sufficient commonalities that they would recommend such a discussion. Their recommendation was approved by the Executive Committee of World Alliance of Reformed Churches and in May 1996, two teams were gathered in Torre Pellice, Italy, in the first of five annual meetings representing Pentecostals and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

³³ See, Lukas Vischer, “World Communions, the WCC and the Ecumenical Movement,” *The Ecumenical Review* 54 (2002), 142-161.

At the third meeting of this dialogue, that year held under the auspices of Yoido Full Gospel Church's International Theological Institute in Seoul, South Korea, we took the unprecedented action of inviting local Pentecostal and Reformed leaders and theologians to observe the discussions. Yoido's International Theological Institute also encouraged widespread newspaper and television coverage of the event and facilitated a number of media interviews with participants from both teams. These moves were risky, but they facilitated conversation around the dialogue table and they gave birth to discussions between the parties throughout South Korea.

The result of this Reformed – Pentecostal Dialogue was that in 2000, Pastor Cho led the Korean Assemblies of God into full membership in the Korean National Council of Churches (KNCC). Leaders from Yoido Full Gospel Church and from the Incheon Full Gospel Church have since filled a number of important leadership posts within the KNCC. Two years ago in an unprecedented move, Pastor Cho went on camera to invite the World Council of Churches to convene its upcoming Assembly in South Korea in 2013.

The results of this first round of discussions, completed in 2000, were subsequently published under the title, "Word and Spirit, Church and World."³⁴ The teams were reconstituted in 2001. They began a second round of discussions the following year under the leadership of Dr. David D. Daniels, Professor of World Christianity at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago and a minister in the Church of God in

³⁴ For the full report see, "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," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 23:1 (Spring 2001), 9-43. This document was also published in the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:1 (2001), 41-72 and as "Word and Spirit, Church and World: Final Report of the International Pentecostal-Reformed Dialogue," *Reformed World* 50:3 (September 2000), 128-156.

Christ. He serves as Co-chair along with Dr. Joseph Small of the Presbyterian Church in the USA. The teams are hopeful that later this year they will complete the second major report under the title, “Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Community, and Justice.”

The World Council of Churches and Pentecostals: Consultations and the Joint Consultative Group

During the decade of the 90s, the World Council of Churches debated what would become known as the CUV Process, the Common Understanding and Vision of the Church. As part of this process, Dr. Konrad Raiser, then the General Secretary, attempted to convince WCC member churches that the ecumenical table needed to be broadened in a more creative way. That was more easily said than done, but one of the results was a clear signal that the WCC desired a better way to relate to Pentecostals. Beginning as early as 1994 through the Office of Church and Ecumenical Relations led by Huibert van Beek, a series of consultations with Pentecostals were convened in Latin America and in Europe. Out of these consultations grew the idea for what is now called the Joint Consultative Group, an annual discussion between representatives from the World Council of Churches and Pentecostal Churches from around the world.

The first round convened in Hautecombe, France in September 1999, following the Harare Assembly. It provided time for introductions, though much of the first round was spent candidly and sometimes painfully addressing the stereotypes, misunderstandings, and fears surrounding one another. There were Pentecostals who came, convinced that the World Council of Churches was the work of anti-Christian forces, and fearing deceit, they had their guards held high. There were representatives from the WCC team who wanted to launch a frontal assault on all Pentecostal evangelistic efforts worldwide.

Charges were made, tears were shed, voices were raised, and tables were pounded. But in the end, those who came decided that the time had been well spent and they settled on a plan of study for subsequent years.

A report was given to the WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, which then authorized a second round of discussions. The Joint Consultative Group is now in the fifth year of a seven year process in which the participants are studying the historic marks of the Church. The participants in both rounds have enjoyed learning about the breadth of the Church, the opportunities to read the Bible, pray, study, and worship together across a spectrum of the Church's liturgical forms, as well as the opportunities to facilitate the development of ecumenical relationships, to demonstrate various methodologies, and to work on forms of common witness. During its most recent meeting, the group even decided to maintain closer contact with one another between meetings through the use of FaceBook.

The results of these different WCC initiatives are still being realized. Certainly, among those who have participated in the dialogues on both sides, there has been a greater realization of what ecumenism is. Many of the myths about one another have been set aside, and greater appreciation for the gifts of the others are being recognized and in some cases embraced. One of the tangible benefits of these initiatives has been the fact that they not only bring participants from around the world together, but that they have also facilitated greater dialogue between various types of Pentecostals as well as among the various churches of the WCC. Because of these discussions, theological developments are now taking place on a global level, and a growing number of Pentecostal theologians have begun to nuance these developments in interesting ways and

to contribute something of the Pentecostal witness in larger, global, ecumenical, contexts. It is no longer possible to speak of Pentecostalism in the singular; one must now speak of diverse Pentecostalsisms, a point that is now being recognized both within and outside the Movement.

The Global Christian Forum

One of Dr. Raiser's contributions to the Common Understanding and Vision process is another initiative that has taken the name "Global Christian Forum". This idea was quite threatening to many of the existing ecumenical organizations, when it was first proposed in the late 90s. It was at the center of considerable debate at the Harare Assembly. While the Global Christian Forum has since become completely independent of the World Council of Churches, it has been a highly successful vehicle for bringing together the widest range of Christians possible for introductions and conversation with one another. It has been able to bring scores of Pentecostal leaders from around the world together with a vast array of other Christians in both regional and international gatherings. The work of the Forum is viewed by its Steering Committee as having a finite period of usefulness, but to date, the results have been very encouraging.

Leaders who would never join an existing ecumenical organization are being introduced to those who have organized or are leading such organizations. Leaders who would not typically cross the denominational line to meet a Pentecostal leader are finding the Forum to be a very useful place to establish a growing set of relationships with Pentecostals. Pentecostal leaders, who are unable or unwilling to speak with others across denominational lines at home, are finding the Forum to be a safe place to address their concerns and have their concerns addressed outside their contexts. Leaders who

otherwise would be unwilling to cooperate with one another in their own countries are finding it possible to speak with each other in this Forum and are making arrangements together for further conversation and collaboration once they reach their home countries.

The Global Christian Forum, in which Lutherans and Pentecostals are both involved, has also brought about some changes to the ways in which ecumenical discussions are initiated. First, it has been recognized that those who come to the table do not always come with the same level of experience in ministry and church leadership, the same level of theological training, or the same level of interest in ecumenism. Partly because the same ecclesial position may carry different titles depending upon the denomination involved (Bishop, Superintendent, Supervisor, Presbyter, Chairman, etc.) and parity is sometimes difficult to establish, and partly, because the use of titles can be intimidating, thereby denying the possibility for truly peer relationships to develop across denominational lines, participants have been encouraged to set aside their titles and address one another by their given names. Second, instead of working immediately with erudite theological papers involving highly developed and complex theological themes expressed in the jargon of the academy, employing multiple languages, and including extensive footnotes, all participants are asked to speak in the first person and from their own experience.

This methodology, which is commonly used between and among Pentecostal groups and in many churches throughout the southern hemisphere has allowed all participants first to hear the heart of the speaker in such a way that traditional denominational boundaries that have separated these Christian leaders from one another, now play a far smaller role between them. It has also enabled friendships to be established by people

who would never have expected those friendships to emerge at the start of a Forum meeting. It may still be too early to know the ultimate contributions that this initiative has made to the larger ecumenical process, but the evaluations that have been conducted to date, are very encouraging.³⁵

The Beginning of a Lutheran – Pentecostal Exchange

The annual meeting of the Secretaries of Christian World Communions was also the venue for contacts between the Lutherans and Pentecostals who would ultimately explore the possibility of an International Lutheran – Pentecostal Dialogue. Professor Gunnar Stålsett, then General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation first approached me fifteen years ago at the Oslo meeting of the Secretaries regarding this possibility. Changes in leadership and preoccupation with the Joint Declaration on Justification then at a critical juncture in its development required that further exploration be delayed. The idea was kept alive by Assistant General Secretary, Dr. Sven Opegaard, and the next General Secretary, Dr. Ishmael Noko. In 2004, our mutual interests led to the establishment of an exploratory conversation that would be overseen by the Institute for Ecumenical Research here in Strasbourg.

The group met in December 2004 with two introductory papers that enabled the discussion to determine a shared approach to dialogue and to set an agenda for the next several years around the theme, “How Do We Encounter Christ?” The next three years explored Pentecostal and Lutheran understandings of (1) How we encounter Christ, in (2) proclamation, (3) sacraments or ordinances, and (4) the charisms. A summary of the

³⁵ On the Global Christian Forum see, Richard Howell, Ed., *Global Christian Forum: Transforming Ecumenism* New Delhi, India: Evangelical Fellowship of India, 2007 and Huibert van Beek, Ed., *Revisioning Christian Unity: The Global Christian Forum* Studies in Global Christianity, Oxford, England: Regnum Books International, 2009.

findings of that exploratory round of discussions has now been published, and the group has recommended the continuation of formal dialogue between Pentecostals and Lutherans.³⁶

It is one thing to recommend further dialogue. It is quite another to engage in such a dialogue. The exploratory group recognized the important reality that Pentecostals and Lutherans have had very little formal contact or interaction with one another. They have developed their perspectives, judgments, and stereotypes largely in isolation from one another. It is precisely these realities that any future dialogue between Pentecostals and Lutherans must seek to overcome.³⁷ But it is also the case that everyone needs to know who their ecumenical partner is in any such dialogue. On the Lutheran side, it clearly involves the Lutheran World Federation, which has a long and rich history of dialogue with other ecclesial partners. But who is its Pentecostal counterpart? That is less easy to articulate.

Who Are the Pentecostals that Lutherans Are Engaging in Dialogue?

Pentecostalism is a name given to a range of independent ministries and churches, fellowships or denominations, and organizations that hold most things in common but often differ over minor points. For at least the past 35 years, it has not been possible to speak of this movement as though it could be represented by the singular noun, Pentecostalism, with a singular definition. It has become necessary to think of a plurality of Pentecostals or to think of it as a Movement described using the singular noun to which a series of descriptors must be added, leading to such combinations as Holiness Pentecostalism, Oneness Pentecostalism, Classical Pentecostalism, Neo-Pentecostalism,

³⁶ *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*.1-21.

³⁷ Kenneth G. Appold, "Lutheran Reactions to Pentecostalism," in *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*, 80.

Progressive Pentecostalism, Global Pentecostalism, and one might even stretch a bit and add Lutheran Pentecostalism.³⁸

It is difficult to keep up with all aspects of a Movement that even a decade ago reportedly opened up five churches a week in greater Rio de Janeiro,³⁹ a Movement in which migrant churches are burgeoning throughout Europe and North America, often outstripping the indigenous population in church attendance⁴⁰ while at the same time transforming the nature of what it means to be Pentecostal in their adopted land,⁴¹ a Movement that is both entrepreneurial and overwhelmingly polycephalous in its organization and structures,⁴² a Movement whose most significant commodity, even in the churches that proclaim the prosperity gospel, may simply be received by the faithful as nothing more than hope, rather than the materialism so often displayed in mass media appeals and criticized by so many,⁴³ a Movement that may have many millions of

³⁸ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr, "Making Sense of Pentecostalism in a Global Context," an unpublished paper presented to the Society for Pentecostal Studies in Springfield, MO (March 13, 1999), 18; Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10; Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 1-2.

³⁹ Richard Shaull and Waldo Cesar, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches: Promises, Limitations, Challenges* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 4.

⁴⁰ Claudia Währisch-Oblau, *The Missionary Self-Perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2009), 5-6; André Droogers, Cornelis van der Laan, Wout van Laar, Eds. *Fruitful in This Land: Pluralism, Dialogue and Healing in Migrant Pentecostalism* Zoetermeer, The Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2006; Michael Bergunder and Jörg Haustein, Eds. *Migration und Identität: Pfingstlich-charismatische Migrationsgemeinden in Deutschland* Beiheft der Zeitschrift für Mission, No. 8, Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2006.

⁴¹ Michael Wilkinson, "What's 'Global' about Global Pentecostalism?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 17 (2008), 107-108.

⁴² Gotthard Oblau, "Pentecostal by Default? Contemporary Christianity in China," in Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, Eds. *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies Series 3 (Oxford, England: Regnum Books International, 2005), 416.

⁴³ The idea of hope stands at the heart of the Pentecostal message. That is what Pentecostals preach. While Pentecostal prosperity preachers are rightly criticized when abusing their flocks by making outlandish claims, making the quest for material things appear to be consistent with the Bible, and living lavish lifestyles, I have yet to see any treatment of prosperity preachers that assesses their role as dispensers of hope to people who often come from hopeless situations. See, for instance, Paulo Romeiro, *SuperCrentes: O Evangelho Segundo Kenneth Hagin, Valnice Milhomens e os Profetas da Prosperidade* (São Paulo, Brazil: Mundo Cristão, 1993, Sixth Edition, 1996; Leonildo Silveira Campos, *Teatro, Templo e Mercado:*

adherents in a land such as China, where it is difficult at best to obtain reliable numbers,⁴⁴ a Movement that works undercover to evangelize Muslims throughout a range of countries where Islam is the dominant force, a Movement that may slowly be emerging as a force to be reckoned with in many countries of the world as it awakens to its potential political power.⁴⁵

So with whom is the Lutheran World Federation talking as it begins a dialogue with Pentecostals? It will begin first with those who identify themselves as Classical Pentecostals.⁴⁶ They come from a variety of groups that have a somewhat interconnected

Organização e Marketing de um Empreendimento Neopentecostal Petropolis, Brazil: Vozes / São Paulo, Brazil: Simpósio Editoria e Universidad Metodista de São Paulo, 1999; Simon Coleman, *The Globalization of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000; Andrew Perriman, Ed. *Faith, Health and Prosperity: A Report on 'Word of Faith' and 'Positive Confession' Theologies by The Evangelical Alliance (UK) Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals* Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003; Milmon F. Harrison, *Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005; Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *Name It and Claim It? Prosperity Preaching in the Black Church* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2007; and Jonathan L. Walton, *Watch This! The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism*, New York, NY: New York University Press, 2009.

⁴⁴ Luke Wesley, *The Church in China: Persecuted, Pentecostal, and Powerful*, Asian Journal for Pentecostal Studies Series, Volume 2 (Baguio, Philippines: AJPS Books, 2004), especially 35-69.

⁴⁵ So far, the verdict is mixed. Pentecostals have not been particularly effective or well received in the political arena in places like Guatemala (Rios Montt) or the United States of America (Pat Robertson, John Watt, John Ashcroft, and Sarah Palin), though they seem to be more effective in Brazil. Edward L. Cleary and Hannah W. Stewart-Gambino, Eds. *Power, Politics, and Pentecostals in Latin America* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1997; Corten, André Corten and André Mary, Eds. *Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes: Afrique / Amérique latine*, Paris, France: Éditions KARTHALA, 2000, each contain several articles on Pentecostal political engagement. There are many other books and articles on the subject as well. Cf. Timothy J. Steigenga, *The Politics of the Spirit: The Political Implications of Pentecostalized Religion in Costa Rica and Guatemala* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002; Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009; Javier Orozco, "Los Pentecostales durante los diez años de gobierno sandinista," in Tomás Gutiérrez S. Ed. *Protestantismo y Política en América Latina y el Caribe: Entre la Sociedad Civil y el Estado* (Lima, Peru: CEHILA, 1996), 223-234; Calvin L. Smith, "Revolutionaries and Revivalists: Pentecostal Eschatology, Politics and the Nicaraguan Revolution," *Pneuma: the Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 30 (2008), 55-82; Paul Freston, "Brother Votes for Brother: The New Politics of Protestantism in Brazil," in Virginia Garrard-Burnett and David Stoll, Eds. *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993), 66-110; Roberto José Schuler, *Pfingstbewegungen in Brasilien: Sozio-politische Implikationen der neuen Pluralität* Theologische Dissertationen, Band 23 (São Leopoldo: Sinodal, 2004), 188 pp.; Frans Kamsteeg, "Pentecostalism and Political Awakening in Pinochet's Chile and Beyond," in Christian Smith and Joshua Prokopy, Ed, *Latin American Religion in Motion* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 187-204., to name a few

⁴⁶ The term "Classical Pentecostal" was coined by Fr. Kilian McDonnell, OSB when he first began studying Pentecostalism. He defined it as "those groups of Pentecostals which grew out of the Holiness

historical development and hold a similar set of convictions. They are generally recognized as belonging to the older Trinitarian Pentecostal denominations that have a relationship with the Pentecostal World Fellowship.⁴⁷ Many of these denominations also hold membership in or work closely with the World Evangelical Alliance and/or other regional evangelical and Pentecostal organizations. A rapidly growing number are joining more ecumenical Councils of Churches as well.⁴⁸

While there will be regular occasions for open communication between this dialogue and the Executive Committee of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, this dialogue will not be officially sponsored by that body. The Constitution of the Pentecostal World Fellowship was not designed for the Fellowship to conduct formal business of any kind. Its primary purposes include the development of mission, evangelistic, and humanitarian aid partnerships, to address governments and nations regarding human rights and in places where Christians are persecuted, to facilitate greater educational parity between denominations, to facilitate the development of prayer networks, and to enable delegates to engage in greater fellowship across Pentecostal denominational lines. Personal relationships between Pentecostal leaders that attend the triennial meeting of the Pentecostal World Fellowship have resulted in a number of shared actions, but the

Movement at the beginning of the [20th] century.” Cf. Kilian McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches* (New York NY: The Seabury Press, 1976), 2.

⁴⁷ Very little has been written about the Pentecostal World Fellowship. Among the most comprehensive overviews of the Pentecostal World Fellowship is my own article, now a decade out of date, “Pentecostal World Conference,” Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee, Eds, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002), 971-974. The Pentecostal World Fellowship website is www.pentecostalworldfellowship.org. It may represent as many as 250,000,000 Pentecostals.

⁴⁸ Pentecostals hold membership in Councils of Churches in Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, South Korea, Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, USA, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue, Samoa, and Vanuatu. This information is largely derived from Huibert van Beek, Compiler, *A Handbook of Churches and Councils: Profiles of Ecumenical Relationships* Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 2006.

Pentecostal World Fellowship has no technical authority to act on its own behalf or on behalf of any Pentecostal denomination.

This fact need not suggest that those with membership in the Pentecostal World Fellowship are opposed to ecumenical dialogue or that these leaders are not interested in such dialogues. In recent years, they have been quite open to hearing about such things and they have encouraged those who are engaged in ecumenical dialogue. The Executive Committee of the Pentecostal World Fellowship made that point clear in its most recent meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden, 24-27 August 2010. Since that time, the Chairman of the Pentecostal World Fellowship has given his blessings to another dialogue that has risen out of the annual meeting of the Secretaries of Christian World Communions, a dialogue between Pentecostals and the Baptist World Alliance that will hold its initial planning meeting December 13-15, 2011.⁴⁹

What Might Appear on an Agenda between Lutherans and Pentecostals?

Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss, who served as the Pentecostal Co-Chair during the initial discussions that brought Lutherans and Pentecostals together, will bear primary responsibility for building the Pentecostal team. Having received his PhD in theology from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, he is a lay theologian of the Swiss Pentecostal Mission (SPM) and his work is well received by the SPM leadership. Furthermore, he is the Director of the European Pentecostal/Charismatic Research Association and is in contact with many scholars from an array of Pentecostal denominations around the world. Still, building the right Pentecostal team will be no mean task, for the level of competence expected for ordination within the Lutheran and

⁴⁹ An exploratory meeting will take place December 13-15, 2011 at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, AL.

Pentecostal traditions is not always comparable. Within the Pentecostal Movement, the requirement for ordination may be as little as a conversion experience and a good testimony, or it may require more formal education, though requirements seldom go beyond the undergraduate collegiate level.⁵⁰

Until quite recently, the level of academic competence expected even for those responsible for the training of Pentecostal and Lutheran clergy, from Bible schools to seminaries, has been at variance as well. In some groups that variance still exists, but in others it has changed considerably over the past decade. It is also the case that until very recently, few Pentecostal leaders have held any type of advanced degree in theology, and many of them have been suspicious of those with advanced degrees, especially in the field of theology.⁵¹ The level of education within Pentecostal circles may vary, but there is a growing cadre of international Pentecostal scholars and theologians from which to

⁵⁰ While it is typical for ministers in historic denominations to hold the minimum equivalent of a four-year Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and a three-year Master's degree from a seminary, and most ecumenists hold advanced degrees (PhD) as well, a study of educational levels among Assemblies of God clergy in 2000, revealed that among senior pastors, 12% had no education beyond high school and 4.3% claimed no ministerial training at all. While 30.6% claimed some training in college or at a technical school, 27.4% had taken a certificate course or had completed some correspondence courses in ministerial training. Some 55.6% had attended Bible College, though only 41.3% completed a degree. While 12.4% held a master's degree, only 9.9% held a seminary degree [often in counseling] and 2.8% held an advanced degree in ministry. "Fact* Survey Results: A 2000 Survey of Assemblies of God Churches" (Springfield, MO: Office of the General Secretary, 2000), 9. Copies of this survey are available from the Office of Statistics or from the Office of the General Secretary in Springfield, Missouri.

⁵¹ Aimee Semple McPherson, the provocative founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, provides a colorful example in a 40 page booklet titled, *What's the Matter?* Los Angeles, CA: Echo Park Evangelistic Association, 1928. In this booklet she asked four questions. "What's the matter with the church?" "What's the matter with the preacher?" "What's the matter with the pew?" "What's the matter with the seminary?" In each case, she described what she believed was wrong. In the case of the seminary, she criticized their use of higher critical methodology leading to the denial of the authority of Scripture, the incursion of scientific theory (e.g. evolution) into biblical interpretation leading to attempts to demythologize and demystify the faith thereby denying the miraculous power of the Gospel to heal and transform lives, the denial of the need for a blood atonement and the reality of hell leading to the teaching of universalism and the end to altar calls, and the condemnation of passionate preaching and evangelistic methods as well as revivalism as nothing more emotionalism and their replacement with rationalism. Her fifth question was intended to provide the solution to all that had been questioned before when she asked, "What's the matter with the Old-Time Religion?"

draw.⁵² Some of them will undoubtedly come to the table not only with strong theological credentials but with mounting ecumenical credentials as well. In spite of the growing pool of ecumenically concerned Pentecostals, it may be difficult for the Pentecostals to produce as highly nuanced a team as the Lutheran World Federation is capable of doing, in part because there is no Pentecostal organization in place to support these efforts, so that each participant must raise his or her own support. Still, the dialogue will undoubtedly be a fruitful one for all representatives who participate and for the churches that will ultimately send delegates to the table.

One of the helpful points to note about the potential for a Lutheran – Pentecostal Dialogue is that while Lutherans and Pentecostals are not yet officially in fellowship with one another there is no mutual condemnation to overcome.⁵³ This fact is undoubtedly based as much upon the youth of the Pentecostal Movement as anything, but it should not be taken too lightly, nor should it be given too much weight. Still it may be a good place to begin, for clearly, it provides a neutral position from which to begin discussions.

It might be the case that Lutherans and Pentecostals could draw some valuable insights from an initial treatment of the stereotypes that they have traditionally held of the other. Questions such as, “Do Pentecostals inherently embrace a theology of glory? Is there a place for a theology of the cross?” were raised, but not addressed in the handbook produced during the preliminary discussions between Lutherans and Pentecostals.⁵⁴ These are fair questions to ask, and certainly if one has only a superficial understanding

⁵² This cadre may best be represented by scholars associated with the Society for Pentecostal Studies, the European Pentecostal/Charismatic Research Association, the European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism (GloPent), the European Pentecostal Theological Association, and the Asian Pentecostal Society

⁵³ *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*, 8.

⁵⁴ *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*, 79.

of Pentecostalism, this might be a valid assumption. Dialogue on such questions, however, should quickly dispel any fears that all Pentecostals have is a “theology of glory” and already there are some insightful responses to the question by Pentecostal scholars.⁵⁵ But these questions might also spark questions in the opposite direction as well. “Do Lutherans inherently embrace a theology of the cross? Is there really a place for a theology of glory within the Lutheran tradition, and if so, what does it look like?”

On the other hand, it should come as no surprise that many of the concerns that have been addressed by various aspects of the Ecumenical Movement, especially the World Council of Churches’ Commission on Faith and Order, might interest any Christian tradition that seeks to build closer relationships with Pentecostals. Issues such as the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, differences in hermeneutical approaches to the interpretation of the Bible, how we understand the sacraments – baptism and the Eucharist, the nature of Christian ministry, and ecclesiological questions will surely emerge at some point. Since both the Lutheran and Pentecostal traditions are Christian traditions, the nature of the Trinity, of the Father (which seems sometimes to be missing among Pentecostals),⁵⁶ of Christology and soteriology, and of Pneumatology (which seems often to be missing or at least truncated among Lutherans), will undoubtedly make their appearance as well. Furthermore, the ways we worship, our different approaches to liturgy, and the practice of ministry are sufficiently diverse, that we should want to learn from one another.

⁵⁵ Keith Warrington, *Healing and Suffering: Biblical and Pastoral Reflections* Bletchley, Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2005.

⁵⁶ Thomas Smail, *The Forgotten Father* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980. Although this book is written about the Charismatic Renewal, much of it is relevant to Pentecostals as well.

Let me be provocative here for a moment and point to a comment made over 80 years ago by the New Testament scholar, B. H. Streeter. In writing on the early Church he observed that the earliest Christians seem to have experienced the Holy Spirit in ways “as definite and observable as...an attack of influenza”.⁵⁷ My suspicion is that most Pentecostals would affirm this claim and point to their experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues and/or to the many charisms and other manifestations of the Holy Spirit that seem regularly to appear among them, and like the apostle Peter (Acts 2:16), reflecting upon the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-29) say, “This is that”. I also suspect that for many of the Lutherans who have participated in the Charismatic Renewal and the majority of members in Ethiopia’s Mekane Yesus Church would join them in this affirmation. Furthermore, they would contend together that this same experience of the Holy Spirit may be found among them to this day. How do such claims fit within the larger Lutheran tradition, or within the Lutheran World Federation?

Now let me join this initial thought with a second one. Through the years, I have been intrigued by two verses in the English version of Martin Luther’s hymn, “Our God He Is a Castle Strong” or “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” loosely based upon Psalm 46:1-2.

3. And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

3. Und wenn die Welt voll Teufel wär’, Und wollt’ uns gar verschlingen,
So fürchten wir uns nicht so sehr, Es soll uns doch gelingen.
Der Fürst dieser Welt, Wie sau’r er sich stellt,
Tut er uns doch nicht, Das macht, er ist gericht’t,
Ein Wörtlein kann ihn fällen.

⁵⁷ B.M. Streeter, *The Primitive Church: Studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry* (London, England: Macmillan and Co., 1929), 69.

4. That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.
4. Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn Und kein'n Dank dazu haben;
Er ist bei uns wohl auf dem Plan, Mit seinem Geist und Gaben.
Nehmen sie den Leib, Gut, Ehr', Kind und Weib:
Lass fahren dahin, Sie haben's kein'n Gewinn,
Das Reich muss uns doch bleiben.

What does this mean, I wonder, when a Lutheran sings such claims? Does it mean the same thing that it means when a Pentecostal sings these words? If that “one little word” that fells the “Prince of Darkness” is the name, “Jesus”, does this hymn in any way claim the authority for the Lutheran and the Pentecostal to exorcise the “Prince of Darkness” and his minions from those who are troubled by them, and to do so in the name or by the authority of Jesus the Christ? Would a Lutheran exorcism be done in the same way that a Pentecostal exorcism would be done?

What does it mean when a Lutheran sings, “The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth”? If this is an accurate translation of what Luther actually wrote, I suspect that he had the traditional “gifts” of Isaiah 11:1-3 in mind.⁵⁸ When Pentecostals sing these same words, I am equally sure that most of them do not have Isaiah 11: 1-3 in mind, but rather they have the charisms of the Spirit cited in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, in mind.⁵⁹ Is it possible to reconcile such diverse readings⁶⁰ of this

⁵⁸ ‘A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.’ Isaiah 11:1-3, (NRSV).

⁵⁹ “To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the spirit chooses.” 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, (NRSV).

liturgical text, or do most Pentecostals fill these words with meanings that were never intended by Luther when he wrote them, while some Lutherans sing them in a superficial way, denying in practice what is claimed in the affirmation that “the Spirit and the gifts are ours” by limiting the anticipated or acceptable list of gifts that they claim?

A discussion on the role and function of charisms and the discernment processes that are employed within our traditions when judging such things is an activity through which we might learn a great deal from one another. In the preliminary discussions between us, the question was raised about “how Pentecostals and Lutherans understand the various gifts and workings of the Spirit, and why they each cultivate certain gifts of the Spirit more than others.”⁶¹ On the surface, it appears that Pentecostals and Lutherans might have lists of gifts that overlap in a few places but are mutually exclusive in others. It also appears that they set different priorities on which gifts are most or least important because they value them differently. In the end, though, it does seem quite odd that we should each celebrate the gifts that the Spirit who indwells all of us has bestowed upon us and then privilege only those gifts we like the best and ignore, re-define, disparage, or exclude the ones that leave us either uncomfortable or unimpressed.

Still, as Pentecostals, we would probably want to press our Lutheran colleagues to become more attentive to God’s work of grace through His Spirit in the life of every believer. God is, after all, a personal God, that is, a God of love, a Trinitarian God who delights in indwelling the believer, extending the communion shared by the Trinity to us

⁶⁰ Interestingly, in his movement from promise to fulfillment when developing his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr envisioned a more or less direct correspondence between the gifts listed in Isaiah 11:1-3 and the charisms found in Ephesians 4 as well as 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, claiming that the gifts promised by Isaiah had been inherited by the Church through Christ. See. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 39.1; 87.5-88.1.

⁶¹ *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*, 21.

in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Precisely because we experience that grace and communion, it should find itself being expressed in the believer's life through experiences of the presence of God, which include, but go beyond confessions of faith, hearing the Word, participation in the sacraments, and the practice of charity in *diakonia*.

Pentecostals recognize that working with the Holy Spirit can be challenging, if not down right messy at times, after all, like the wind, Jesus noted (John 3:8), the Holy Spirit blows where the Spirit wishes to blow, stirring things up, challenging the *status quo*, and causing us to think new thoughts and experience things that frequently move beyond our self-imposed "comfort zones". If Lutherans have a theology that limits charisms to an earlier age, Pentecostals will want to challenge their assumptions. Does the biblical text actually support such an idea or is it a theological position that has been developed to prevent a problem from recurring, one experienced previously in the life of the Church, a position adopted so that the Church no longer has to deal with those who claim that they have such gifts?⁶² If Lutherans are fearful that the public exercise of certain gifts will disturb the order in their lives and worship, Pentecostals will want to challenge them to re-think their definition of order, and they will want to address those fears.⁶³ If Lutherans are concerned that the public expression of certain charisms may "eclipse the centrality of Christ's atonement", Pentecostals will want to demonstrate how, in their worship, the work of the Holy Spirit is intended not to compete with but to lift up the person and work

⁶² The Montanists come easily to mind here, but so do the Heavenly Prophets.

⁶³ While God is clearly a God of peace and order (1 Corinthians 14:33), what do we make of David's ecstatic dance, with leaping, shouting, and merry making, while clothed only in a linen ephod that scandalized his wife Michal (2 Samuel 6:12-23)? It seemed to be appropriate for the time and place. Yet, similar happenings within early Pentecostalism were described by one Los Angeles pastor as nothing more than "African voodoo superstition and Caucasian insanity." "Denounces New Denominations," *Los Angeles Express* (September 24, 1906), 5; "New Religions Come, Then Go," *Los Angeles Herald* (September 24, 1906), 7.

of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:26). It is precisely over such objections that the preliminary group concluded that these three objections invite further examination.⁶⁴ My guess is that our Lutheran counterparts would want to challenge Pentecostals thinking and action to move beyond their obvious interest in charisms, even when these charisms are exercised in love and to the end of building up the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 14:1, 12).⁶⁵ These issues are not unimportant to either of our traditions and I suspect that the way we view these things has been deeply impacted by our earlier isolated histories.⁶⁶

It should be clear that all claims to “experiences” of the Holy Spirit require a discernment process by which decisions can be made regarding the nature of that experience and thus, the authority that it might hold in the life of the community. Discernment is not only necessary but of critical importance in such matters, and the discernment processes to which we are committed are intended first, to be a community rather than simply an individual undertaking. Discernment is a difficult process. Yes, there is a charism that helps the Church to discern the spirits, but discernment must also take into consideration various anthropological, psychological, rational and intuitive factors. It is at this point that the discernment process becomes most complex. Thus, dialogue with one another on what constitutes the discernment process, what is to be discerned, and who it is that ultimately discerns whether what has been discerned has been properly discerned is critical for all of us.

⁶⁴ *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*, 21.

⁶⁵ I am deeply indebted to Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss for helping me to formulate the essence of this paragraph.

⁶⁶ Pentecostals have clearly wished to distance themselves from what they termed “dead” expressions of the faith. In keeping with the concern expressed in 2 Timothy 3:5 that in the last days there would be those “holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power”, they have been particularly hard on printed liturgies including what they perceive as the recitation of prayers and creeds that were not always understood or even necessarily believed by those who said or confessed them. On the other hand, it appears that Lutherans have wanted to distance themselves from what they deem to be the claims and practices of “enthusiasts”.

The fact that our two communities have developed in relative isolation from one another may suggest that we function much more like two individuals who are unfamiliar with one another, that is, like strangers who have just met. What dialogue calls us to embrace, however, is the idea that we should view ourselves as two collegial members or two siblings within the same larger family that carries the name “Church”. The sad reality is that we have developed our own patterns of thought and action in isolation from one another. Thus we function as though that were the way it has always been or worse, that is the way that things should be. The result is that our approach to the unity that Christ intends for our two traditions is at best superficial, and we have failed to take seriously the fact that we might be able to develop anything like a common mind or will between us.

One of the places that Lutherans might be able to broaden the thinking of Pentecostals is what it means to be part of a Christian *community*. Pentecostals speak freely about the Body of Christ, especially when addressing the question of charisms. That makes good sense because in each case where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are mentioned in the Pauline corpus (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; and Ephesians 4:1-15), the Body metaphor plays a significant role. But Pentecostalism has also been heavily influenced by the notion of “rugged individualism” and by the business mentality of the corporate world, that is, the “spirit of competition”. Pentecostals may have a fairly good sense of what Acts 2:4 and 2:43 are all about,⁶⁷ but many of them fail to understand the full

⁶⁷ “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability” (Acts 2:4); “Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the Apostles” (Acts 2:43). Both verses are taken from the NRSV.

implications of Acts 2:44.⁶⁸ Within the Pentecostal Movement, entrepreneurialism is frequently rewarded in such a way that the individual too often is lifted up and celebrated at the expense of the community as a whole, and sometimes even at the expense of God. But what does it mean to be part of the community that is called the Church? How should the Pentecostal Movement reflect upon itself in such a way as to make sure that it does not fall victim to an unhealthy version of sectarianism? What must Pentecostals do to ensure that they do not become so individualistic that they contribute to further division within the Church and ultimately manifest the actions of those who lived during the days of the Judges, when everyone did what was right in his or her own eyes (Judges 17:6, 21:25)? My suspicion is that Lutherans may have some helpful ideas that Pentecostals would find useful in such a discussion.

There are many directions that the International Lutheran – Pentecostal Dialogue could go. I have only scratched the surface of possibilities. What we need are clear minds, well chosen words, and humble spirits when we face one another. What is important is that we bring our questions to the table and begin our conversation in prayer, asking for the Spirit of God to be present, moving in our midst, helping us to hear one another, enabling our minds to formulate good questions, and finding answers to questions like the following. What do we hold to be essential as we seek to worship

⁶⁸ “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as many as had need.” I do not wish to communicate that Pentecostals have no sense of social justice [Cf. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. “The Social Concern of Early American Pentecostalism,” Jan A.B. Jongeneel, ed. *Pentecost, Mission and Ecumenism: Essays on Intercultural Theology: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Walter J. Hollenweger*, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity, 75 (Frankfort am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 97-106; translated and published as “Das soziale Anliegen der frühen amerikanischen Pfingstbewegung,” In Michael Bergunder, Ed. *Pfingstbewegung und Basisgemeinden In Lateinamerika. Die Rezeption befreiungstheologischer Konzept durch die pfingsliche Theologie*, Weltmission heute 39 (Hamburg, Germany: Evangelisches Missionswerk In Deutschland, 2000), 57-66, notes 145-149], but their sense of *diakonia* beyond the Pentecostal world is sometimes linked more with political than ethical responsibility and as such, is frequently short-sighted.

God? What do we hold in common with one another? What are the unique gifts that we bring to one another such that they enrich all of us when we share them? Where do we seem to differ with one another, and why is that the case? Where do we most challenge one another, that is, at what points do we actually catch the concern of the other in such a way that it becomes our concern as well? If we can begin to do these things, we will be well on the way to becoming the sisters and brothers we are intended to be, in Christ Jesus, who has made us one.