

Cracked or Broken: Pentecostal Unity

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Abstract

Just over 100 years ago, Pentecostalism was born. Since then, it has grown to be one of the biggest and fastest growing components of Christianity. It's big – but it's not what it was. Now, it's multi-denominational, multi-cultural, multi-national...and rather fragmented. There are doctrinal and practical reasons for this, some of which are understandable and logical. However, an apparent tendency to disunity has resulted in uncertainty and even hostility towards other Christian denominations, especially the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. This has led to some unfortunate and Spirit-grieving consequences, including theological and ethical aberrations. A positive way forward must be explored for the sake of the Church (including Pentecostal believers and others) and in order to reflect the vision of Jesus and the mission of the Spirit. Some pointers to help achieve this end include a readiness to remember that Pentecostalism is about mission and encounter; also Pentecostals need to learn lessons from their history, especially from those who made the quest for authentic unity an important element on their agenda. They also need to listen to the Bible as well as learning to appreciate and benefit from the lives of other believers whose spiritual frameworks may be different, but no less authentic, than their own. Most importantly, they need to listen to the Spirit.

Cracked or Broken: Pentecostal Unity

I. Introduction

When I was nineteen, I joined Operation Mobilization for a year's evangelism in Europe. As preparation, I was sent a collection of sermons to listen to. Although a number were dedicated to evangelistic issues, I was surprised that the first concentrated on the topic of unity. I could not understand the relevance of such a subject to young people who were dedicated to telling others about Jesus. I soon learned the wisdom of those who had indicated that we needed to actively consider the importance of unity. As I spent time in small groups of people engaging in mission in Belgium, Italy and England, differences and potentially divisive issues crept into our time together that could have caused dissension and spoiled our mission activities. Unity is a treasure to be sought for by believers with each other. Unity is targeted by the devil to break up relationships and fellowship in the Church today.

The plea for unity and the plague of disunity is noted throughout the pages of the Bible. In writing his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul spends the first four chapters dealing with these themes and thereafter identifies a lack of harmony and cohesion amongst the believers as the cause of all their many problems. It is little wonder that Jesus prays for unity among his followers (John 17:11). The potential for harming the Church by disunity is greater than most other sins. Disunity distracts from the core mission of the Church which is to reflect God with integrity to other believers and unbelievers, the latter generally only seeing God through the former.

I was startled to read a sermon by a Muslim cleric who called for unity amongst Muslims in his community. He identified division as the greatest problem facing Islamic religious leaders today and pointed out the dangers of disunity, providing evidence from the Koran. However, the most troubling sentence of the sermon was his plea that unity should be encouraged because 'disunity and division are characteristics of the disbelievers' – those who worship another God other than Allah. It is tragic when Christians poorly reflect the harmony so desired by Jesus and Paul.

II. The diversity and size of Pentecostalism

Just over 100 years ago, Pentecostalism was born. Since then, it has grown to be one of the biggest and fastest growing components of Christianity.¹ It's big – but it's not what it

¹ The journal *Heritage* is dedicated to the history of the AOG (www.AGHeritage.org) in association with the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center; *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Dempster, M. W., Klaus, B. D., Petersen, D., (eds.) (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1999) pp. 85-115; Smith, H. B., (ed.) *Pentecostals from the Inside Out*, (Wheaton: Victory, 1990) pp. 43 -50; Mason, C. H., *History and Formative Years of the Church of God in Christ with Excerpts from the Life and Works of its Founder: Bishop C. H. Mason* (Memphis: Church of God in Christ Publishing House, 1973); Anderson, A., *An*

was. Now, it's multi-denominational and multi-cultural. There are so many different Classical Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal and independent Pentecostal churches that it now takes two dictionaries, one of which has been revised, and a regular supply of books and articles to try to do justice to exploring them.² Also, although originally a largely Western movement, it is now increasingly represented by people from the Majority world.³ 66% of Pentecostals now live in the Majority world; 87% live in poorer areas of the world; 71% are non-white.⁴ Ma estimates that by 2025, more than 80% of Pentecostals will reside in Asia.⁵ Increasingly, it is more accurate to identify Pentecostalism in the plural form (Pentecostalisms) as there is no longer a set framework into which all Pentecostals easily fit.

How can Pentecostals stay united in the face of such diversity let alone develop fellowship with other believers who differ to us in belief and practice? Of course, this is a complex issue and it would be simply naïve to believe that the topic could be considered without recognizing the place of truth and integrity in the authentic establishing of true unity. It is here that the challenge is often greatest as the most important elements of orthodoxy and orthopraxy are not always easily identified.

III. Pentecostal Disunity

1. Just one doctrinal example

Introduction to Pentecostalism, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp. 19-165; Bloch-Hoell, N., *The Pentecostal Movement: Its Origin, Development, and Distinctive Character* (Oslo: Allen and Unwin, 1964); Wilson, E. A., *Strategy of the Spirit: J. Philip Hogan and the Growth of the Assemblies of God Worldwide 1960-1990* (Carlisle: Regnum, 1997); Blumhofer, E. L., *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism* (2 Vols.) (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1989); Burgess, S. M., Van der Maas, E. M., (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

² See especially the various articles in Burgess, Van der Maas, (eds.) *The New International Dictionary...* pp. 3-282; 382-417; 467-472; 530-544; 640; 715-723; 777-783; 791-794; 797-801; 937-946; 961-974; 1157-1166; *Encyclopedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity (EPCC)* (ed.) Burgess, S., (London: Routledge, 2006); Jones, C. E., *A Guide to the Study of the Pentecostalism* (2 vols., Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1983).

³ Ma, "Growing...", pp. 324-342; Larbi, K., "African Pentecostalism in the Context of Global Pentecostal Ecumenical Fraternity: Challenges and Opportunities", *Pneuma* 24.2 (2002) pp. 138-166; Hollenweger, W., *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) pp. 1-74; Tinney, J., "Black Origins of the Pentecostal Movement", *Christianity Today*, 16.1 (Oct. 8, 1971), pp. 4-6; Jones, C. E., *Black Holiness: A Guide to the Study of Black Participation in Wesleyan Perfectionistic and Glossolalic Pentecostal Movements* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1987); Anderson, *An Introduction...*, pp. 168-170.

³ Jenkins, P., *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 67; Anderson, A. A., "The Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches: The Shape of Future Christianity in South Africa", *Pneuma* 24.2 (2002) pp. 167-184.

³ Yung, H., "Pentecostalism and the Asian Church" in Anderson, A. H., Tang, E., (eds.) *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum, 2005) pp. 37-57.

⁴ Logan, J. H. Jr, "Black Pentecostalism", in *Encyclopaedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity* (ed.) Burgess, S., (London: Routledge, 2006) pp. 60-64.

⁵ Ma, W., 'Asia, East', in Burgess (ed.), *EPCC*, p. 49.

The Trinity

As with many other evangelicals, Pentecostals have traditionally identified themselves as Trinitarian⁶ and thus (often unknowingly) affirmed the classical creeds, adopting the orthodox beliefs of the Western Church, as defined by the Council of Nicea.⁷ They have wrestled with the concept of hierarchy within the Godhead and have generally identified the Father as being the first or the primary member. Basically, the Father, Son and Spirit are each identified as equally God though none of them are completely God without the others, each functioning separately, though in unity and harmony with each other, and being worthy of worship.

However, a large Pentecostal constituency is identified as being particularly Christocentric.⁸ They are generally referred to as Oneness Pentecostals⁹ and although their forebears were expelled from the AoG, there has been some dialogue with Trinitarian Pentecostals, especially through the Society of Pentecostal Studies,¹⁰ though

⁶ Gen. 1.26; Mt. 28.19; 1 Cor. 12.4-6; 2 Cor. 13.14; Eph. 4.4-6; Col. 2.9; 1 Pet. 1.2.

⁷ The Statement of Fundamental Truths (13) of the AoG states, 'The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son, proceeding...'; Sheppard, G. T., 'Nicean Creed, *Filioque*, and Pentecostal Movements in the United States', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 31.3-4 (1986); McRoberts, K. D., 'The Holy Trinity', in Horton (ed.), *Systematic Theology...*, pp. 145-77; Massey, D. J., 'Trinitarianism', in Burgess (ed.), *EPCC*, pp. 449-51; Somdal, A., *Tro og Laere. Et forsøk på en samlet presentasjon av pinsevenes tro og laere* (Oslo: Filadelfiaforlaget, 1990), pp. 45-152.

⁸ Anderson suggests that they may number up to a quarter of all Pentecostals (*An Introduction...*, p. 49) and identifies a number of Pentecostal denominations including the United Pentecostal Church (the largest Oneness denomination in North America, founded in 1945), the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (predominantly African American), the (predominantly black) British Apostolic Church, and the True Jesus Church (the largest Chinese Pentecostal church); Gill, K. D., 'The Oneness Doctrine as a Contextualized Doctrine of the Trinity for Mexico', in Jongeneel, J. A. B., (ed) *Pentecost, Mission and Ecumenism Essays on Intercultural Theology* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992, pp. 107-14; Reed, D. A., 'Origins and Development of the Theology of Oneness Pentecostalism in the United States', *Pneuma* 1.1 (1979), pp. 31-7; idem, 'Aspects of the Origins of Oneness Pentecostalism', in Synan, V. (ed.), *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield: Logos, 1975), pp. 143-68; idem, 'Origins and Development of the Theology of Oneness Pentecostalism', (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University, 1978); Archer, K. J., 'Early Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation', *JPT* 18 (2001), pp. 32-70 (56-67).

⁹ Boyd, G., *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), pp. 10, 227-28; Boyd, an ex-Oneness Pentecostal, estimates that there are 1 million in the USA and 5 million globally; French, T. L., *Our God is One: The Story of Oneness Pentecostalism* (Indianapolis: Voice and Vision Publications, 1999).

¹⁰ Gaxiola-Gaxiola, M., 'The Unresolved Issue: A Third-World Perspective on the Oneness Question', (SPS conference paper, CBN University, 1987); Gill, K. D., 'The New Issue Reconsidered: A Missiological Analysis of the Oneness Doctrine of the Trinity', (SPS conference paper, Christ for the Nations, Dallas, 1990); Bernard, D. K., 'Dialogue between Trinitarian and Oneness Pentecostals', (SPS conference paper, Evangel University, Springfield, 1999); idem, 'A Response to Ralph Del Colle's 'Oneness and Trinity: A Preliminary Proposal for Dialogue with Oneness Pentecostalism'', (SPS conference paper, Toronto, 1996); Montgomery, C. H., Reed, D. A., 'The Experience of Jesus in Baptismal Doctrine: A Third Way in the Trinitarian-Oneness Divide', (SPS conference paper, Cleveland, 2007), pp. 229-36; Flynn, D. M., 'The Oneness-Trinity Debate in the Early Church', (SPS conference paper, Springfield, 1999); Colle, R. 'Oneness and Trinity: A preliminary proposal for dialogue with Oneness Pentecostalism', *JPT* 10 (1997), pp. 85-110; Reed, D., 'Oneness Pentecostalism: Problems and Possibilities for Pentecostal Theology', *JPT* 11 (1997), pp. 73-93; Segraves, D. L., 'Oneness Theology', in Burgess (ed.), *EPCC*, pp. 342-45.

not without some resistance.¹¹ Fundamentally, Oneness Pentecostals reject the concept that the members of the trinity may be identified as separate and equal. Instead, they believe that Jesus is the revelation of God, Jehovah being identical to Jesus. Furthermore, they believe that God is revealed to humanity in the person of the Son, the whole Godhead existing in Jesus. Thus, Jesus is not viewed as one of the Godhead but the Godhead in one. Since God is essentially one, the terms ‘Father’, ‘Son’ and ‘Spirit’ are identified as manifestations of God for the purposes of revelation but not intended to indicate members of the Godhead.

2. *Just one ethical example*

Racism

Although the early days of Pentecostalism in the West embraced the notion of a racially inclusive Church,¹² this ideal did not last and before too long, churches were being established on racial grounds.¹³ As Ma has written, ‘What the Holy Spirit miraculously put together was miserably divided by humans’,¹⁴ and for decades, racism has been a painful and segregating issue in especially US and South African Pentecostalism. This sad part of Pentecostal history has been explored and documented by a number of writers,¹⁵ particularly relating to the USA,¹⁶ India,¹⁷ and South Africa.¹⁸

¹¹ Menzies, W. W., Horton, S. M., *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (rev. and expanded), (Springfield: Logion Press, 1993, 2000), pp. 44, 55-7. (Menzies describes it as a modern form of the heresy of Sabellianism (p. 55)); Bass, K. L., ‘Baptism and the Canon: Can/Should We Still Harmonize the Baptismal Formulae in Matthew and Acts’, (SPS conference paper, Cleveland, 2007), pp. 32-9; Boyd, *Oneness...*, pp. 9, 23.

¹² Daniels, D., ‘Charles Harrison Mason: The Interracial Impulse of Early Pentecostalism’, in Goff and Wacker (eds.), *Portraits of a Generation. Early Pentecostal Leaders* (University of Arkansas Press, 2002), pp. 255-70; Thompson, H. P. Jr. ‘“On Account of Conditions that Seem Unalterable”: A Proposal about Race Relations in the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) 1909-1929’, *Pneuma* 25.2 (2003), pp. 240-64 (241-46).

¹³ Kenyon, H., ‘An Analysis of Ethical Issues in the History of the Assemblies of God’, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Baylor University, 1988), pp. 40-176; Synan, V., *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal* (Nashville: Nelson, 2001).p. 167; Alexander, E., ‘Race Relations’, in Burgess, *EPCC*, pp. 401-04.

¹⁴ Ma, ‘Doing...’, p. 230.

¹⁵ MacRobert, I., *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Anderson, A. H., ‘Dangerous Memories for South African Pentecostals’ in Anderson and Hollenweger (eds.), *Pentecostals...*, pp. 89-107; Callahan, L. D., ‘Redeemed or Destroyed: Re-evaluating the Social Dimensions of Bodily Destiny in the Thought of Charles Parham’, *Pneuma* 28.2 (2006), pp. 203-27 (209-14).

¹⁶ Alexander, ‘Race...’, pp. 402-03; Michel, D., *Telling the Story: Black Pentecostals in the Church of God* (Cleveland: Pathway Press, 2000); Olena, L. E., ‘From Paralysis to Action: Robert Harrison and the Assemblies of God-Experiencing Racism in the Pentecostal Fold’, (SPS conference paper, Cleveland, 2007), pp. 253-60; Daniels, D., ‘“Everybody Bids You Welcome”: A Multicultural Approach to North American Pentecostalism’, in Dempster, Klaus and Petersen (eds.), *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), pp. 222-52; Newman, R. J., ‘Race and the Assemblies of God Church: The Journey from Azusa Street to the “Miracle of Memphis”’, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Memphis, 2005).

¹⁷ Nadar, S., Leonard, G.S.D., ‘Indentured Theology: White Souls/Black Skins? Decolonizing Pentecostals within the Indian Diaspora’, in Stålsett, S., *Spirits of Globalization* (London: SCM, 2006) pp. 65-89.

In recent years, there has been a move to engage in meaningful dialogue and relationship with Pentecostals of different racial backgrounds.¹⁹ In 1994, the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America, an all white grouping, was disbanded in order to be replaced by the racially mixed Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America, led by six white and six African Americans, in an event popularly known as ‘the Memphis Miracle’.²⁰ Its first manifesto was dedicated to the issue of racial reconciliation.²¹ The context for such a declaration is that for the previous seventy years, American Pentecostals were racially divided.

3. Just one theological example

Health and Wealth teaching

The complementary issues of wealth and poverty have, to a limited degree, been addressed by Pentecostals.²² The issue of wealth was not central to early Pentecostals partly because most of them were not wealthy, coming from the less privileged groups of society. To a degree, they still do. However, there has been a development with regard to an expectation on the part of some to be prosperous as a manifestation of God’s blessing

¹⁸ Anderson, A. “The Struggle for Unity in Pentecostal Mission Churches”, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 82 (March 1993) 67-77; idem, ‘Pentecostals and Apartheid in South Africa during Ninety years 1908-1998’ *CPCR* 9; J. N. Horn, ‘Power and Empowerment in the Political Context of South Africa’, *JEPTA* 25 (2005), pp. 7-24 (15-24); idem, ‘South African Pentecostals and Apartheid: A Short Case Study of the Apostolic Faith Mission’, in Jongeneel, *Pentecost...*, pp. 157-67; idem, ‘Crossing Racial Borders in Southern Africa: A Lesson from History’, *CPCR* 3; Lapoorta, J., ‘The Necessity for a Relevant Pentecostal Witness in South Africa’, *EB* 10.1 (1991), pp. 25-33; idem, *Unity or Division? The Unity Struggles of the Black Churches within the Apostolic Mission of South Africa* (Kuils River: Japie LaPoorta, 1996); idem, ‘Unity or Division: A Case Study of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa’, in Dempster, Klaus and Petersen (eds.), *The Globalization...*, pp. 151-69; ‘Declaration of Solidarity with the Relevant Pentecostal Witness in South Africa’, *EB* 10.1 (1991), pp. 34-5.

¹⁹ Blumhofer, E. L., Armstrong, C. R., ‘Assemblies of God’, in Burgess and van der Maas (eds.), *NICPCM*, pp. 333-40; Rosenior, D. R., ‘Toward Racial Reconciliation: Collective Memory, Myth and Nostalgia in American Pentecostalism’, (SPS conference paper, Cleveland, 2007), pp. 299-306; Macchia, F. D., ‘From Azusa to Memphis: Where do we go from here? Roundtable Discussions on the Memphis Colloquy’, *Pneuma* 18.1 (1996), pp. 113-16; Clemmons, I. C., ‘What Price Reconciliation: Reflections on the “Memphis Dialogue”’, *Pneuma* 18.1 (1996), pp. 116-22; Lovett, L., ‘Looking Backward to go Forward’, *Pneuma* 18.1 (1996), pp. 122-25; Gaxiola-Gaxiola, M., ‘Reverberations from Memphis’, *Pneuma* 18.1 (1996), pp. 125-28; Solivan, S., ‘A Hispanic/Latino Pentecostal Response’, *Pneuma* 18.1 (1996), pp. 128-32; Amos, B. M., ‘Race, Gender and Justice’, *Pneuma* 18.1 (1996), pp. 132-35; Robeck, C. M., Jr., ‘Racial Reconciliation at Memphis: Some Personal reflections’, *Pneuma* 18.1 (1996), pp. 135-40.

²⁰ Berg, R. A., ‘Memphis Miracle’, in Burgess, *EPCC*, pp. 304-06; Macchia, F. D., ‘From Azusa to Memphis: Evaluation of the Racial Reconciliation Dialogue among Pentecostals’, *Pneuma*, 17.2 (1995), pp. 203-18; Hunter, H. D., ‘A Journey Toward Racial Reconciliation: Race Mixing in the CGP’, *Refleks* 3.1 (2004), pp. 19-42; Anderson, A. H., ‘The Dubious Legacy of Charles Parham: Racism and Cultural Insensitivities among Pentecostals’, *Pneuma* 27.1 (2005), pp. 51-64.

²¹ See Conference held in Memphis (Oct. 18, 1994) entitled ‘Pentecostal Partners: A Reconciliation Strategy for 21st Century Ministry’.

²² Roebuck, D. G., ‘Pentecostalism at the end of the Twentieth Century: From Poverty, Promise and Passion to Prosperity, Power and Place’, in Norman, C. E., Armentrout, D. S., (eds.), *Religion in the Contemporary South, Changes, Continuities, and Contexts* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005), pp. 53-73.

to his people. That which is often known as the Prosperity Gospel, associated with the largely American Word of Faith movement, is rejected by many Pentecostal leaders²³ though it still influences many Pentecostal believers, especially in parts of the developing world where poverty is common. This aberrant dogma assumes that God promises wealth, health and happiness for all believers in this life; it is theirs to claim and verses such as Philippians 4.19 are used to support such a notion. Whilst it emphasises the goodness of God and teaches that a belief in Christianity does not mean that one must eschew material benefits, it does not have any room for suffering nor a theology of suffering, presents pastoral difficulties for those who remain in need and ultimately provides a distorted picture of God who appears to arbitrarily bless some but not others.²⁴

Fee, in an attempt to redress the balance, calls for a radical faith ‘that does not require poverty, but it does require righteousness...to use our wealth...to alleviate the hurt and pain of the oppressed’.²⁵ Kung calls for Pentecostals, who have traditionally attracted the poor, not to lose sight of such people, especially in the light of the increasing globalisation of the world that has benefits but also spawns massive disruption and leaves many people marginalised and vulnerable to exploitation.²⁶ Similarly, Wenk calls for the Pentecostal Church to be the kind that ‘hears the cry of the needy, that sees the pain of the people, that is willing to understand the feeling of a person in despair’ for ‘such a church will reflect the love of God and be his agent in this world’.²⁷

Other issues that have not helped the challenge of establishing unity have been a readiness to misunderstand one another, a lack of trust and an assumption that rumour is to be equated with truth. We have also been guilty of poor traditioning (my own case with regard to Catholics). Fundamentally, the quest for unity has not been recognised as being important. Even as Pentecostals, we have assumed that the Spirit has been more interested in power and charismatic gifts; we have stressed the role of the Spirit in evangelism but have forgotten that mission is hurt if those involved are disunited. This has had some sad and even disastrous consequences with relations with those believers who are not Pentecostals as well as with other Pentecostals.

²³ Fee, G. D., *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels* (Costa Mesa: The Word For Today, 1979); Horn, J. N., *From Rags to Riches: An Analysis of the Faith Movement and its relationship to the Classical Pentecostal Movement* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1989); Perriman, A., (ed.), *Faith, Health and Prosperity: A report on 'Word of Faith' and 'Positive Confession' Theologies* (Carlisle: ACUTE Paternoster Press, 2003).

²⁴ Nwankwo, L., “‘You have received the Spirit of Power...’ (2 Tim. 1:7). Reviewing the Prosperity Message in the Light of a Theology of Empowerment’, *JEPTA* 22 (2002), pp. 56-77.

²⁵ Fee, G. D., *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, Vancouver: Regents College Publ, 2000) p. 55

²⁶ Kung, L-Y., ‘Globalization, Ecumenism and Pentecostalism: A Search for Human Solidarity in Hong Kong’, *AJPS* 6:1 (2003), 97-122.

²⁷ Wenk, M., ‘Christian...’, p. 14.

IV. Ecumenical Disunity

Although Pentecostals have over the years increasingly sought and responded to dialogue with other Protestant denominations,²⁸ discussions with the Roman Catholic Church and ecumenical debate have been much more tenuous.²⁹ This has been in part due to the rejection of Pentecostals by many mainline churches, especially in the earliest years. Some denominations have accused Pentecostals of proselytism and, although there may be valid reasons for people transferring their allegiance to Pentecostal churches, it has resulted in hurt and suspicion on the part of non-Pentecostal denominations and their leaders and has hindered dialogue.³⁰ McClung³¹ identifies early Pentecostals as experiencing the challenge of accommodating believers from many different church backgrounds who related together under the common experience of the baptism in the Spirit, McGee³² identifying a similar spirit of cooperation among early Pentecostal missionaries. Bundy traces the early history of Pentecostal ecumenical development concluding, 'Ecumenism has been an essential and foundational quest of Pentecostalism'.³³

The tendency of Pentecostals to have serious organisational disagreements³⁴ and to split from one another has not helped in a quest for unity with those who are not Pentecostal. Even when some Pentecostals and other denominations began to dialogue with one another, to worship together and be prepared to learn from each other, many Pentecostals

²⁸ 'Word and Spirit, Church and World: The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Some Pentecostal Churches and Leaders 1996-2000', *AJPS* 4.1 (2001), pp. 41-72; see responses by Hollenweger, W., Lee, S. H., Powers, J. E., van der Laan, P. L., Knight, H. H., III., Jacobsen, D., amongst others - *Pneuma* 23.1 (2001), pp. 44-97. Robeck, C. M., Jr ('The Assemblies of God and Ecumenical Cooperation: 1920-1965' in Ma and Menzies (ed.), *Pentecostalism...*, pp. 107-50 (110-25)) notes that a measure of relationship was developed between the AoG and the Foreign Missions Conference of North America (founded in 1893, this provided a basis for dialogue and action with regard to missions by a large variety of denominations) prior to the establishment of the WCC in 1948.

²⁹ Robeck, 'The Assemblies...', pp. 107-50; Kärkkäinen, V. M., "'Anonymous Ecumenists?'" Pentecostals and the Struggle for Christian Identity', *JES* 37:1 (2000), pp. 13-27; Hunter, H. D., 'Two Movements of the Holy Spirit in the 20th Century? A Closer Look at Global Pentecostalism and Ecumenism,' *One in Christ* 38:1 (2003), pp. 31-9.

³⁰ Karkkainen, V. M., 'Proselytism and Church Relations: Theological Issues Facing Older and Younger Churches', *ER* 52:3 (2000), pp. 379-90; idem, *Ad Ultimum Terrae: Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness in the Roman Catholic Dialogue (1990-1997)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999); Robeck, C. M., Jr., 'Mission and the Issue of Proselytism', *IBMR* 20:1, (1996), pp. 2-8; idem, 'Do We Agree as to When Evangelism Becomes Proselytism?' *Ecumenical Trends* 29:10 (November 2000), 7/151-14/158.

³¹ McClung, L. G., Jr., "'Try To Get People Saved' Revisiting the Paradigm of an Urgent Pentecostal Missiology", in Dempster, M. W., Klaus, B. D. and Petersen, D., (eds.), *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), pp. 40.

³² McGee, G. B., 'Missions, Overseas (N. American Pentecostal)', in Burgess and van der Maas (eds.), *NIDPCM, The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), pp. 885-901 (888).

³³ Bundy, D. D., 'The Ecumenical Quest of Pentecostalism', *CPCR* 5 (1999).

³⁴ Cole, D. L., 'Pentecostal Koinonia: An Emerging Ecumenical Ecclesiology among Pentecostals', (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Los Angeles, 1998), pp. 243-57.

still maintained an isolationist position. The call to ‘come out from among them and be separate’ (2 Cor. 6.17) was often applied as readily to other Christians from differing traditions to one’s own as it was to secular society.

There has been a greater flexibility and a readiness to engage in dialogue with other Christian traditions in recent years and a willingness to recognise that this is a worthy and necessary role for Pentecostals, with benefits for co-operation on socio-ethical issues, to foster good relationships and break down barriers harmful to evangelism.³⁵ This has also been partly fed by the desire to fulfil the prayer of Jesus in John 17 and the Pauline recognition of the role of the Spirit to fuse all believers into one Church (Eph. 2.11-18; 4.3).³⁶ Indeed, one of the reasons for dialogue occurring between Pentecostals and the WCC was the joint recognition of the role of the Spirit to bring unity and to establish spiritual communion.³⁷ Similarly, the Pentecostal-Catholic dialogue commenced in 1970 on the basis of an agreement that the essence of Pentecostalism was best identified as ‘the personal and direct awareness and experiencing of the Holy Spirit by which the risen and glorified Christ is revealed and the believer is empowered to witness and worship’.³⁸

The establishment of Pentecostal academic societies³⁹ and other Pentecostal fellowships⁴⁰ has also helped build bridges. Robeck offers regular clarion calls concerning the issue that reflect sound spirituality and a desire to concentrate on the essentials, overcome fear

³⁵ Moltmann, J., and Kuschel, K.-J., (eds.), *Pentecostal Movements as an Ecumenical Challenge*, Concilium (London: SCM, 1996); Robeck, C. M., Jr., ‘Pentecostals and Ecumenism in a Pluralistic World’, in Dempster, Klaus and Petersen (eds.), *Called and Empowered...*, pp. 338-62; Gros, J., ‘Toward a Dialogue of Conversion: The Pentecostal, Evangelical and Conciliar Movements’, *Pneuma* 17.2 (1995), pp. 189-202; Robeck, C. M., Jr. has collected an invaluable and substantial index of articles and books, written between 1982 and 2006, relating to dialogue between Pentecostals and the wider Church entitled, ‘Resourcing Ecumenical Formation among Pentecostals. A Select Bibliography: Ecumenical (and Inter-Religious) Promise’.

³⁶ Rusch, W. G., ‘The Theology of the Holy Spirit and the Pentecostal Churches in the Ecumenical Movement’, *Pneuma* 9.1 (1987), pp. 17-30; Robeck, ‘Pentecostals and Ecumenism...’, pp. 341-44.

³⁷ Moltmann, J., *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (transl. Kohl, M.) (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), p. 4) speaks of the importance of different believers, recognising “‘the fellowship of the Spirit’” as something that transcends...denominational boundaries’; Habets, ‘Veni...’, pp. 66-80; Kärkkäinen, V. M., ‘Pneumatology as a New Ecumenical “Model”’, *Ecumenical Trends* 27:9 (1998), pp. 10-6; idem, ‘The Ecumenical Potential of Pneumatology’, *Gregorianum* 80:1 (1999), pp. 121-45; Ortega, O., ‘Ecumenism of the Spirit’, in Gutierrez, B. F., Smith, D. A., (eds.), *In the Power of the Spirit: The Pentecostal Challenge to Historic Churches in Latin America* (Louisville: Presbyterian Church, Worldwide Ministries Division, 1996), pp. 171-83.

³⁸ McDonnell, K., ‘Five Defining Issues: The International Classical Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue’, *Pneuma* 17.2 (1995), pp. 163-88 (178).

³⁹ Society of Pentecostal Studies, European Pentecostal Theological Association, European Pentecostal Charismatic research Association, Pentecostal Charismatic Research Fellowship.

⁴⁰ Pentecostal World Conference, Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America, Pentecostal European Fellowship.

of the other, slow down the trend to further disunity while recognising that ‘the nature of dialogue is a process of discovery’,⁴¹ a potentially positive and life enhancing quest.

World Council of Churches

Robeck identifies cooperation between the WCC and some representatives of the AoG in the USA in the years after its establishment though it was rarely made public.⁴² However, within a decade of it being established, criticism of the WCC was voiced because of its apparent formality, liberal tendencies and its call for unity, viewed as a sign of an end-time apostate and antichristian federation.⁴³ During the 1950’s and 1960’s, the debate concerning the WCC continued with most Pentecostals exhibiting a suspicious if not openly hostile attitude to it. In 1965 and 1969, the General Council of the AoG expressed its disapproval of the WCC, stipulating that it was at variance with biblical priorities and spiritual unity, associated it with Babylon of Revelation 17 and 18 and thus disapproved of ministers being involved.⁴⁴ Most Western Pentecostals have railed against the WCC as a liberal, or worse, an antichristian organisation.⁴⁵

However, there were some leading Pentecostals who provided an alternative stance and argued that such dialogue and interaction did not necessarily indicate compromise.⁴⁶ Anderson⁴⁷ identifies a number of Pentecostals who espoused ecumenical ideals,⁴⁸ the most renowned being David du Plessis⁴⁹ (such people have often been misunderstood and maligned as a result).

There are a number of basic reasons that cause Pentecostals to be wary of developing relationships with the WCC. The first relates to the concept of an ecumenical movement itself. Pentecostals believe that they, as believers, are part of the invisible Church that comprises all believers. Therefore, they are suspicious of a movement that seeks to

⁴¹ Robeck, C. M., Jr., ‘Pentecostals and Christian Unity: Facing the Challenge’, *Pneuma* 26.2 (2004), pp. 307-38 (334).

⁴² Robeck, ‘The Assemblies...’, pp. 125-32; idem (ed.), *Confessing the Apostolic Faith: Pentecostal Churches and the Ecumenical Movement* (Pasadena: The Society for Pentecostal Studies, 1987).

⁴³ Kendrick, K., *The Promise Fulfilled: A History of the Modern Pentecostal Movement* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), pp. 203-04; Coulter, D. M., ‘Pentecostal Visions of the End: Eschatology, Ecclesiology and the Fascination of the *Left Behind* Series’, *JPT* 14.1 (2005), pp. 81-98 (93-4).

⁴⁴ Robeck, ‘The Assemblies...’, p. 147.

⁴⁵ Durasoff, S., *Bright Wind of the Spirit: Pentecostalism Today* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), pp. 87, 99.

⁴⁶ Gee, D., ‘Contact is not Compromise’, *Pentecost*, 53 (Sept.-Nov., 1960).

⁴⁷ Anderson, *An Introduction...*, pp. 67, 68, 73, 249.

⁴⁸ T. B. Barratt, Alexander Boddy, Aimee Semple McPherson, Donald Gee, Walter Hollenweger, C. M. Robeck.

⁴⁹ Howard, R., ‘David du Plessis: Pentecost’s ‘Ambassador-at-Large’’, in Ma, W., Menzies, R.P., *The Spirit and Spirituality. Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), pp. 271-97; Robinson, M., ‘David du Plessis – A Promise Fulfilled’, in Jongeneel (ed), *Pentecost...*, pp. pp. 143-55; du Plessis, D., *The Spirit Bade Me Go. The Astounding Move of God in the Denominational Churches* (Plainfield: Logos, 1970).

demonstrate unity, a unity they believe already to be demonstrable by the individual members owning a relationship with Jesus. Robeck also identifies the formalism that many Pentecostals associated with the liberal churches of the WCC.⁵⁰ Pentecostals concluded that their (often liturgical) worship lacked the warmth and authenticity of a true expression of spirituality. Interestingly, Robeck deduces that the exuberance of Pentecostal worship was often viewed by members of the WCC as dangerous and likely to lead to disorder.⁵¹ Thus, misunderstanding reigned on both sides of the ecumenical fence.

Partly as a result of the unwillingness by members of each constituency to explore the strengths of each other and only to concentrate on the perceived weaknesses, other valid issues were also sidelined by Pentecostals. Thus, for Pentecostals, because the WCC was seen to be a movement that concentrated on the social gospel, Pentecostal denominations denounced the latter. Similarly, because of the educated calibre of many of the leaders in the churches associated with the WCC, a fear grew among Pentecostals that to adopt an educated portfolio (especially in theology) was to run the risk of compromising one's faith or sliding towards the adoption of a liberal theology.

A more obvious problem relates to the different doctrines espoused by Pentecostals and those held (or perceived to be held) by members of the WCC.⁵² Over recent decades, more Pentecostals have dialogued with the WCC,⁵³ though it has taken non-Western

⁵⁰ Robeck, C. M., "Pentecostals and the Apostolic Faith: Implications for Ecumenism", *Pneuma* 9.1 (1987), pp. 69-70

⁵¹ Robeck, 'Pentecostals and the Apostolic...', p. 70.

⁵² Robeck, C.M., Jr., 'World Council of Churches' in Burgess and van der Maas (eds.), *NIDPCM*, pp. 1213-217 (1214).

⁵³ Conway, M., 'Helping the Ecumenical Movement to Move On: Hollenweger and the Rediscovery of the Value of Diversity', in Jongeneel (ed.), *Pentecost...*, pp. 273-87; Wainwright, G., 'The One Hope of Your Calling? The Ecumenical and Pentecostal Movements after a Century', *Pneuma* 25.1 (2003), pp. 7-28; Gros, J., 'A Pilgrimage in the Spirit: Pentecostal Testimony in the Faith and Order Movement', *Pneuma* 25:1 (2003), pp. 29-53; Pfister, R., 'Pentecostalism and Ecumenism: A Critical Examination of Seeming Antipodes in Light of Recent developments within French Pentecostalism', *SC* 2.3 (2001), pp. 209-26; Robeck, C. M., Jr., 'Pentecostalism and Ecumenical Dialogue: A Potential Agenda', *Ecumenical Trends* 16:11 (1987), pp. 185-88; idem, 'Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches and Ecumenism: An Interview with Cecil M. Robeck, Jr.', *The Pneuma Review* 6:1 (2003), 22-35; idem, 'The Challenge Pentecostalism Poses to the Quest for Ecclesial Unity', in Walter, P., Krämer, K., and Augustin, G., (eds.), *Die Kirche en ökumenischer Perspektive* [a festschrift for Cardinal Walter Kasper on his 70th Birthday] (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), pp. 306-20; idem, 'Pentecostals and Christian Unity: Facing the Challenge', *Pneuma* 26:2 (2004), pp. 307-38; idem, 'The Holy Spirit and the Unity of the Church: The Challenge of Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Independent Movements', in Donnelly, D., Denaux, A. and Famerée, J., (eds.), *The Holy Spirit, the Church and Christian Unity: Proceedings of the Consultation Held at the Monastery of Bose, Italy (14-20 October 2002)* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005) pp. 353-81; idem, 'The Pentecostal Movement Should Open Her Eyes to the Ecumenical Movement', *CGJ* 4 (April 2003), pp. 32-8; idem, 'Pentecostals and Ecumenism...', in Dempster, Klaus and Petersen (eds.), *Called...*, pp. 338-62; Sandidge, J.L., 'The Pentecostal Movement and Ecumenism: An Update', *Ecumenical Trends* 18 (1989), pp. 102-06; idem, 'An Update on the Ecumenical Activities of Pentecostals', in Jongeneel (ed.), *Experiences of the*

Pentecostals, in the main, to be at the forefront of engaging in discussions with the WCC and they have begun to make substantial changes to its membership and emphases.⁵⁴ Anderson concludes, ‘It appears as if Majority World Pentecostals have far fewer ‘hang-ups’ when it comes to ecumenism than their western counterparts have’.⁵⁵ The consultations on faith and healing initiated by the WCC have seen a majority number of Pentecostals and Charismatics involved.⁵⁶ Staples identifies the adoption of major pneumatological concepts by the WCC with which Pentecostals are in complete agreement, including the roles, gifts and mission of the Spirit in the Church and lives of individual believers.⁵⁷

Roman Catholicism

Fear, ignorance and prejudice have resulted in deep divisions between Pentecostals and the Roman Catholic Church, Revelation 18.4 (‘Come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins...’) being used by some Pentecostal leaders as a call to those who would seek to engage with it. Since the early seventies, there has been some significant movement with regard to dialogue between some Pentecostals and leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, resulting in five specific discussions that occurred over a period of years (1972-1976, 1977-1982, 1985-1989, 1990-1997, 1998-2004, 2011-2015).⁵⁸ This has sometimes been facilitated by Pentecostal scholars and, in particular,

Spirit: Conferences on Pentecostal and Charismatic Research in Europe at Utrecht University 1989 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 239-46.

⁵⁴ Robeck, C. M., Jr., ‘Do “Good Fences Make Good Neighbors”? Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness’, *AJPS* 2:1 (January 1999), pp. 87-103 (94-8).

⁵⁵ Wilson, E. A., ‘Latin American Pentecostals: Their Potential for Ecumenical Dialogue’, *Pneuma* 9.1 (1987), pp. 85-90; C. E. Alvarez, ‘Latin American Pentecostals: Ecumenical and Evangelical’, *Pneuma* 9.1 (1987), pp. 91-95.

⁵⁶ Robeck, C. M., Jr., ‘A Pentecostal looks at the World Council of Churches’, *ER* 47:1 (1995), pp. 60-9.

⁵⁷ Staples, P., ‘Ecumenical Theology and Pentecostalism’, in Jongeneel (ed.), *Pentecost...*, pp. 262-71 (264-69).

⁵⁸ Hall, J. L., ‘Response to the Report from the Third Quinquennium...(1985-1989)’, *Pneuma* 12.2 (1990), 152-154; McDonnell, K., ‘Classical Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue: Hopes and Possibilities’, in Spittler (ed.), *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) pp. 246-68; idem, *Catholic Pentecostalism: Problems in Education* (Pecos, NM: Dove Publications, 1970); idem, ‘Five...’, pp. 163-88; Robeck, C. M., Sandidge, J. L., ‘Dialogue, Catholic and Pentecostal’, in Burgess (ed.) *DIPCM*, pp. 576-82; O’Connor, E., *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1971); Ranaghan, K., Ranaghan, D., *Catholic Pentecostals* (New York: Paulist Press, 1969); Robeck, C. M., Jr., ‘Specks and Logs, Catholics and Pentecostals’, *Pneuma* 12.2 (1990), pp. 77-83; idem, ‘John Paul II: A Personal Account of His Impact and Legacy’, *JPT* 27.1 (2005), pp. 3-34; Gros, J., ‘Toward a Dialogue of Conversion: The Pentecostal, Evangelical and Conciliar Movements’, *Pneuma*, 17.2 (1995), pp. 189-201; Sandidge, J. L., (ed.), *The Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982): A Study in Developing Ecumenism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1987); idem, ‘Roman Catholic Pentecostal dialogue : a contribution to Christian unity’, *Pneuma* 7.1 (1985), pp. 41-61; Lee, P.D., *Pneumatological Ecclesiology in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue: A Catholic Reading of the Third Quinquennium (1985-1989)* (Rome: Pontifical University, 1994); Crowe, T. R., *Pentecostal Unity: Recurring Frustration and Enduring Hopes* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993); Cole, D. L., ‘Dialogues, Catholic and Pentecostal’, in Burgess (ed.), *EPCC*, pp. 129-34; idem, ‘Current Pentecostal/Ecumenical Tensions’, *Ecumenical Trends* 24:5 (May, 1995), 1/65-2/66, 9/73-16/80.

the Society of Pentecostal Studies.⁵⁹ Similarly, Pentecostal journals have often been the vehicles for delivering the findings of such dialogues and for Pentecostal and Catholic scholars to write on issues of shared interest.⁶⁰ Robeck offers a helpful insight into the relationship between Pentecostals and Catholics noting concerns on both sides; in their own way, each has been and still is concerned, if not worried, about the other.⁶¹

The Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church has made dialogue easier between some Pentecostals and Catholics, and especially since the Second Vatican Council.⁶² The issue of ecclesiology has proved to be a useful matrix within which dialogue has taken place. Indeed, Zegwaart explores the possibility for further dialogue between Pentecostals and Catholics on the central issues of ecclesiology, soteriology and the sacraments⁶³ while Kärkkäinen identifies pneumatology⁶⁴ and ecclesiology⁶⁵ as having valuable potential for extended fruitful dialogue.

V. Where do we go from here?

There have been positive moves by some leaders in both communities resulting in a readiness to learn from each other.⁶⁶ Thus, in 1976, McDonnell encouraged fellow Catholics to learn from the Pentecostal ‘willingness to let the Spirit come to visibility in the full spectrum of His gifts’,⁶⁷ their readiness to acknowledge a ‘personal moment in faith and a personal relationship with Jesus’,⁶⁸ while encouraging Pentecostals to be less suspicious of international structures that seek to reflect the message of the Gospel.⁶⁹ In

⁵⁹ See further Robeck, ‘Do good...’, pp. 99-100.

⁶⁰ The full report of the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue (1990-1997) between the Catholic Church and some Pentecostal Leaders was included in the *AJPS* 2.1 (1999), pp. 105-51; so also the third set of discussions between similar groups was published in *JPT* 12.2 (1990); Canales, A. D., ‘A Rebirth of Being “Born Again”: Theological, Sacramental and Pastoral Reflections from a Roman Catholic Perspective’, *JPT* 11.1 (2002), pp. 98-119; Sandidge, J. L., ‘Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue: A Contribution to Christian Unity’, *Pneuma* 7.1 (1985), pp. 41-60.

⁶¹ Robeck, C. M., Jr., ‘Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue: Some Pentecostal Assumptions’, *JEPTA* 21 (2002), pp. 3-25 (3-9); McDonnell, K., ‘Improbable Conversations: The International Classical Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue’, *Pneuma* 17.2 (1995), pp. 163-74; idem, ‘Five...’, pp. 163-88.

⁶² Ford, J. M., *Which Way for Catholic Pentecostals?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); O’Connor, E., *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1971); Thigpen, T. P., ‘Catholic Charismatic Renewal’, in Burgess and van der Maas (eds.), *NIDCPM*, pp. 460-67; Kärkkäinen, V.-M., *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), pp. 47-50; Hocken, P., ‘Charismatic Renewal in the Roman Catholic Church: Reception and Challenge’, in Jongeneel (ed.), *Pentecost...*, pp. 301-09; Gelpi, D.L., ‘The Theological Challenge of Charismatic Spirituality’, *Pneuma* 14.2 (1992), pp. 185-97.

⁶³ Zegwaart, H., ‘The Place of the Church in the economy of Salvation: Roman Catholic and Pentecostal Perspectives’, *JEPTA* XX1, 2001, pp. 3-25.

⁶⁴ Kärkkäinen, *Toward...*, pp. 65-79.

⁶⁵ Kärkkäinen, *Toward...*, pp. 109-22.

⁶⁶ Ceresoli, J. M., ‘Critical Mass: “We had church” in a Holy Catholic Way’, *JPT* 17 (Oct. 2000), pp. 7-11.

⁶⁷ McDonnell, ‘Classical...’, p. 252.

⁶⁸ McDonnell, K., ‘The Pros and Cons of Dialogue with Catholics’, *JPT* 16 (2000), pp. 90-101 (91).

⁶⁹ McDonnell, ‘Classical...’, p. 250-52.

2000, at the SPS, he read an apology by the then Pope on behalf of Catholics towards Pentecostals for a range of issues including intolerance, discrimination and exclusivism. This was, in turn, accepted by the president of the Society of Pentecostal Studies who also requested forgiveness for negative attitudes and statements towards the Catholic Church. At the same time, that there are major differences is clear and these may not be simply overlooked by either side.

McDonnell, a Catholic, writes, ‘Primary biblical truths unite us. Important theological convictions divide us. What can we do together?’ and suggests prayer together, sharing of pulpits as well as speaking together on issues on which agreement may be established. He also calls for clearer information to be offered in theological institutes with regard to each other’s traditions.⁷⁰ He also offers a candid overview of the mistakes made by Catholics against Pentecostals, notes measures taken by the Catholic Church to support Pentecostal churches and individuals, and offers his gratitude to Pentecostalism for that which he has learned that has profited his spiritual growth.⁷¹

Robeck also offers a number of perspectives that, if developed, could advance the dialogue between Pentecostals and the wider Church.⁷² Rather than concentrate on differences, areas of agreement should also be identified, strengths affirmed and weaknesses acknowledged. Patience and forgiveness is needed on the part of all as well as a greater realisation of the universal nature of the Church. Finally, he advocates the strategic ‘breaking down of barriers at all levels of the church, but particularly among those in church leadership’.⁷³ Sandidge also identifies ways whereby the development of bridges could be created between both groups by national dialogues, the sharing and exploration of differing doctrinal distinctives in seminaries, a readiness to learn from one another, repentance on both sides for words, deeds, unfounded criticisms and assumptions, and engaging in corporate prayer.⁷⁴

Engage in dialogue with other believers

Pentecostals can learn from other Christian communities and cultures different to our own. Pentecostals need to take advantage of that which the Spirit is saying to others also in different contexts and cultures to our own. I have been privileged to engage in dialogue with Christians from denominations different to my own. Although none of the parties felt any need to compromise or amend their respective traditions, the exercise has been immensely profitable, resulting in a much clearer level of appreciation of each other’s

⁷⁰ McDonnell, K., ‘Can Classical Pentecostals and Roman Catholics engage in common witness’, *JPT* 7 (1995), pp. 97-106 (103-05).

⁷¹ McDonnell, ‘The Pros...’, pp. 90-101.

⁷² Robeck, ‘Pentecostals and the Apostolic...’, pp. 74-5; Kärkkäinen, *Toward...*, pp. 50-1.

⁷³ Robeck, ‘Pentecostals and the Apostolic...’, p. 75.

⁷⁴ Sandidge, J. L., ‘Consultation Summary: A Pentecostal Perspective’, *Pneuma* 9.1 (1987), pp. 96-8.

spiritualities, beliefs and practices, as well providing opportunities for fellowship and mutual understanding and respect, and a readiness to engage in further dialogue and prayer. In these tentative steps towards each other, we have, I believe, been moving towards the aspiration of the Spirit that the Church he initiated should be united, experiencing harmony, though not necessarily without individual distinctives.

One way to see authentic unity developing among Pentecostals is to teach them of its importance and provide them with opportunities to fellowship with and learn from other (Pentecostal) believers. In particular, Theological Colleges can provide this forum for fellowship. There is a danger that in the desire to train leaders, training centres may become formal instead of dynamic and the training and the teachers be more concerned with orthodoxy and orthopraxy, rather than openness to the Spirit. College faculties need to guard against concentrating on enabling their students to gain good degrees instead of also developing their spirituality, developing academic prowess to the exclusion of spiritual power, being elitist rather than evangelistic, being professional and not also Pentecostal.

Learn from Pentecostals who made the quest for unity central to their agenda

Charles Parham, early American Pentecostal leader sought to establish unity in the context of multi-denominationalism in the early twentieth century.⁷⁵ William Seymour promoted “Christian Unity everywhere” in his *The Apostolic Faith*.⁷⁶ Donald Gee was a British AOG leader encouraged contact with the Ecumenical Movement.⁷⁷ In 1960, David J. du Plessis, a South African Pentecostal contacted Cardinal Bea as a result of which he became the first Pentecostal observer during the Third Session of Vatican II.⁷⁸ Following this, a formal dialogue between some Pentecostals and Catholics was continued through five quinquenniums from 1972. Walter Hollenweger, a Swiss Professor of Global Pentecostal Studies, promoted dialogue between Pentecostals and Ecumenical leaders.⁷⁹ Dialogues have also taken place between Pentecostals and Lutherans, and Pentecostals and Reformed Churches. Some of these developments have

⁷⁵ Parham, C. F., *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness* (Baxter Springs: Apostolic Faith Bible College, 1902, 1910) 61-65.

⁷⁶ 1.1 (Sept. 1906) 2.

⁷⁷ Anderson, A. H., “Pentecostals, Healing and Ecumenism”, *International Review of Mission* 95/370-371 (2004) 491.

⁷⁸ Du Plessis, David J., *A Man Called Mr. Pentecost*, (Plainfield: Logos International, 1977) 199-247; Robeck, C. M. Jr., “Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity: A Pentecostal Perspective. Edinburgh and the Pentecostal Movement in 1910”, 26-28.

⁷⁹ Hollenweger, W. J., “Common Witness between Catholics and Pentecostals”, *Pneuma* 18.2 (1996) 185-216.

been traced by Prior and Robeck⁸⁰ though not all have been without frustrations and opposition.⁸¹

Thomas Barrett, a Norwegian Pentecostal wrote, in 1911, “An Urgent Call for Charity and Unity” and proposed an international Pentecostal Union. In 1939, the European Pentecostal Conference was convened, attracting 15,000 Pentecostals. In 1947, the Pentecostal World Conference was convened in Switzerland, the first of triennial events that have met since then. One of the seven central aims is “To demonstrate to the world the essential unity of Spirit-baptized believers, fulfilling the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ: ‘that they may all be one’ (John 17:21)”.

In 1948, the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America was initiated, two of the four aims being “‘To demonstrate to the world the essential unity of Spirit-baptized believers, fulfilling the prayer of the Lord Jesus: ‘that they may all be one’ (John 17:21)’ and ‘To encourage the principles of community for the members of the body of Christ, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit until we all come to the unity of the faith’.” In 1994, this was replaced by the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America, adopting a Racial Reconciliation Manifesto at its inaugural meeting in Memphis, Tennessee. It included in its aims the following aspirations “VII We commit ourselves not only to pray but also to work for genuine and visible manifestations of Christian unity. XI ...We therefore, pledge our commitment to embrace...reconciliation of all Christians regardless of race or gender...”.

Publicise ongoing dialogue

Part of the difficulty in developing dialogue between Pentecostals and either Catholics or ecumenical believers is that any developing rapprochement will be limited among Pentecostals simply because few are aware of the discussions being held between the various groups. Developments in dialogue and closer examples of fellowship is rarely recorded in popular Pentecostal magazines. Similarly, there have been very few attempts to provide reports to Pentecostals by their denominational leaders of these often unofficial discussions. Indeed, some of the barriers to dialogue on the part of Pentecostals are created by other Pentecostals. Suspicions and assumptions are still common among the members of each constituent body and the issue of proselytism still plagues the dialogue.

⁸⁰ Prior, J. M., SVD, “The Challenge of the Pentecostals in Asia: Part One: Pentecostal Movements in Asia” *Exchange* 36 (2007) 10-12 (6-40); Robeck, “Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity...”, 8-28.

⁸¹ Crowe, T. R., *Pentecostal Unity: Recurring Frustration and Enduring Hope*, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993).

Listen to the Bible

The Spirit establishes the Church as a body (1 Cor. 3:16-17), is committed to unity (Phil. 1:27; 2:1-2), welcoming folk from all people-groups and backgrounds (2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:3).⁸² Paul spent eighteen months in Corinth establishing a church but when he left, it quickly fell into disarray; by the time, Paul writes to them, they were disunited (1:10-17). Paul's corrective letter is intended to provide teaching that would result in the church being transformed and begin to reflect Jesus practically in their lifestyles and worship. His central thesis relates to their need to be united.

The coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost provided the basis for a racially undivided community, demonstrated by the expansion of the Christian community to include Samaritans and even Gentiles. Those outside were now included. Indeed, Peter includes such a hope in his sermon (Acts 2:39). Ramachandra, referring to Acts 10:9-23, concludes that the Day of Pentecost resulted in 'the stupendous sight, unimaginable in their contemporary world, of a Jewish peasant and a Roman centurion living together under one roof'.⁸³ The Spirit affirmed those whom others were wishing to exclude.

The implication that Gentiles would be able to experience the same quality of relationship with the God of the Jews is rarely articulated in the OT. Zechariah (14:16-17) prophesies that the nations are to worship God, but it will be as a result of divine compulsion, failure to do so resulting in severe punishment. But the Spirit demonstrates that God desires direct and intimate relationship with all people and not just Jews. Thus, it is no surprise that although the initial fillings by the Spirit are of Jews, both Samaritans and Gentiles will also be recipients. Although such a momentous occasion is initially presented with reference to Jews in Acts 2:1-4, the outworking of such a revelation will include opportunities for others to similarly receive the Spirit.

Thus, Jewish believers are presented with the reality that Samaritans are also accepted by the Spirit (Acts 8:14-19) as are Gentiles (Acts 10:44-47; 11:15) and even killers of Christians (Acts 9:17). Given the ancient rivalries and hatred between Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles, it took a sensational act of the Spirit, witnessed and affirmed by Jewish leaders of the Church, recorded in Acts 15, to ensure that age-old, divisive resentments were divinely removed from the minds of all concerned. The Spirit dictated the new rules of his community and ensured that all believers knew them. This fundamental work of the Spirit to create a diverse but united community (1 Cor. 3:16) needs greater emphasis among believers, who, unfortunately, are increasingly divided. Unity is not a negotiable

⁸² Macchia, F. D., "‘I Belong to Christ:’ A Pentecostal Reflection on Paul’s Passion for Unity”, *Pneuma* 25.1 (2003) 1-6.

⁸³ Ramachandra, V., *The Recovery of Mission. Beyond the Pluralist Paradigm*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 269.

element on the agenda of the Spirit, neither should it be valued as a doctrine devoid of reality by believers today.

The Spirit is interested in inclusion, providing an opportunity for unique cooperation and harmony. Thus, he initiates a community that includes women, men and children, young and old, multi-racial, culturally varied and nationally diverse. The Church, as initiated by the Spirit, is a medley of people who are privileged to stand with each other, to relate to each other, to minister together on behalf of the Spirit and thus to radiate God and his purposes. Unity is such a precious commodity that Paul emphasizes it this by providing a sevenfold list of 'ones', commencing with the reference to 'one body', concluding with 'one God and Father of us all' (Eph. 4:1-6). The body of believers exists because the one God has chosen to be their father and to welcome them as children whose privilege it is to share the common bond of being in a family. It is to this quality of unity that they have been called (4:4), a unity that has already been initiated (4:3) and is characterized by the Spirit (4:4).⁸⁴ They are to maintain (present tense) and guard that unity consistently and continuously in their relationships with one another because of and with the help of the Spirit.

The unity expected by Paul is identified by the explanatory virtues located in 4:2. It is a unity that is characterized by lowliness (or humility), meekness (or gentleness, courtesy), patience, forbearance (or a readiness to be faithful to others) and love, each identified as fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). It involves a dedication to maintaining honourable principles of behaviour and an unquestioning loyalty to each other. This is a high calling, a super-human task that needs the help of the Spirit.

One of the most serious aspects concerning the presence of the Spirit in believers relates to the possibility that they may grieve him (Eph. 4:30). The clearest OT reference to this feature is Isaiah 63:10 in which Israel's rejection of God is described, in terms of their "grieving his Holy Spirit. The meaning of the term relates to the concepts of "to hurt, cause pain" rather than "to irritate, annoy". For believers to hurt the Spirit who has sealed them is an inconceivable act of betrayal. It is as if Paul is recommending that the readers consider the humiliation of embarrassing someone who positively presents them, whom they let down and thereby bring his reputation as a guarantor into disrepute. It is the height of ingratitude for people to hurt the one who has authenticated them. In particular, Paul is concerned that his readers do not commit the kinds of sin that undermine that which the Spirit is seeking to achieve.

⁸⁴ The commencing words 'There is' (4:4) are not in the original Greek; they have been included to provide a clearer reading of the text. For Paul, however, he presents the truth starkly - 'One body and one Spirit'.

The Spirit is seeking to unite the people; if by their actions, they bring about disunity and hurt to the body of believers, they will also be hurting the Spirit. Given that the Spirit is committed to them until their final redemption, having sealed them, such behaviour on their part would be even more grievous. The sins that are particularly injurious, as recorded in the following verses, are those associated with the tongue. These sins break fellowship, destroy friendships, undermine unity and thus, grieve the Spirit. Although other crimes are viewed as particularly heinous, Paul reminds the readers of the destructive potential of the tongue. The Spirit indwells believers in order that they be united. When this is not fulfilled, the objective of the Spirit is not realized. The injunction that follows that believers are to be filled with the Spirit (5:18, 19) is followed by examples of how this will be manifested in their lives – in their relationships with each other. The Spirit is committed to unity. Believers must therefore realize the importance of maintaining unity, protecting it as a priceless treasure, recognizing that the aim of the Spirit is to welcome folk from all people-groups and backgrounds and to shed the love of God through each believer.

Geese have much to teach believers about unity. The reason they fly in a V-formation is of great significance for as each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird that follows. It has been estimated that by flying in such a formation, they add at least 70% greater flying range when compared to one bird flying alone. Therefore, they aim to fly in concord with one another. When the leader becomes tired, another goose takes its place. Furthermore, it is thought that geese honk to encourage the leaders to keep going and when a goose gets sick, or becomes exhausted and falls out of the formation, others join it to help and protect it, staying with it until it is able to fly again or until it dies. Only then, do they join the main group or another one. When believers recognise the importance of community, they will achieve higher standards of togetherness and a clearer sense of direction. The Spirit has a similar vision of interdependency and mutual support with reference to believers in the Church. He is working to establish such in his community and therefore, so should we.

Pentecostals should be wary of (unintentionally) creating a framework outside of which it may be assumed that the Spirit does (or should) not function. Indeed, it may be more appropriate to be prepared to widen our expectations with reference to the work of the Spirit by considering how he has led others into new dimensions of spirituality (whose denominational or spiritual traditions may be different to our own). The tendency to elitism is a constant threat to any who espouse a particular spiritual experience. However, the dynamic and creative Spirit exists to create unity in diversity, rather than a monochrome community, and the NT often reflects this two-fold agenda.

Conclusion

In an attempt to relocate the issue of unity higher up the agenda of Pentecostals, it is important that we concentrate on encountering Christ, the Spirit and the Father (and not focus our attention on the minutiae of orthodoxy or orthopraxy). We need to have a healthy awareness of the issues that we focus on and to which we may be biased and to be prepared to learn from others. The Spirit has brought believers to the start of the race and given them the resources to reach the end and has promised to be their coach. It is up to us to take advantage of our trainer and win. The race that is set before us is one that was central to the heart of Jesus and the Spirit. It is related to maintaining unity in God's family.

In 1964, Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment for plotting revolution in a context of apartheid. He made a speech on April 20, 1964 that was part of his defence, concluding with these words, 'I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die'. Similarly, unity among believers is not an optional extra or an aspiration for which only a little energy should be expended. It is of central importance. On May 10 1994, Mandela celebrated the climax of that dream when he became President of South Africa.

Believers today need to take greater steps to realize a similar dream of unity in the Church. We do not know when Jesus will return and signal the end of life. But we do know what is on his heart and that the Spirit is with us empowering us. And our commission is to never, never give in with regard to our quest for authentic unity.