[AJPS 23.1 (February 2020), pp. 71-84]

Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue on Mary: Moving the Conversation Forward

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Introduction

The second phase of the International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982) made Mary one of its topics of discussion. In 1987, Jerry L. Sandidge presented a landmark paper from the Pentecostal side. Since then, however, Pentecostals have produced almost no substantive systematic theological reflections on Mary, only biblical or historical ones.[1] Given the significant developments in Pentecostal theological scholarship since Sandidge's paper, the time seems right to challenge Catholics and Pentecostals to renew that decades-old conversation in search of greater common witness between them on Mariology.

In this paper, I first present a brief summary of the second phase's treatment of Mariology. Then I turn to facets of the New Testament witness to Mary, to which both Dialogue partners perhaps give insufficient attention. Next, I trace some theological trajectories from that New Testament witness—trajectories that concern the relationship between the Holy Spirit and grace, the occasionally negative elements of the Synoptics' portrayals of Mary, and the pneumatological foundation of Mariology. Last, I conclude with a consideration for those Pentecostals who wish to understand Catholic Mariology better through a concrete practice.

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[1]Jerry L. Sandidge, "A Pentecostal Perspective of Mary, the Mother of Jesus," in J.L. Sandidge, *Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982): A Study in Developing Ecumenism*, vol. 2. (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1987), 289-351. See an abbreviated version in Sandidge's "A Pentecostal Response to Roman Catholic Teaching on Mary," *Pneuma* 4, no. 1 (1982): 33-42.

Mary in Catholic-Pentecostal International Dialogue

Both Mariology and church tradition occupy considerable amounts of space in the Dialogue's second final report.[2] Each of the Dialogue partners approaches Mariology in light of each's own view of church tradition. On the one hand, both agree that the church predates the New Testament and played a role in its composition (50). On the other hand, Pentecostals say that they are slow to emphasize church tradition unless it is based on the explicit witness of Scripture. While Pentecostals recognize the existence of traditions in their own churches, they insist that these traditions have authority only in relation to Scripture (57).

The stated Pentecostal hesitance to speculate beyond and in light of Scripture surfaces as their primary objection to the points of Mariology on which they disagree with Catholics. Multiple times, Pentecostals note that some Catholic Mariology lacks sufficient scriptural basis (68, 73, 76). Although both partners affirm Mary's importance in the New Testament, Pentecostals depart significantly from Catholics on post-canonical doctrinal development and deny the legitimacy of any such development concerning Mary (61). Furthermore, Pentecostals refuse to go beyond the "clear meaning" of Scripture because of its normative value for doctrine (59). Even with these tight strictures in place, Pentecostals agree with Catholics that Mary "occupies a unique place" (62) and is worthy of "special respect"; that Mary is "the outstanding example or model of faith, humility, and virtue" (63); that Mary in no way replaces the one mediator, Jesus Christ (66); and that Mary was a virgin at the conception of Jesus (70).

The Dialogue's final report, however, shows significant differences between Catholics and Pentecostals on the relationship between Scripture and tradition, and Mariology is one of the more important doctrinal manifestations of those differences. Nonetheless, there is at least one fundamental commonality between the two on the relationship between Scripture and tradition—namely, that legitimate developments in church tradition are based ultimately on Scripture, apart from which developments should not take on a life of their own. The Pentecostals state this explicitly in the final report, and *Dei Verbum* denies that tradition is altogether disconnected from Scripture and speaks of tradition as the "handing on" of divine revelation.[3] Thus, both Catholics

[2]"Final Report of the International Roman Catholic Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982)," *Pneuma* 12, no. 2 (1990): 97-115. All subsequent citations of the final report and of Catholic documents in the notes and body of the text are to section numbers unless noted otherwise.

[3]Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. *Dei Verbum*. (November 18, 1965), 7-10.

and Pentecostals insist that Scripture is the ultimate basis of legitimate doctrinal development.

Mary in the New Testament

In light of the Dialogue partners' common commitment to the primacy of Scripture in theological reflection, I now turn to some key moments in the life of Mary as attested to in the Gospels. My goal is to encourage both Catholics and Pentecostals to say more than they tend to say about Mary or at least say what they say more thoroughly and clearly than they sometimes do. Perhaps Pentecostals could be more attentive to the charismatic activity that surrounds Mary, and Catholics could be more attentive to those portions of the New Testament that seem to cast Mary in a somewhat negative light. I give particular (although not exclusive) attention to Luke's birth narrative because of Catholic emphasis on the Annunciation and *Magnificat* and because of the paradigmatic function of Luke-Acts in Pentecostal theology and spirituality.

Luke's Birth Narrative

Luke's birth narrative is drenched with the activity of the Holy Spirit and concomitant signs, and Mary is a prominent character in this charismatic drama. At the Annunciation, Gabriel tells Mary that she will conceive and give birth to the Son of God as a result of the Holy Spirit coming upon her (1:35). Her response—"Let it happen to me exactly as you have said"—epitomizes not only submission to the divine plan in general but docility to and cooperation with the Holy Spirit, since it is the Spirit who will come upon her. Mary gives herself over to the improbable proclamation that she will become the mother of the Son of God without the aid of human seed. When she expresses radical compliance to these prospects, she knows that it is the Spirit who will bring Gabriel's message to fulfillment in her.

It takes only a little pneumatological imagination to see Mary's posture towards Gabriel's message as itself already a work of the Holy Spirit, drawing her to obedience to and union with the Son that she would conceive and who would become her own Redeemer. In the words of Gabriel, the Lord was already with her (1:28). A Pentecostal hermeneutic funded by Luke-Acts is able to see the Spirit as the one in whom created things live, move, and have their being (Acts 17:28). At the Annunciation, Mary says "Yes" to the Holy Spirit coming upon her to conceive the Son of God because of her cooperation with a prior work of the Spirit that produces in her the disposition to say "Yes." The Spirit

makes possible her life of obedience, holiness, and further docility to the Spirit.

I trust that the above pneumatological reading of the Annunciation seems viable to Pentecostals. Perhaps less obvious to them may be the charismatic nature of Mary's *Magnificat*, which reads:

> *And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts; he has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever."*
>
> *(Luke 1:46-55, RSV)*

Many Pentecostals rightly see Mary's exclamation as words of praise and may even paraphrase portions of it to make her words their own in times of verbal praise. Indeed, words of praise they are, but situating them within the wider context of Luke's birth narrative allows them to be seen as another example of the repeated charismatic speech that Luke reports. Immediately before Mary's *Magnificat*, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and cries out with charismatic speech that contains blessings for Mary and the baby that she carries, one of which is a blessing for Mary's believing what was spoken to her at the Annunciation (1:41-45). In addition, when the time arrives for Elizabeth and Zechariah to name their son, Zechariah regains his ability to speak, is filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesies (1:67-79). Furthermore, in the temple, Simeon (on whom the Spirit rests), having received a revelation from the Spirit that he would not die until seeing the Messiah, is directed by the Spirit to Jesus and his parents and speaks by the Spirit that the child is God's salvation for Israel and the Gentiles (2:25-35). Also, while Luke does not explicitly mention the Holy Spirit in reference to Anna, he states that she is a prophetess. In Pentecostal perspective, prophecy is a work of the Spirit of God, and she speaks thusly to all who were looking for the redemption of Israel (2:36-38). All of this is the broader context of Mary's Magnificat in Luke's birth narrative—repeated charismatic speech inspired by the Holy Spirit, who has already come upon Mary, for she already bears Jesus in her womb. With her

Spirit-inspired speech, she becomes one of the many who speak the word of God with all boldness in Luke-Acts, and she is among those baptized in the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4).

Luke's birth narrative attests to Mary's charismatic experiences. As one seeks a synthesized view of Mary in the New Testament, the birth narrative becomes a lens through which to view other scenes in her life. Mary's total abandonment to the things of God that she demonstrates in her "Yes" at the Annunciation surfaces again when she instructs the attendants at the wedding in Cana to do whatever Jesus says, even after Jesus' stern words to her (John 2:3-5). Furthermore, after Simeon warns Mary that a sword will pierce her own soul (Luke 2:35), she faithfully remains with Jesus throughout His ministry and is present at His crucifixion, even after the disciples had fled (John 19:26-27). A Lukan lens invites the interpreter to see Mary's expressions of abandonment and faithfulness in John as further cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

However, Luke's birth narrative is not entirely flattering of Mary. The only New Testament glimpse into Jesus' childhood is also a glimpse into Jesus' relationship with his mother, and it reveals her maternal misunderstanding (2:41-51). After Mary and Joseph return to Jerusalem in search of Jesus and find him in the temple, she asks Him why He mistreated them by causing her and His "father" (v. 48) anxiety. Jesus answers with His own questions that imply they should not be surprised that He must be in His "Father's" house (v. 49), and Luke informs his readers that Mary and Joseph did not understand what Jesus said to them. While Mary balances her misunderstanding with treasuring Jesus' words in her heart, that misunderstanding is nonetheless severe. Mary misunderstands more than the things that Jesus should be doing. She also misunderstands something of who Jesus is. By calling Joseph His "father," she demonstrates less than a full grasp of His true identity. Jesus' reply clarifies that He is already pursuing the concerns of His true "Father." Luke's records of the Annunciation and of Jesus' genealogy accentuate Mary's misunderstanding all the more, for she should already understand that He is rightly called the Son of the Most High and the Son of God (1:32, 35), not the son of Joseph as others wrongly think Him to be (3:23). To be sure, the narrative is harsher on Joseph than on Mary, but her misunderstanding is significant to the point of being nearly unthinkable in light of all of her charismatic experiences surrounding Jesus' conception and birth.

Other New Testament Texts

The portrayal of Mary in Mark 3, which also involves Jesus' mother and brothers, is especially poignant. In this instance, Jesus' family

members demonstrate their misunderstanding by searching for Him. Jesus and the twelve are among such a large crowd that they are unable to eat. When His family hears about the situation, they try to seize Him amid reports that He has lost His mind (vv. 19-21). The immediate conclusion to their search comes in 3:31-35. When told that His mother and brothers are looking for Him, Jesus replies by asking who His mother and brothers are and immediately answers His own question. In doing so, He broadens the meanings of "mother" and "brothers" beyond direct family relations to encompass all who do the will of God. Jesus' broadening of terms does not necessarily include family relations. He also seems to contrast those sitting around Him (v. 34) with his own family in that same respect.

Sandwiched between 3:19-21 and 3:31-35 is an exchange about cooperation with Satan, which sets the material about Jesus' mother and brothers in sharp relief. When the scribes accuse Him of performing exorcisms by the power of demons and of having an unclean spirit, Jesus considers their misunderstanding of the nature of His exorcisms to be so great that He warns them against blaspheming the Holy Spirit—a sin for which there is no forgiveness (vv. 22-30). It is difficult not to conclude from the juxtaposition of these verses that the misunderstanding of Jesus' mother and brothers (i.e., thinking that His behavior requires their rescuing Him from His activities) is comparable to, not equal to, the misunderstanding of the scribes, which involved misidentifying the Holy Spirit's influence on Jesus as the influence of Satan. The scribes' misunderstanding leads them to attempt to hinder Jesus' ministry. His mother's and brothers' misunderstanding leads them dangerously close to hindering it as well.

In the parallel passage in Matthew 12, the comparison of Jesus' mother and brothers with (this time) the Pharisees is softened somewhat. Matthew does not introduce Jesus' family until after the Pharisees' accusation that He casts out demons by the power of Satan and His comments on blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Jesus also gives a longer response to His accusers that separates further the material about His family from that about the sin that will not be forgiven. Matthew also lacks any mention of Jesus' family responding to concerns about His refraining from eating and being out of His mind. However, more stark in Matthew than in Mark is the contrast between Jesus' family and those who "do the will of my Father in heaven" (v. 50). This time, Jesus stretches His hands towards His disciples in order to identify them with the latter group (v. 49).

The parallel passage in Luke diffuses almost entirely any juxtaposition between Jesus' mother and brothers looking for Him (8:19-21) and those accusing Him of cooperating with Satan (11:15-23), both

by shortening His statement about blaspheming the Holy Spirit to little more than a proverb (12:10) and by separating all three of these references from each other. However, Luke does maintain in the material about Jesus' family the contrast between them and those who hear and do the word of God (8:21). Luke also interjects an additional contrast that none of the other Gospels contain. After Jesus responds to His critics, a woman shouts that the womb that bore Him and the breasts that He sucked are blessed. He replies that "rather" (*menoun*; 11:28)—a strong adversative—it is those who hear and obey the word of God who are blessed.

The common element in the parallel passages of Mark, Matthew, and Luke most important for my purposes is Jesus' broadening of the categories "mother" and "brothers"—through a contrast with obedient followers—in a way that may not include Mary among the preferred group. At least, it does not include her automatically because of her familial relationship to Jesus. To this, Luke adds a contrast that may not include Mary among the "blessed." Again, at least, it does not include her automatically because of her familial relationship to Jesus.

Mark weaves the family's attempt to rescue Jesus with the scribes' attribution of satanic power to Him in such a way as to present the two scenes as a single story. In the process, Mark suggests that Mary's misunderstanding about Jesus' activity is comparable to the scribes' misunderstanding of Him, which prompts Jesus to issue a warning about the irremediable result of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Following the Trajectory of the New Testament Witness to Mary

Given Catholics' and Pentecostals' shared desire for development of church tradition to remain faithful to the witness of Scripture, I now suggest the following three implications of the New Testament data above.

A Challenge for Pentecostals: On the Relationship between Spirit and Grace

First, if Pentecostals recognize the pneumatological themes surrounding Mary in Luke's birth narrative, a significant point of continuity with Catholics that is based on the notions of "Spirit" and "grace" could arise. Just as the birth narrative attests to the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary and suggests that the Spirit is already at work within her to empower her "Yes" to the divine plan, the birth narrative also attests that Mary is "full of grace" (1:28) and has found "favor" (χηαριν; 1:30) with God. Pentecostals could then see in Luke's birth narrative a

scriptural basis for a close relationship between the Holy Spirit and the workings of grace—a relationship that the Catholic church has posited at least since the Council of Orange (529). Among the observations of the Council's canons is the reference to the gift of grace as an inspiration of the Spirit. Also, the Council calls both grace and the Spirit the means by which humans "believe, will, desire, strive, labor, pray, keep watch, endeavor, request, seek, and knock."[4] In *Redemptoris Mater*, John Paul II brings together grace and the Spirit in reference to Mary. He writes that the Holy Spirit infused the fullness of grace into Mary; that "full of grace" means that the Father and the Son eternally entrust Mary to the Spirit of holiness; and that her motherhood is a motherhood in the order of grace precisely because it implores the gift of the Spirit.[5]

Pentecostals need to see that Luke invites consideration of a close relationship between grace and the Holy Spirit and that the Catholic theology of grace has at times developed along that trajectory. In order for Pentecostals to begin to see the close relationship between grace and the Spirit, they may need to do little more than tap into their own pneumatological sensitivities and recognize the biblical point of departure for such a relationship in Luke's birth narrative. If Pentecostals can do this, they will have taken significant steps towards both a more robust theology of grace and a Mariology, not to mention towards more substantive bases from which to dialogue with Catholics. Pentecostals will be all the better for it if such dialogue leads them to throw off the trappings that lead some Protestants to reduce grace to "unmerited favor," understood as nothing more than a disposition God has towards believers rather than something God gives to believers to bring literal transformation.

A Challenge for Catholics: On the Synthesis of New Testament Data

Second, Catholic teaching tends to give little attention to the negative elements of Luke's portrayal of Mary with the boy Jesus at the temple and later the three Synoptics' portrayal of Mary when she (and Jesus' brothers) look for Him. If one reads charitably, the material in Matthew and Luke could indicate only misunderstanding on Mary's part—i.e., her failure to understand Jesus' need to be in His Father's house and the fullness of His identity. Further, a charitable reading could continue that Jesus' redefining of "mother" and "brothers" includes Mary among those who hear the word of God and do it. John Paul II

[4]Council of Orange, canons 5-6; Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, 375-76.

[5]John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*. On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church (March 25, 1987), 1, 8, 44.

offers this kind of reading in *Redemptoris Mater*. With reference to these exact passages, he states, "Her motherhood has a significance which is not exclusively contained in the words of Jesus and in the various episodes reported by the Synoptics."[6] Thus, for John Paul II, Jesus' broadening of "mother" points to a more significant dimension of Mary's own motherhood—one of deep spiritual union with Jesus and one more closely related to the mysterious bonds that come from hearing and doing the word of God rather than from familial relationships.[7] The Pope adds that Jesus was aware that his mother,

> . . . to whom had been revealed most completely the mystery of his divine sonship, lived in intimacy with this mystery only through faith! Living side by side with her Son under the same roof, and faithfully perceiving "in her union with her Son," she "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith," as the [Second Vatican] Council emphasizes. And so it was during Christ's public life too . . . that day by day there was fulfilled in her the blessing uttered by Elizabeth at the Visitation:"Blessed is she who believed."[8]

Thus, the Pope acknowledges Mary's need to grow in faith and understanding during Jesus' life and ministry.

Even if one finds convincing both John Paul II's explanations of the material in Matthew and Luke—and taking Mary's cooperation with the Holy Spirit in Luke's birth narrative as the lens for the whole of her life renders them plausible—these explanations do not seem to address the severity of the situation in Mark 3. There, Mary's misunderstanding borders on hindering Jesus' ministry and is comparable to the scribes' misunderstanding of His exorcisms, which prompts His statements about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Catholic theology would be more fully informed by the breadth of the New Testament's witness to Mary if it more regularly included direct engagement with Mark's portrayal of Mary in its official teaching, which focuses (at times exclusively) on the positive dimensions of her person and work.[9] The point, of course, is not to suggest that Mark's portrayal contradicts Catholic dogmas on Mary; they are nonnegotiable to Catholics. Rather, Catholic teaching could more thoroughly explain how this episode in Mary's life—an episode in

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[6]Ibid, 21.
[7]Ibid, 20.
[8]Ibid, 17.
[9]For example, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), chap. 8.

which she seems to be less in tune with the discerning power of the Holy Spirit than she is at the Annunciation—conforms to those dogmas.

John Paul II's comments in *Redemptoris Mater* are an admirable step in that direction. Yet, the Catholic picture of Mary would be more complete if it more readily included this scene from Mary's life. I am confident that the Catholic imagination can do this while explaining that Mary's misunderstanding, even in its great severity in Mark 3, does not attribute to her concupiscence or venial or mortal sin. Perhaps the picture of Mary that emerges would clarify that she—without moral imperfection—at times cooperated less with the Holy Spirit than at the Annunciation. Perhaps Catholics could learn from their Pentecostal Dialogue partners ways of talking about times in which one's not being "in the Spirit" does not amount to sin.

A Challenge for Pentecostals and Catholics: On the Pneumatological Basis of Mariology

Third, Jesus' redefining motherhood could challenge both Catholic and Pentecostal reflections on Mary, especially in the context of the International Dialogue. In the second final report, both Dialogue partners observe that the historical origins of Mary as *theotokos* and much subsequent Mariology have a christological basis.[10] The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* echoes this sentiment.[11] At the same time, the pneumatological emphases in Luke's birth narrative suggest a pneumatological foundation for Mariology, in systematic perspective even if not in light of the historical origins of *theotokos* and subsequent Mariology. Indeed, since the Holy Spirit is at work in Mary before the Annunciation in order to make possible her response of "Yes" to Gabriel's message, she then becomes theologically significant before becoming the mother of God. Thus, there are theological grounds for Mariology that do not depend exclusively on ideas derived from her familial and biological motherhood. It might even be that while Mariology per se has both a pneumatological and christological foundation (only the most facile approach would insist on either one to the exclusion of the other[12]), Mary's motherhood in particular rests primarily on a pneumatological foundation.

Since Jesus' mother and brothers, in the strictest sense, are those who hear and obey the word of God, the more fundamental sense of

[10]Final Report of the International Roman Catholic Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982)," 62.

[11] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 487.

[12]Neither does this affirmation require denying the ecclesiological context of Mariology espoused in *Lumen Gentium*.

Mary's motherhood derives from her abandonment to participation in the divine plan, which (as Luke's birth narrative suggests) is a work of the Holy Spirit. Add to this the fact that, in Luke, christology itself begins with pneumatology. Since Jesus is conceived by the Spirit, whatever christological basis there is for Mary's motherhood has itself an even more fundamental pneumatological basis. It would not take much development of John Paul II's sentiments in *Redemptoris Mater* to move towards these conclusions. The surprise—and shame—is how slow Pentecostals have been to develop a systematic Mariology, since their favoring of Luke-Acts and of a Pentecostal imagination that is robustly pneumatological almost demand it. In fact, Mariology may be an example of how seeking a pneumatological perspective on the whole of theology—a third article theology—may direct Pentecostals (and others) not only to pursue their standard systematic loci in a different light but also to turn their systematic reflection to a locus of systematic theology that they otherwise would not develop at all. Whatever the case, both Catholics and Pentecostals probably have room to clarify further the pneumatological basis of Mariology. With an increasing number of thinkers in both churches turning their attention to Spirit christology,[13] the time may be right for a more pneumatologically-informed Mariology.[14]

Conclusion and Suggestion

The current (seventh) phase of the International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue is discussing lex orandi, lex credendi—theological shorthand for the close relationship between what Christians pray and what they believe.[15] A development along another front in recent decades has been the notion that theological beliefs have a performative dimension. That is, not only should Christian beliefs and practices be closely related to each other, but certain practices are also parts of beliefs themselves. In light of lex orandi, lex credendi and the performative dimensions of doctrine, practices of worship and devotion can be

[13]For example, *Catholics*: Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (Oxford. UK: OUP, 1994); Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, new ed. (London, UK: T. & T. Clark, 2011); David Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God* (Oxford, UK: OUP, 1999); *Pentecostals*: Steven M. Studebaker, *From Pentecost to the Triune God: A Pentecostal Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012); Skip Jenkins, *A Spirit Christology* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2018).

[14]For a charismatic Catholic perspective on pneumatological Mariology, see Sally Jo Shelton, "Overshadowed by the Spirit: Mary, Mother of Our Lord, Prototype of Spirit-Baptized Humanity" (Ph.D. diss., Regent University, 2016).

[15]Christopher A. Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 111-30.

incredibly insightful ways to come to understand another church's beliefs. To be clear, I do not mean only that learning about practices of worship and devotion can assist learning about beliefs. Rather, I mean that *engaging in* practices of worship and devotion can assist learning about the beliefs of which those practices and devotions are an integral part.

On that note, I wonder if some Pentecostals might be willing to engage occasionally in a form of devotion in the hope of understanding better not only facets of Catholic Mariology with which they disagree, but also aspects about which they simply do not understand why Catholics hold them to be important. After all, Pentecostals often assume such a logic when they invite outsiders to their churches to "taste and see," thereby implying that one might come to experience components of Pentecostal spirituality like the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the charismatic gifts before understanding them very much. English-speaking Pentecostals sometimes refer to their spirituality as "better caught than taught." Similarly, Pentecostals might "taste and see" Mariology in ways that might not be accessible to them except through expressions of devotion.

The Hail Mary presents itself as a possible devotion for Pentecostals to try:

> *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you;*
> *blessed are you among women,*
> *and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.*
> *Holy Mary, Mother of God,*
> *pray for us sinners*
> *now and at the hour of our death.*
> *Amen.*

I hope that Pentecostals do not object to the first three lines of this prayer, since it comes directly from Luke's birth narrative. The fourth line requires only the beliefs that the sanctifying power of the Spirit of holiness was efficacious in Mary and made her holy (bearing in mind that many Pentecostals admonish each other to holiness regularly) and that Jesus is essentially God.[16] Pentecostals are likely to show more inhibition over the fifth and sixth lines—i.e., the request for Mary's intercession. I encourage them to consider that asking Mary to pray for them no more amounts to idolatry than does asking themselves to pray for each other. I also encourage them not to confuse the potential reality of Mary's intercession on their behalf with consulting a medium who

[16]I say "that Jesus is essentially God" rather than "Chalcedonian christology" to avoid excluding Oneness Pentecostals unnecessarily.

claims to facilitate communion with the dead, which is condemned in passages like Leviticus 19:31 and Deuteronomy 18:10-11. It seems to me that, at worst, the request for intercession would be a request that Mary simply does not fulfill, if it turns out that the dead cannot intercede for the living, as most Pentecostals assume. And yet, the unfulfilled request would still not be a request made in vain if the making of it prompts Pentecostals to face their mortality and acknowledge their need "at the hour of their death."

Maybe I am asking too much of Pentecostals. But then again, if there is a Christian church that is full of surprise, it is theirs. One way forward could be for Pentecostal ecumenists to lead by example and talk about their experiences praying the Hail Mary. Did the times of prayer seem dry and vacuous? Did the Holy Spirit sternly caution them to discontinue the prayer? Did they sense the pleasure of the triune God at the reverent implication that Mary deserves more honor than any other human except the One who is the eternal Word in hypostatic union with a fully integral human nature—the Redeemer of whom she is the mother? Whatever the answers, Pentecostals will have much to ponder and treasure in their hearts on the road to what may be a Mariology infused with astonishment.

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