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### **Pentecostals and Ecumenism**

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I hope you will join us on the "road less travelled." We might discover, along with Frost, that this road "makes all the difference." As usual, you may contact me directly through our website, [www.aptspress.org](http://www.aptspress.org) and share your thoughts with me. Thanks for reading.

Your fellow pilgrim on the road less travelled,

Dave Johnson, DMiss  
*AJPS Managing Editor*

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(Continue on back inside cover)

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IMPACTING THE FUTURE OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC CHURCH

**Catholicity, Full Gospel, and Fullness of the Spirit:  
A Pentecostal Perspective on the Third Mark of the Church<sup>1</sup>  
Part 1**

by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

*“... wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church”<sup>2</sup>*

*“All churches want to be catholic, though each in its own way. This is the paradox of catholicity on this side of God’s new creation. Though it stands for totality (holos), it is always based on a certain particularity. No church is catholic purely and simply; each is catholic in a certain way. Thus also arises the dispute concerning catholicity.”<sup>3</sup>*

~ St. Ignatius

For starters: ***Should—or could—Pentecostals talk about catholicity?*** Any Pentecostal talk on catholicity, the third ‘mark’ of the Church, would be allegedly a short speech! Suffice it for the speaker to confess that Pentecostals do not usually have that word in their vocabulary—and if it happens to be mentioned, it will be (mistakenly!) linked with a

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<sup>1</sup>This essay is a slightly revised version of two earlier presentations of mine: “Full Gospel, Fullness of the Spirit and Catholicity: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Third Mark of the Church,” Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals, Bossey Ecumenical Institute, Geneva, Switzerland, Nov 14-19, 2010. “Full Gospel, Fullness of the Spirit, and Catholicity: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Third Mark of the Church,” Presentations at the “Theological Positions Colloquium at Continental Theological Seminary, Brussels, Belgium, Feb 16-17, 2011. Subsequently it was published as “Full Gospel, Fullness of the Spirit, and Catholicity: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Third Mark of the Church,” in *Pentecostal Issues, Ecclesiology & Ecumenism*, ed. C. Donovan Barron and Riku Tuppurainen (Sint-Peters-Leeuw, Belgium: Continental Theological Seminary, 2011), 77-99.

<sup>2</sup>Ignatius, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 8.

<sup>3</sup>Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 259.

specific denomination (namely the Roman Catholic Church), concerning which too many Pentecostals have prejudices and misconceptions.<sup>4</sup>

This essay, however, testifies to the contrary! It attempts to talk about catholicity in a Pentecostal perspective. Indeed, against the common assumption, it can be argued that even though the Pentecostal theological thesaurus does not use this term, materially and thematically the idea of catholicity is embedded in the very texture of Pentecostal spirituality and theology. That said, one also has to be careful in too hastily establishing these kinds of theological connections and finding ‘convergences’ everywhere and between all church traditions, as seems to be in vogue in much of contemporary ecumenical discourse.

For the sake of ecumenical advancement, it is rather necessary and useful to take a careful look at the various meanings attached to the term ‘catholic’, its ramifications and conditions, and then to reflect on possible emerging common themes among various church traditions. Hence, an exploration like the one under discussion here can only be that—an exploration. Its mode is suggestive rather than assertive.

My essay consists of two main parts. In Part 1, I will try to clarify some key issues regarding the meaning of the term ‘catholic’ in order for us to speak the same language and to highlight aspects of the conversation important to my argumentation. In the same context, I will also highlight some of the important theological corollaries and ramifications related to the use of this term. In Part 2, I will attempt to outline some key features (as I see them) in the distinctively Pentecostal understanding of catholicity. Tentatively put, the Pentecostal understanding of catholicity is focused on the concept of the Full Gospel—the desire to embrace “all” of Christ as Savior, Justifier, Baptizer with the Spirit, Healer, and the Soon-Coming King—as well as on the yearning for the fullness of the Spirit. That deep spiritual experience and empowerment of all Christians for proclamation and service has propelled Pentecostals to spread the Gospel all over the world among all cultures and people groups. On that basis, we will be able to look at both potential Pentecostal contributions to the discussion about catholicity and at the potential liabilities, challenges, and problems in the Pentecostal self-understanding of the church.

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<sup>4</sup>It is significant that another mark of the church, in contrast – namely apostolicity – is deeply embedded in Pentecostal consciousness, as can be discerned even in the nomenclatures: the first ever Pentecostal church on Azusa Street, Los Angeles, CA, named itself *Apostolic Faith Mission*. Similarly, a number of older Pentecostal churches and denominations are known by the term “apostolic,” as in *Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa*, one of the oldest and most influential ones. A number of publications and organizations also bear that name. See further, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Pentecostalism and the Claim for Apostolicity,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 25, no. 4 (2001): 323-36.

## Part 1: Catholicity in Contemporary Ecumenical Understanding

### Multidimensional and Multifaceted Meaning(s) of Catholicity

As is well known, the Greek expression *kath' holou* means “[referring to the] whole,” “complete,” “not missing anything;” similarly, the Latin term *catholicus* means “universal” or “general.” To St. Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, who lived at the turn of the 2nd century, we owe the classic brief description of catholicity (cited above) that “wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.” Here, Ignatius is clearly speaking of the local church first and foremost; and it is an ecumenical consensus currently that, in the primary sense of the word, each local church is catholic.<sup>5</sup> For Pentecostal ecclesial sensibilities, the affirmation of the catholicity of the local church is a critical truth, since Pentecostal ecclesiology (in keeping with the whole Free Church tradition) is so much locally oriented that often the acknowledgment of the universality of the Church as the worldwide Body of Christ may not be adequately present.<sup>6</sup>

A related—and in many ways, corollary—contemporary consensus is that catholicity is not only speaking of the oneness and wholeness of the church, but also its diversity (-in-unity). The ecclesiological document, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, makes an important remark to this effect: “Diversity appears not as accidental to the life of

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<sup>5</sup>*Lumen Gentium* (#13) of Vatican II expresses this ecumenical consensus in a remarkable way: “In virtue of this catholicity each individual part [of the Church] contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church. Thus through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort to attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase.” So also the Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 408-9. In light of this ecumenical consensus, the categorical prioritizing of the universal church as the “source” and foundation of the catholicity of the local church by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger strikes one as odd: “What first exists is the one Church, the Church that speaks in all tongues – the *ecclesia universalis*; she then generates Church in the most diverse locales, which nonetheless are all always embodiments of the one and only Church. The temporal and ontological priority lies with the universal Church; a Church that was not catholic would not even have ecclesial reality.” Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 44.

<sup>6</sup>See the important comment by the Pentecostal theologian from Singapore, Simon Chan, “Mother Church: Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 22, no. 2 (2000): 184: “In the New Testament the local congregation could therefore be described as ‘the whole church’ (Rom. 16:23) – which is what the word ‘catholic’ means – precisely because it is constituted ‘whole’ by the Spirit when the whole church gathers together in the name of Jesus Christ to celebrate the communion.”

the Christian community, but as an aspect of its catholicity, a quality that reflects the fact that it is part of the Father's design that the story of salvation in Christ be incarnational. Thus, diversity is a gift of God to the Church.<sup>7</sup>

In the globalizing world and after the advent of postmodernity with its celebration of alterity and diversity, this insight into the dynamic nature of catholicity is of great significance.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Howard A. Snyder, a Methodist, speaks of all four marks of the church in terms of a dynamic, mutual conditioning. He surmises that all four form a continuum rather than single poles. Thus, the Church is not only "one, uniform," but also "diverse, varied"; not only "holy (sacred)," but also "charismatic"; not only "catholic, universal," but also "local, contextualized"; and not only about "apostolic authority," but also about "prophetic Word."<sup>9</sup> What Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* says to this effect is something greatly appreciated by Pentecostals as well: "In these communities, though they may often be small and poor, or existing in the diaspora, Christ is present through whose power and influence the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is constituted."<sup>10</sup>

In Christian tradition, it is customary to speak of two interrelated dimensions of the term 'catholic'—the quantitative dimension and the qualitative dimension. The classic definition by Cyril of Jerusalem of the

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<sup>7</sup>*The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper no. 198 (Geneva: WCC, 2005), #16 [hereafter: *NMC*]. The text immediately following in the same paragraph elaborates on the basis and implications of this diversity: "Not only do various passages of the New Testament use the plural 'churches' to denote that there are a variety of local churches (cf. Acts 15:41; Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 16:1, 19; 2 Cor 8:1; Gal 1:2; 1 Thess 2:14), without thereby contradicting the conviction that Christ's body is one (Eph 4:4), but also one finds variety among the ecclesiological themes and insights addressed by individual books. The inclusion of such plurality within the one canon of the New Testament testifies to the compatibility of unity and diversity. Indeed, the discussion of the one body with many members (cf. 1 Cor 12-14) suggests that unity is possible only through the proper co-ordination of the diverse gifts of the Triune God." See also Report of Section II: "Multiplicity of Expression of the One Faith," §§13-22, in *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*, ed. Thomas F. Best and Günther Gassmann, Faith and Order Paper no. 166 (Geneva: WCC, 1994), 240-42.

<sup>8</sup>This crucial insight was acknowledged by the drafters of the *Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity* by American ecumenists: "In late modernity we fear unity, often with good reason. We cherish our particularity.... We look with suspicion on the political and economic forces that impose homogeneity. We celebrate diversity and pluralism, sometimes as a good in its own right, because we fear the constraints of single sets of ideals." *In One Body through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), #2 (p. 12).

<sup>9</sup>Howard A. Snyder, "The Marks of an Evangelical Ecclesiology," in *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion*, ed. John G. Stackhouse Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 83-89, particularly.

<sup>10</sup>*Lumen Gentium*, 26.

4th century brings to light both of these dimensions. The church is called catholic because it is spread throughout the entire inhabited world (*oikoumene*) from one end to the other, and because it teaches in its totality (*katholikos*) and without leaving anything out of every doctrine which people need to know relating to things visible and invisible, whether in heaven and earth. It is also called catholic because it brings to obedience every sort of person—whether rulers or their subjects, the educated and the unlearned. It also makes available a universal (*katholikos*) remedy and cure to every kind of sin.<sup>11</sup>

The quantitative dimension speaks of the spread of the Church everywhere (cf. Matt 28:18-20), whereas the qualitative speaks of the fullness and completeness (i.e., wholeness) of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup> In order for these two dimensions to be valid, there also has to be temporal dimension of the catholicity—namely, that the Gospel preached is in continuity with the Gospel of the New Testament and that the Church preaching that Gospel stands on the “*foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Eph 2:20). Or otherwise, the Gospel preached is “*another Gospel*” (Gal 1:7), and the church spreading to all corners of the earth is not built on Christ, “*the cornerstone*” (Eph 2:20).

The New Testament does not use term ‘catholic’ in this technical ecclesiological sense. Yet the Bible speaks much of the various facets of this term, which was important enough to be added to the Constantinopolitan Creed (381). The fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is nothing else than the fullness of Jesus Christ himself. He who was “*full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14) came so that we “*may have life, and have it abundantly*” (10:10). Indeed, since “*in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, . . . [we] have come to fullness of life in him*” (Col 2:9, 10). He who came to baptize with the Holy Spirit (cf. Mk 1:8), after his glorious resurrection and ascension, poured out the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost so that those who were gathered “*together in one place* (Acts 2:1) . . . *were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*” (2:4). Significantly therefore, Jürgen Moltmann, a Reformer, says that

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<sup>11</sup>*Catechetical Lecture* 18, 23.

<sup>12</sup>*NMC*, #12: “The Church is catholic because God is the fullness of life ‘who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Tim 2:4), and who, through Word and Spirit, makes his people the place and instrument of his saving and life-giving presence, the community ‘in which, in all ages, the Holy Spirit makes the believers participants in Christ’s life and salvation, regardless of their sex, race or social position’.” The citation is from *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*. Faith and Order Paper no. 153, new rev. version, 4th printing (Geneva: WCC, 1996), §240.

glossolalia (i.e., speaking in tongues) was the first sound and “birthmark” of the Christian church.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Church of Jesus Christ, whether as a local congregation or as the universal body, already has the fullness of the Gospel as a gift from God, it also being an eschatological reality. That’s why we wait eagerly “*until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (Eph 4:13).<sup>14</sup>

#### A Divine Gift and a Human Task

From the nature of the gift, it follows that the four marks are also a task for us to pursue. Paul’s reasoning in Ephesians 4 is an illustrative example. Speaking of the gift of the unity in terms of the sevenfold oneness (“*one body and one Spirit*” [vv. 4-6]), he wants the Christians to be “*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (v. 3)...with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love*” (vv. 1-2). In other words, human beings do not create catholicity any more than, say, unity. It is a divine quality given to the church. Human beings are thereby called to practice and grow into a more authentic manifestation of those qualities until they be completed on the other side of the eschaton.<sup>15</sup>

In what sense can catholicity—along with unity, holiness, and apostolicity—be understood as the ‘mark’ of the Church? None of the marks can be understood in a sense that they allow us to unambiguously discern where the true Church is. These marks are part of the creed (i.e., confession of faith). We cannot see these marks in real life; at its best, we may perhaps see some glimpses, as it were, into the reality they point to. Rather, we believe them.<sup>16</sup> The catholicity of the Church, as much as her unity, holiness, and apostolicity, is a matter of confession of faith.

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<sup>13</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, “The Spirit Gives Life: Spirituality and Vitality,” in *All Together in One Place: Theological Papers from the Brighton Conference on World Evangelization*, ed. Harold D. Hunter and Peter D. Hocken (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 26.

<sup>14</sup>*NMC*, #52: “The oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church are God’s gifts and are essential attributes of the Church’s nature and mission. However, there is a continual tension in the historical life of the Church between that which is already given and that which is not yet fully realised.”

<sup>15</sup>See further, Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:407.

<sup>16</sup>Indeed, the literal text of the creed is not only saying that we “believe in” the church as described by these marks but that we “believe” the church, and consequently the marks thereof.

The more so as we look around and see how very badly all churches (including our own church) lack the qualities of these marks.<sup>17</sup>

Consider ‘unity’ for a moment. It takes an eye of faith to see any sign of the unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ in the midst of bewildering diversity, splits, and mutual condemnations of churches. The deplorable situation of the empirical church, however, is not reason to cast away the confession of faith, but rather makes it ever more necessary as we await the eschatological fullness.<sup>18</sup>

Only the Church of Christ as a whole (as even the term itself defines it) can be a catholic church. Consequently, no single church alone can represent or manifest catholicity apart from others—not even the oldest one (Orthodox Church) or the biggest one (Roman Catholic). Any claim from a single church to the true catholicity, vis-à-vis lack thereof in other churches, not only shows arrogance, but also leads to an ecumenical impasse.<sup>19</sup> Hence, Moltmann rightly speaks of each church on this side of the eschaton as “limited, non-universal and non-catholic until ‘every rule and every authority and power’ (1 Cor 15:24) is destroyed” by Christ the Lord.<sup>20</sup> This is not to deny the catholicity of each local church, but rather to acknowledge that her “catholicity in the face of its particularity is an expression of its hope” for the coming eschatological fulfillment.<sup>21</sup>

In his important study on the Free Church ecclesiology as represented by John Smyth, founder of the Baptist movement in the 17th century, Miroslav Volf, who was deeply rooted in the Pentecostal movement of his homeland, Yugoslavia, in critical dialogue with Orthodox (J. Zizioulas) and Roman Catholic (J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI) ecclesiologies, suggests an ecclesiological minimum according to

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<sup>17</sup>NMC, #55: “The essential catholicity of the Church is confronted with divisions between and within the Christian communities regarding their life and preaching of the Gospel. Its catholicity transcends all barriers and proclaims God’s word to all peoples: where the whole mystery of Christ is present, there too is the Church catholic. However, the catholicity of the Church is challenged by the fact that the integrity of the Gospel is not adequately preached to all; the fullness of communion is not offered to all. Nevertheless, the Spirit given to the Church is the Spirit of the Lordship of Christ over all creation and all times. The Church is called to remove all obstacles to the full embodiment of what is already its nature by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>18</sup>See the important remarks by Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:409, 411.

<sup>19</sup>This is rightly and firmly affirmed by the Roman Catholic Avery Cardinal Dulles: “Catholicity, so conceived, is not exclusively proper to the Roman Catholic church, the church that uses the term ‘catholic’ as part of its official title. Rather, catholicity is a mark or property of the church of Christ as such.” Avery Dulles, “The Catholicity of the Augsburg Confession,” *Journal of Religion* 63 (1983): 349. Similarly, Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:407-8.

<sup>20</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1977), 350.

<sup>21</sup>Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 25.

which any church should show openness to other churches.<sup>22</sup> Only that church can be catholic which by opening herself up to other churches shows belonging, dependency, and desire to make a contribution to all other churches of Christ.<sup>23</sup> If this quality is lacking, it means that each church seeks to define catholicity only for herself (as the quotation from Volf in the beginning of the essay mentions) and so frustrates the whole concept itself.

Openness to other churches and their catholicity is necessary also because catholicity is interrelated with all other marks of the church. Indeed, they can only function when seen as integrally intertwined. As Thomas C. Oden, a Methodist, succinctly puts it: “Only that church that is one can be catholic. Only that church that is united in the one mission of the one Lord can be apostolic. Lacking that holiness which is fitting to the obedience of faith, one finds neither apostolicity nor catholicity. Only that church that is formed by the apostolic memory can be united in one body with the Lord.”<sup>24</sup>

#### The Question of Ecclesiality: What Makes the Church, Church?

Not only are the ‘marks’ related to each other, but they are also integrally related to the most foundational and deepest ecclesiological dispute—namely, the question of the ecclesiality of the Church or what makes the Church, church? In other words, what are the conditions of the being of the Church?

It is in the dispute concerning catholicity and other marks of the Church that “episcopal” churches<sup>25</sup> and Free churches have stood at the opposite extremes. The very foundation of Free Church ecclesiology is at stake. Episcopal churches contend that the apostolicity of Free churches is uncatholic, because it lacks the connection to the whole Church in its history, which is assured by the *successio apostolica*.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 274-75, 278.

<sup>23</sup>*NMC* (#12) puts it succinctly: “Being the creature of God’s own Word and Spirit, the Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. These essential attributes flow from and illustrate the Church’s dependence upon God.”

<sup>24</sup>Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit: Systematic Theology* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992), 3:349. Similarly *NMC*, #35: “This is a central implication of affirming the apostolicity of the Church, which is inseparable from the other three attributes of the Church – unity, holiness and catholicity.” See also Vladimir Lossky, “Concerning the Third Mark of the Church: Catholicity,” in *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. J. H. Erickson and T. E. Bird (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 171; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:405.

<sup>25</sup>The term *episcopal* in its general theological sense means those churches that regard a bishop as a necessary condition of the ecclesiality of the church.

<sup>26</sup>See further, Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 259-60.

As far as the conditions of ecclesiality are concerned, the episcopal and Free Church traditions differ especially in the following three respects. (1) According to the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, Free Church ecclesiology lacks a bishop to ensure the presence of Christ; whereas, according to the Free Church tradition, such a bishop is not permitted. (2) In the episcopal model, Christ's presence is mediated sacramentally; whereas the Free churches speak of Christ's unmediated, direct presence in the entire local communion. And (3) Again according to the episcopal tradition, the church is constituted through the performance of objective activities, so Christ's constitutive presence is not bound to the subjective disposition (even if the latter is not unimportant); whereas the Free churches have come to emphasize subjective conditions (namely, faith and obedience) to the point that, where these are missing despite the presence of the objective aspects, serious doubt arises regarding ecclesiality.<sup>27</sup>

The Free churches have insisted on the holiness, oneness, apostolicity, and catholicity of their own churches, although they have rarely argued along the classical canons. They understand the holiness of their churches primarily in the holiness of their members, in the oneness of the Church in the spiritual unity of all born-again Christians,<sup>28</sup> their apostolicity in their faithfulness to the apostolic doctrine and life,<sup>29</sup> and their catholicity as a consequent, self-evident fact.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the Free churches have accused the traditional churches of a lack of ecclesiality—their holiness being impaired by the presence of mixed membership, their claim of apostolicity on the basis of apostolic succession being biblically unfounded, and so on.

The current transformation of the global Christian Church and a growing acceptance of diversity and alterity within the one Church of Jesus Christ make it necessary and urgent for the churches together to look for ways to negotiate this impasse. Only then can we speak of the catholicity of the whole Church!

In this part, Part 1, I have clarified some key issues regarding the meaning of the term 'catholic' in order for us to speak the same language and to highlight aspects of the conversation important to my argumentation. In the same context, I have also highlighted some of the

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<sup>27</sup>Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 133-35.

<sup>28</sup>For a Pentecostal understanding of unity, see, e.g., my *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue 1972-1989*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 42 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1998), 314-23.

<sup>29</sup>For a Pentecostal understanding, see, e.g., my *Spiritus ubi vult spirat*, 355 especially.

<sup>30</sup>See, e.g., John Smyth, *The Works of John Smyth*, ed. W. T. Whitley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 745; and R. Flew and R. E. Davies, eds., *The Catholicity of Protestantism* (London: Lutterworth, 1950).

important theological corollaries and ramifications related to the use of this term.

In Part 2, I will attempt to outline some key features (as I see them) in the distinctively Pentecostal understanding of catholicity.

**Catholicity, Full Gospel, and Fullness of the Spirit:  
A Pentecostal Perspective on the Third Mark of the Church<sup>1</sup>  
Part 2**

by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

**Part 2: Pentecostal Perspectives on Catholicity**

In Part 1, I have clarified some key issues regarding the meaning of the term ‘catholic’ in order for us to speak the same language and to highlight aspects of the conversation important to my argumentation. In the same context, I have also highlighted some of the important theological corollaries and ramifications related to the use of this term.

In Part 2, I will attempt to outline some key features (as I see them) in the distinctively Pentecostal understanding of catholicity.

**‘Full Gospel:’ The Emerging Pentecostal Consciousness of  
Catholicity**

Now, what is distinctively Pentecostal on the topic of catholicity? This question takes us to one of Pentecostal identity—in other words, what makes Pentecostalism, Pentecostalism. The understanding of the ‘marks’ of the church can only be derived from the theological self-understanding of any tradition. Against the common misunderstanding, according to which the center of Pentecostalism is primarily and merely

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<sup>1</sup>This essay is a slightly revised version of two earlier presentations of mine: “Full Gospel, Fullness of the Spirit and Catholicity: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Third Mark of the Church,” Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals, Bossey Ecumenical Institute, Geneva, Switzerland, Nov 14-19, 2010. “Full Gospel, Fullness of the Spirit, and Catholicity: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Third Mark of the Church,” Presentations at the “Theological Positions Colloquium at Continental Theological Seminary, Brussels, Belgium, Feb 16-17, 2011. Subsequently it was published as “Full Gospel, Fullness of the Spirit, and Catholicity: Pentecostal Perspectives on the Third Mark of the Church,” in *Pentecostal Issues, Ecclesiology & Ecumenism*, ed. C. Donovan Barron and Riku Tuppurainen (Sint-Peters-Leeuw, Belgium: Continental Theological Seminary, 2011), 77-99.

pneumatocentric (i.e., the focus on the work of the Holy Spirit), it must be argued that since its inception, Pentecostalism has been embedded and anchored in an encounter with Christ as being depicted in His manifold role as Justifier, Sanctifier, Baptizer with the Spirit, Healer of the Body, and Soon-Coming King.<sup>2</sup> It is the Full Gospel that sets the tone for Pentecostal spirituality. When visiting a typical Pentecostal worship service, one is struck by the frequent mention of the name Jesus (whether in prayer or praise or testimonies or sermons); whereas the Holy Spirit is invoked usually in relation to the work of Jesus.

Early Pentecostals, in looking at other churches, worried about whether those churches were still missing something important about what Jesus Christ is doing through the power of the Spirit. Jesus was preached as Savior (to which Pentecostals said “Amen”). Similarly, they affirmed the talk about Jesus as Sanctifier, and so forth. But what they saw missing were some crucial roles of Jesus as depicted in the Gospels and in the book of Acts—namely, His healing ministry, empowerment by the Spirit, and fervent expectation of his Second Coming.

Pentecostals were convinced that the Full Gospel (a gospel that was “whole,” “not missing anything,” the catholic gospel) had all of the wonderful blessings from Christ. Of course, at times the term ‘Full Gospel’ was used by Pentecostals in a way that bordered on ideology, the implication being that other churches’ gospel is not as full or as complete. While that kind of implicit critique no doubt was in mind by those who coined the term, in its best theological sense, it is rather an attempt to identify the basic elements of a biblical gospel. As such, it needs to be heard both as a legitimate self-identification and a call to other churches to pay attention to what Pentecostals perceive to be the forgotten or lost parts of the Gospel.

Now, how does this outlook and terminology relate to classic marks of the church, and especially to catholicity? Ironically, Pentecostals have affirmed the substance of the classical creeds, but their attitude towards creeds and creedal formulations has been either pejorative or superficial. Why is it that they, in the first place, did not feel comfortable or compelled to speak of catholicity and the other marks of the church?

“When we ‘came out’ for Pentecost,” wrote well-known British Pentecostal spokesperson Donald Gee, “we came out not merely for a theory or a doctrine; we came out for a burning, living, mighty experience that revolutionized our lives.”<sup>3</sup> This emphasis on experience rather than on creeds is expressed even more clearly in a statement from

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<sup>2</sup>See the determinative study by Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987).

<sup>3</sup>D. Gee, “Tests for ‘Fuller Revelations,’” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, February 14, 1925.

the first years of the Azusa Street Mission: “We are not fighting men or churches, but seeking to replace the dead forms and creeds . . . with living, practical Christianity.”<sup>4</sup> For most Pentecostals, creeds indicated a departure from apostolic faith for two reasons—(1) because of their lack of concern with practical Christianity, and (2) because of their origin in and support for an episcopacy alien to the priesthood of believers and the idea of church as a voluntary community of “believers.”<sup>5</sup>

Of course, this is a mistaken assessment of the value of creed; yet we should give hearing to the first generation of Pentecostals before passing judgment. Their criticism did not mean that Pentecostals were in principle opposed to the statements of doctrine; in fact, they would even occasionally admit that there is some value in creeds.<sup>6</sup> However, as Pentecostal theologian Frank Macchia rightly notes, Pentecostalism sought “to discover direct access to the church of the apostles through the mediation of the Holy Spirit.” The implication is, of course, that “mediation” through some agency other than the Holy Spirit (e.g., sacraments) was not regarded as ‘apostolic.’<sup>7</sup>

With all those reservations against formal, (‘dead’) recitation of creedal statements, it is remarkable that non-thematically—and perhaps we could even say ‘against their will’!—Pentecostals from the very beginnings of the movement affirmed the four marks of the church. One way to bring this orientation to light is to look at the very first brief statement of faith drafted by Pentecostals on Azusa Street of Los Angeles, California, the birth place of global Pentecostalism: “The Apostolic Faith Movement stands for the restoration of faith once delivered unto the saints—the old time religion, camp meetings, revivals, missions, street and prison work and Christian Unity everywhere.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>*Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 1 (1906): 2.

<sup>5</sup>Gerald T. Sheppard, “The Nicene Creed, *Filioque*, and Pentecostal Movements in the United States,” in *The Spirit of Truth: Ecumenical Perspectives on the Holy Spirit*, ed. Theodore Stylianopoulos and S. Mark Heim (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1986), 405; see also my *Spiritus ubi vult spirat*, 350-58.

<sup>6</sup>See, e.g., Myer Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1937), 71, which has been one of the most widely read textbooks among Pentecostal students.

<sup>7</sup>Frank D. Macchia, “The Church as an End-Time Missionary Fellowship of the Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective on the Significance of Pneumatology for Ecclesiology,” paper presented to Pentecostal/National Council of Churches Dialogue, March 12, 1997, Oakland, California, 20-21. The United-Reformed missionary bishop of South India, Lesslie Newbigin, spoke to this concern of Pentecostals in his remark that the Pentecostal understanding of the church is neither dominated by the word nor sacrament, but by the direct experience of the Holy Spirit as it was believed to have been shared originally among the apostles and early followers of Jesus. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953), chap. 4.

<sup>8</sup>*Apostolic Faith* 2, no. 1 (September 1906).

The phrase “stands for the restoration of the faith once delivered unto the saints” (from Jude 3) clearly suggests that the apostolic faith was in mind here and that a certain body of knowledge was intended to be understood as constituting that faith. That body of knowledge—following the template of the fivefold Gospel (or the fourfold Gospel in which Jesus’ role as Savior encompassed both justification and sanctification)—could be summarized as statements concerning (1) justification, (2) sanctification, (3) baptism in the Holy Ghost, (4) healing, and (5) Christ’s return.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, and that is my main claim in this essay—that for Pentecostals, the notion of the Full Gospel means what catholicity in its qualitative sense means in older Christian tradition.

Hence, it can be argued (and this is of immense importance ecumenically) that the above statement of the Apostolic Faith Movement encapsulates the essence of the confession—“One holy catholic apostolic Church,”<sup>10</sup> although Pentecostals do not so often use the creedal language of older churches.<sup>11</sup> Cecil M. Robeck summarizes the main elements of this commitment to the apostolic confession based on the preamble quoted above:

The explicit commitment of these early Pentecostals to “Christian Unity,” and their honest recognition of their role as a restoration movement within the Church points toward their affirmation of the oneness of the Church. Identification with their Wesleyan-Holiness roots articulated through references to the “old time religion” and “camp meetings” with their deep commitment to personal sanctification, underscore their belief in the holiness of the Church and its impact on the personal lives of each individual Christian. Their recognition that the Church in which the Apostolic Faith Movement participated was “everywhere” is an explicit affirmation of the catholicity of the

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<sup>9</sup>*Apostolic Faith* 2, no. 1 (September 1906), under the title “The Apostolic Faith Movement.” These statements were accompanied by a brief apologetic note designed to alleviate any charge of sectarianism which might be raised against the movement.

<sup>10</sup>*Perspectives on Koinonia: The Report from the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders* (1985-1989), #34.

<sup>11</sup>Cecil Robeck notes that although Pentecostals in general are anticreedal, it was not to negate the truths which the creed was intended to exalt and protect, but rather, it was to deny that the creed was sufficient to the task. Scripture, and in some cases experience consistent with Scripture, was more important than creed. Cecil M. Robeck: “A Pentecostal Perspective on Apostolicity,” paper presented to Faith and Order, National Council of Churches, Consultation on American Born Churches, March 1992 (unpublished), 2-3.

Church. And their self-designation as the “Apostolic Faith Movement” is sufficient to demonstrate some kind of commitment to the apostolic nature of the church and a deep concern to contribute to a restored or enhanced apostolic character of the Church.<sup>12</sup>

Of course it is true that these embryonic Pentecostal statements of faith did not say everything about catholicity or of other marks of the Church. That would be too much to expect. But they do point in the same direction as Christian tradition in its creedal statements.

### **‘Fullness of the Spirit’ and ‘Fullness of Catholicity’ in Ecclesial Communion**

That the Holy Spirit is not at the center of Pentecostal spirituality does not mean that, therefore, the Spirit’s role is not important. It is, but always in relation to Jesus Christ and, of course, the Father in a healthy trinitarian grammar. Indeed, Pentecostal sensibilities go well with the ecclesiological consciousness of early Christian tradition as it linked the confession of faith in the church and her catholicity with the article on the Holy Spirit. Without in any way diminishing the christological foundation of the Church, which (after all) is the Body of Christ, there is also an equally important pneumatological moment to the coming of existence and life of the church. The current Roman Catholic Catechism makes this significant statement when speaking of the church-constitutive meaning of the fullness of the Spirit:

This fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah’s, but was to be communicated to the whole Messianic people. On several occasions Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit, a promise which he fulfilled first on Easter Sunday and then more strikingly at Pentecost. Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim “the mighty works of God,” and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age. Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Robeck, “A Pentecostal Perspective on Apostolicity,” 2 (emphases in the original).

<sup>13</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 1287 (New York: Doubleday, 1995), p. 359.

This statement could, of course, be written by Pentecostals<sup>14</sup> as a Pentecostal contribution to the ecumenical consciousness of catholicity being the importance of its pneumatological ramification.

In an important recent essay the title of which has been used for the heading of this section,<sup>15</sup> Evangelical theologian Evan F. Kuehn forges a robust connection with the biblical promise of the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God and the claim for the fullness of catholicity.<sup>16</sup> In other words, catholicity is a dynamic concept, a charismatic reality—as the location of the marks of the church in the third article of the creed (that being on the Holy Spirit) indicates. On the one hand, this is something on which Pentecostals have always insisted; whereas on the other hand, as Pentecostal theologian Simon Chan of Singapore reminds us, there must be a healthy mutuality between the acknowledgment of the Spirit’s work in the individual (typical Pentecostal emphasis) and in the community (typical traditional churches emphasis). Indeed, nothing less than what Chan calls “ecclesial pneumatology” is needed to find a proper balance:

That is to say, the primary locus of the work of the Spirit is not in the individual Christian but in the church. The coming of the Spirit on Jesus at his baptism is often regarded as a model for the Spirit’s baptism of individual Christians. Rather, Jesus’ baptism should be regarded as representative of the Spirit’s coming upon the church, his body. To be baptized into Christ is to be incorporated into a Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered entity. Spirit-baptism is first an event of the church prior to its being actualized in a personalized Spirit-baptism.<sup>17</sup>

In a programmatic work, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*,<sup>18</sup> Pentecostal theologian Frank Macchia

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<sup>14</sup>The context for the catechism’s remarks on the fullness of the Holy Spirit has to do with the sacrament of confirmation. There are no biblical or traditional reasons why a wider and more inclusive application of the idea would not be appropriate.

<sup>15</sup>Evan F. Kuehn, “‘Fullness of the Spirit’ and ‘Fullness of Catholicity’ in Ecclesial Communion,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11, no. 3 (July 2009).

<sup>16</sup>Kuehn takes his point of departure in the way post-conciliar Roman Catholic theology uses the expression “fullness of catholicity” in a semi-technical sense in references to clarify the status of churches and ecclesial communities within the church of Christ and the expression “fullness of Spirit” mainly in relation to the sacrament of confirmation. Both in Kuehn’s essay and in mine here, these expressions are used in a more inclusive and non-technical sense.

<sup>17</sup>Simon Chan, “Mother Church: Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 22, no. 2 (2000): 180.

<sup>18</sup>Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).

constructs a robust theology of Holy Spirit baptism combining individual and communal dimensions. For Macchia, Spirit baptism is a thoroughly and genuinely communal event. He further believes that his project can best be done in critical and mutually informing ecumenical dialogue with other views and the best of the movement's tradition. Having confessed that "With their individualistic understanding of Spirit baptism, . . . [Pentecostals] have lacked the conceptual framework in which to understand its connection to the Church's communally gifted life,"<sup>19</sup> Macchia also issues this important call—"The Spirit is the Spirit of communion. Spirit baptism implies communion. That's why it leads to a shared love, a shared meal, a shared mission, and the proliferation/enhancement of an interactive charismatic life."<sup>20</sup> Even speaking in tongues, the most distinctive gift for many Pentecostals, is not unrelated to the *sanctorum communio*. Since no believer compasses the wholeness of charismata, the fullness of God can only be experienced in solidarity koinonia with others in the church body.<sup>21</sup>

In the fourth phase of the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal International Dialogue (1991-1997), the koinonia-building aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit through charisms (i.e., gifts), empowerment, and other energies was wonderfully highlighted:

The life of Koinonia is empowered by the Holy Spirit; in recent times many have experienced that power through "the baptism in the Holy Spirit." This presence of the Spirit has been shown in a fresh activity of biblical charisms, or gifts (cf. 1 Cor 12:8-11) reminding all Christians to be open to charisms as the Spirit gives to everyone individually, whether these gifts are more or less noticeable. Some of the charisms are given more for personal edification (cf. 1 Cor 14:4a), while some provide service to others, and some especially are given to confirm evangelization (cf. Mk 16:15-20). All of them are intended to help build up the koinonia.<sup>22</sup>

The distinctively Pentecostal emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit as the principle of communion can be found in the distribution and availability of spiritual gifts in all their richness. In that light, the

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 156.

<sup>21</sup>Frank D. Macchia, "Sighs Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Glossolalia," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992): 65.

<sup>22</sup>"Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: Final Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue (1990-1997) between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders," IV, #27.

reflection by the leading Roman Catholic pneumatologist Yves Congar (a French Dominican) on catholicity through the lens of the Spirit's work and energies is highly significant. In his classic work, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, he speaks of the Spirit as "the principle of catholicity." Catholicity of the Church is always in the nature of the "earnest-money" (cf. Eph 1:13). Echoing the sentiments of Pentecostals with deep yearning for the fullness of the Gospel and fullness of the Spirit, Congar says that this "earnest-money is quite substantial, since, even though the Spirit does not at present develop the fullness of that activity by which he will enable God to be 'everything to everyone,' he is even now the eschatological gift that is substantially present to the Church and active in the Church."<sup>23</sup>

The Pentecost event with its pouring out of the Spirit and ensuing missionary commitment is indeed a call and vocation for the Church to become catholic in outreach for all peoples. The power behind the vocation is the empowerment of the Church by various charisms that are meant for the mutual building up of the community and service to all.<sup>24</sup> Only in dependence on "the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit, then, the Church is able to be completely open to accomplish its catholicity, which is also the catholicity of Christ."<sup>25</sup>

Importantly, Pentecostal theologian Amos Yong builds on the work of Congar as he offers a constructive discussion of the four marks.<sup>26</sup> According to Yong, the first Pentecostal response to Congar's pneumatological and missiologically oriented dynamic definition is "Amen!" At the same time more robustly than Roman Catholics, Pentecostals want to look at catholicity first from the perspective of the local church and each member serving therein with the plethora of charisms:

Here pentecostal charismology . . . informs Pentecostal ecclesiology and vice versa. The church charismatic flows from the manifestation of the gifts through each member, which serves the common good (1 Cor 12:4-7). Each member's gifting is essential precisely because he or she constitutes the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27). Individual members constitute local congregations, which combine, finally, as the church catholic. In understanding both the charismatic giftedness and the

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<sup>23</sup>Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, three volumes in one (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 2:24.

<sup>24</sup>See further Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2:25-26.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:35.

<sup>26</sup>Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 134-51; on catholicity, see pp. 143-46.

ecclesial constitution of the church, pentecostals therefore emphasize the particularity of local congregations and individual members.<sup>27</sup>

### Mission and Catholicity: A ‘Glocal’ Gospel

The first Pentecostal church’s statement of faith (analyzed above) highlights the quantitative dimension of the Pentecostal consciousness of catholicity—namely, that the Gospel should be preached everywhere. This is a highly important aspect of the ecclesiological texture of Pentecostalism. In many ways, this movement can be described as a dynamic, charismatically endowed missionary community or a community of communions to highlight its diversity, pluriformity, and continuing dissemination all across the globe.

Reformed missiologist Charles E. Van Engen has recently argued for a more robust theology of catholicity through the lens of mission and the global church. In order to illustrate the dynamic nature of *The Locality and Catholicity in a Globalizing World*,<sup>28</sup> he coins the term “glocal,” which is, of course, an attempt to mesh together “local” and “global.”<sup>29</sup> His main thesis is simply this:

In the twenty-first century, the church of Jesus Christ needs to become self-consciously what it in fact already is: a glocal church. . . . [A] healthy congregation of disciples of Jesus lives out its catholicity by intentionally and actively participating in Christ’s mission . . . that dynamically fosters the glocal interaction between the global and the local.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>28</sup>Subheading in Charles E. Van Engen, “The Glocal Church,” in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 157-79. The term was invented at the turn of the twentieth century in the interdisciplinary debate about the meaning of “globalization.” See further: Susan H. C. Tai and Y. H. Wong, “Advertising Decision Making in Asia: ‘Glocal’ versus ‘Regcal’ Approach,” *Journal of Managerial Issues* 10 (Fall 1998): 318-19; James N. Rosenau, *Distant Proximities: Dynamics beyond Globalization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>29</sup>The often-used term “global” theology in the conversations engaging contextuality is a term that has to be used with great care. The term “global” may easily fall into the trap of being understood in the sense of modernist “universal” ideas. The only meaning of the term “global” that contemporary theology can accept is the “communion” of “local” interpretations in mutual dialogue with each other. In other words, the only “global” is “local.” See further, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and William Dyrness, “Introduction” to *Global Dictionary of Theology*, ed. William Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ass. eds., Simon Chan and Juan Martinez (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), vii–xiv.

<sup>30</sup>Van Engen, “The Glocal Church,” 157.

While catholicity includes more than just extension of the Church to all corners of the Church, it also has that element as an essential aspect of that notion. Pentecostal sensibilities are expressed in a most remarkable way in the statement from *The Nature and Mission of the Church*—“Mission thus belongs to the very being of the Church. . . . All four attributes relate both to the nature of God’s own being and to the practical demands of authentic mission.”<sup>31</sup>

In Pentecostal spirituality and church life, the promise of Acts 1:8 became the programmatic statement. Pentecostals believed that all men and women, young and old, educated and unlearned, Blacks, whites, Latinos, and others were energized and equipped by the same Holy Spirit to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Whereas Pentecostals have much to learn from older traditions concerning the importance of continuity and tradition as essential aspects of catholicity, their specific contribution to the Church Universal is the lived-out dynamic spirituality which constantly yearns for empowerment for witnessing and outreach.

### **Catholicity and Diversity: The Liberationist Impulse**

As already mentioned, diversity (-in-unity) belongs to the texture of catholicity. That principle applies not only to the diversity of communities which form together the one Body of Christ, but also to persons in the community and groups of persons within those communities. If the Church (the local church consisting of real people) is catholic, then also every member of the Church is catholic. Hence, we can speak of the catholic personhood.<sup>32</sup>

To this catholicity belongs the overcoming of sinful barriers and sinful structures, which resist the fullness of the Gospel but not legitimate, God-willed diversity. Rather than being deleted (as in the modernist illusion of ‘universal nature’), racial, sexual, economic, cultural, and other diversities will be affirmed, purified, sanctified for the sake of love and the work of the Gospel. The truly catholic vision of the end-time Church gathered before the throne of the Lamb in all her diversity and pluriformity serves as the paradigm here:

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,*

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<sup>31</sup> *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper no. 198 (Geneva: WCC, 2005), #35.

<sup>32</sup>For a programmatic discussion, see Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 259-82.

*clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev 7:9, 10).*

Singaporean Pentecostal Simon Chan remarks, "It is in this light of the Spirit's constituting the church as catholic that we can begin to appreciate the ecumenical impulse of the Pentecostal pioneer William Seymour at the Azusa Street Mission." Chan surmises that this illiterate former Methodist preacher might have been the only person at the time "who clearly understood the real significance of the Pentecostal outpouring, because he saw it as the event to bring into existence a church supremely marked by an all-transcending catholicity."<sup>33</sup>

As a result of this catholic vision, not only men but also women, not only Whites but also the colored,<sup>34</sup> not only the educated but also the unlearned, not only the 'mainliners' but also the 'sectarians,' worshipped, ministered, and glorified the one Lord of the Church. All ethnicities and both genders had access to ministry because of the end-time pouring out of the Holy Spirit. "The color line was washed away by the blood of the Lamb," the early Pentecostals confessed.<sup>35</sup> Ironically, even the Los Angeles Times, a bastion of liberal rhetoric, found this kind of socio-political inclusivism appalling and horrendous!

Pentecostal church historian Douglas Nelson brings to light this extraordinary diversity-in-unity/unity-in-diversity thusly:

Amid the most racist era of a totally segregated society, a miracle happened. For the first time in history a miniature global community came together beyond the color line, meeting night and day continuously for three years, inviting everyone to enter the new life in fellowship together. The original vision for a new society—forged again in the USA during 250 years of black slave experience—became an historical reality in the church.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Chan, "Mother Church," 185.

<sup>34</sup>I try to avoid the term "colored" not only because in the past it was used in a somewhat pejorative sense but more importantly, because it mistakenly implies that whites are colorless!

<sup>35</sup>For historical and theological analysis of these developments, see my "Free Churches, Ecumenism, and Pentecostalism," in *Toward a Pneumatological Theology*, ed. Amos Yong (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), chap. 4.

<sup>36</sup>D. J. Nelson, *For Such a Time as This: The Story of Bishop William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival* (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 1981), 11, quoted in Chan, "Mother Church," 186.

Although subsequent generations of Pentecostal churches too often were no better than their mainline counterparts in maintaining this original vision of diversity and unity, nonetheless, this heritage is an essential part of the movement's history and is yet another contribution to the Church Universal.

African American/Black Pentecostals have often highlighted the significance of this aspect of catholicity. In the initial consultation that featured African American perspectives on the Apostolic Faith (held in December 1984), participants addressed "the unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the Church of Jesus Christ," with the self-understanding that African Americans were marginalized within American society, within American churches, and within the Church at large. They had hoped to make a substantive contribution to the "common expression of the faith."<sup>37</sup> At the same time, they also leveled a powerful critique at how many white Christians in North America and in Europe have interpreted the Apostolic Faith in a way that has allowed them to oppress Christians of color. The participants of that consultation made clear their suspicion of any attempt to talk about unity that from the beginning did not take seriously the political, economic, and cultural diversity and instead defined the marks of the church merely in spiritual terms.<sup>38</sup>

With regard to catholicity, these Black Pentecostals sharply critiqued traditional interpretations of catholicity that they viewed as being driven by western norms—norms by which many Africans and African Americans had been deprived of full participation in the life of the Church. They repudiated these norms as being heavily influenced by the sins of racism, sexism, and classism because they discourage fellowship with many Christians of color both near and far.<sup>39</sup> By building walls between older Christian denominations and these newer expressions of Christianity, they argued, the older denominations were guilty of denying "the catholicity of the Body of Christ."<sup>40</sup>

That issue is addressed directly by Moltmann's linking of catholicity with 'partisanship' for the weak, underprivileged, and marginalized. The reason for partisanship is in the example of Jesus, who "turned to the

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<sup>37</sup> "Toward a Common Expression of Faith: A Black North American Perspective," in *Black Witness to the Apostolic Faith*, ed. David T. Shannon and Gayraud S. Wilmore, Faith & Order/USA (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 65.

<sup>38</sup> "Toward a Common Expression of Faith: A Black North American Perspective," 65. For these references and discussion in this section I am indebted to Cecil M. Robeck, "The Apostolic Faith Study and the Holy Spirit," presentation given at the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches on July 19-23, 2007, in Oberlin, Ohio (unpublished).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

sinners, tax-collectors and lepers in order to save the Pharisees and the healthy as well.” Similarly, “Paul turned to the Gentiles in order to save Israel too.” Thus, this “form of partisanship does not destroy Christian universalism,” which belongs to the notion of catholicity, but rather makes accessible to all the blessings of the Full Gospel, as I have named it in this study.<sup>41</sup>

### **In Lieu of Conclusion: Towards a Mutual Acknowledgment of the Apostolicity of the Whole Church**

In both parts of this explorative essay, I have suggested that the distinctively Pentecostal understanding of catholicity is rooted in the notion of the Full Gospel, the center of Pentecostal spirituality. Linked with that is the deep desire for the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the sake of empowerment for mission and service. As the Spirit was poured out on the Church, it also led to the experience of an inclusive, affirmative, diversity-in-unity/unity-in-diversity as a way to make accessible to all men and women the blessings of the Gospel and the ministry of Christ. Let me name these four interrelated dimensions of the Pentecostal idea of catholicity as follows:

- “Christological” (Full Gospel)
- “Pneumatological” (Fullness of the Spirit)
- “Missiological”
- “Liberationist”

Now this is not all that catholicity includes and embraces, nor is it meant to be. No single church can embody the wholeness of catholicity apart from others, for there is mutual dependency and mutual contribution. Pentecostals have much to learn from others, but they can also make a contribution. Hence, there is the urgent call for other churches—together and in mutual love—to continue seeking for a common understanding and acknowledgement of an ever growing sense of catholicity, until the Lord of the Church comes and brings to completion this hope.

Unfortunately, as mentioned, different churches have their own take on the notion of catholicity; and that often leads to the contesting of the catholicity of some other churches. Certainly, Pentecostal churches have experienced this. In the 1986 National Council of Churches (USA) consultation on *Confessing the Apostolic Faith from the Perspective of*

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<sup>41</sup>Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 352. Along the same lines, Moltmann speaks of “holiness in poverty” (352-57) and “apostolate in suffering” (357-61).

*the Pentecostal Churches*, it so happened that, “From the start the nature of the ‘Apostolic Faith’ confessed by the Pentecostal churches was questioned by some representatives of Faith and Order.”<sup>42</sup> Pentecostals have committed similar kinds of ecumenical ‘sins’ by denying the fullness of the Gospel in other churches.

I find the precept of Ormond Rush (a Roman Catholic) helpful in the search for mutual acknowledgment of the apostolic nature of the Church. This precept serves as well for the common search for catholicity: “Instead of comparing and contrasting traditions, both parties attempt to interpret together the apostolic tradition. If each can recognize in the other’s interpretation ‘the apostolic faith,’ then surprising agreement and common ground can be achieved.”<sup>43</sup>

And the Princeton Proposal’s comment likewise embodies that spirit:

Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians and their institutions also have a unique role. All churches may benefit from their vitality, their zeal for evangelism, and their commitment to Scripture. They demonstrate a spirit of cooperation with each other and sometimes with others that breaks down old barriers, creates fellowship among formally estranged Christians, and anticipates further unity. The free-church ecclesiologies of some Evangelicals bring a distinct vision of unity to the ecumenical task.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, Pentecostals who engage in the careful task of studying the actual church life of other Christian communities would be enlightened by the richness of spiritual experience, depth of prayer life,

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<sup>42</sup>Robeck, “Apostolic Faith,” 9-10. Most of the papers from this conference were published in *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 9, no. 1 (1987). They were also published as a separate volume for National Council of Churches under the title *Confessing the Apostolic Faith: Pentecostal Churches and the Ecumenical Movement* (Pasadena, CA: Society for Pentecostal Studies, 1987). Many of the papers were also published in *One in Christ* 23 (1987). On this particular point, see, Jeffrey Gros, FSC, “Confessing the Apostolic Faith from the Perspective of the Pentecostal Churches,” *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 9, no. 1 (1987): 8-10.

<sup>43</sup>Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 67.

<sup>44</sup>*In One Body through the Cross*, #67 (pp. 55-56). See also my “Unity, Diversity, and Apostolicity: Any Hopes for Rapprochement between Older and Younger Churches?” in *Believing in Community: Ecumenical Reflections on the Church*, ed. Peter de Mey, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium (Leuven: University of Leuven, 2011; forthcoming).

**commitment to service, and other evidences of the Full Gospel in all its diversity.**



**Where Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism Part Ways:  
Towards a Theology of Pentecostal Revelatory Experience  
Part 1**

by Tania Harris

**Introduction**

This article is presented in two parts. In Part 1, I introduce the Evangelical and Pentecostal approaches to contemporary revelatory experience. In Part 2, I will focus on the impact of Evangelical theology on that experience and show how the adoption of an Evangelical theology to explain Pentecostal revelatory experience has negative consequences for its ongoing practise. In the final section of Part 2, I will propose the Catholic approach as an appropriate framework for understanding Pentecostal revelatory experience.

The claim to revelatory experience, or in common parlance, the experience of “hearing God’s voice” is frequent among Pentecostals<sup>1</sup> and has been identified by Albrecht and Lee as important to their spirituality.<sup>2</sup> A ten-country survey in 2006 showed that Pentecostals were two to three times more likely than the average Christian to report that they have received a direct revelation from God.<sup>3</sup> Ernest B. Gentile

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<sup>1</sup>As a global and diverse phenomenon, Pentecostalism is notoriously difficult to define. In this paper, “Pentecostal” relates to churches who embrace an experiential spirituality and its practice of charismata, and who are associated with organized Pentecostal groupings or denominations.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 228; Sang-Whan Lee, “Pentecostal Prophecy,” *The Spirit and Church* 3.1 (2001): 147–8.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Alexander, *Signs and Wonders: Why Pentecostalism Is the World’s Fastest Growing Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 117. Further, in a study of America’s largest Pentecostal denominations, 81 percent of adherents reported to have received a revelation directly from God: Margaret M. Poloma and John C. Green, *The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism* (New York and London: NYU Press, 2010), 135. In a 2012 study among Hispanic Catholic Charismatics, 46 percent were reported to having received a direct revelation from God: Pew Research Center, “The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States,” May 7, 2014. <http://www.pewforum.org/>

writes that for the Pentecostal, to “hear God’s voice” is to receive the revelation of “God’s thoughts towards humanity” via the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> The ability to hear God’s voice is seen by Roger Stronstad to be a distinctive of the New Covenant whereby the Spirit’s outpouring at Pentecost enabled all believers to receive revelatory messages in the same manner (as dreams and visions) as the Old Covenant prophets (Num 12:6; Acts 2:16-17).<sup>5</sup> Pentecostal scholars generally concur that the Pentecostal experience involves the spontaneous reception of revelation apart from cognitive thought, and comprises a genuine transfer of new and/or previously unknown information.<sup>6</sup> For Pentecostal historian Cecil M. Robeck, prophetic messages include both categories of “forth-telling” (declaring the mind of God) and “fore-telling” (prediction of future events).<sup>7</sup> It is my observation that Pentecostals adopt an approach that assumes phenomenological continuity between their own experience and that of the biblical characters, and therefore view their revelatory experiences as analogous to those in Scripture. This perspective is consistent with the Pentecostal approach to all contemporary spiritual experience as identified by several in the Pentecostal Academy.<sup>8</sup>

Modern Pentecostal churches in Western Christianity have typically aligned themselves with the Protestant tradition, and under the smaller

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2014/05/07/the-shifting-religious-identity-of-latinos-in-the-united-states/ (accessed 21.7.16). As one form of hearing God’s voice, prophecy was found to be extensively practiced among Pentecostals in Asia: Dennis Lum, *The Practice of Prophecy: An Empirical-Theological Study of Pentecostals in Singapore* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2018), Kindle Version, Location 122.

<sup>4</sup>Ernest B. Gentile, *Your Sons and Daughters Will Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1999), 20.

<sup>5</sup>Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke’s Charismatic Theology*, Journal Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 16 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 69.

<sup>6</sup>Mark J. Cartledge, “Charismatic Prophecy: A Definition and Description,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5 [1994]: 81; Lee, “Pentecostal Prophecy,” 160; Samuel W. Muindi, *Pentecostal-Charismatic Prophecy: Empirical-Theological Analysis* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017), 255-256.

<sup>7</sup>Cecil M. Robeck Jr., “The Gift of Prophecy” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Edouard M. Van Der Maas (Rev. edn., 999–1012, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 999; Cartledge, “Charismatic Prophecy: A Definition and Description,” 81.

<sup>8</sup>Stephen E. Parker, *Led by the Spirit: Toward a Practical Theology of Pentecostal Discernment and Decision-Making* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 13; Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20; Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 15; Mark McLean, “Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic,” *Pneuma* 6, no.2 (1984): 35-56; Scott A. Ellington, “Pentecostalism and the Authority of Scripture,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 9 (1996): 17; Kenneth J. Archer, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect” In *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 131; John McKay, “When the Veil Is Taken Away: The Impact of Prophetic Experience on Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5 (1994): 26.

umbrella of Evangelicalism;<sup>9</sup> nearly all Pentecostals consider themselves to be Evangelical.<sup>10</sup> While the two traditions share much in common, the Protestant/Evangelical approach to “hearing God’s voice” represents a clear differentiation from that of the Pentecostals.<sup>11</sup> In the Protestant/Evangelical traditions, the experience of hearing God speak is most often equated with the reading and exposition of Scripture by means of the Spirit’s illumination.<sup>12</sup> Contemporary revelatory experience outside of Scripture may be possible, but is usually deemed to be qualitatively inferior, relatively unreliable, and of minimal authority compared with the inspired experiences of Scripture.<sup>13</sup> This position is derived from the belief that the experiences in Scripture are ‘special’ and therefore unrepeatable, a perspective that seeks to preserve the authority, sufficiency and uniqueness of Scripture.

Although the revelatory experience is important to Pentecostal practise and is prized for its spiritual value, there has been a profound lack of theological reflection in this area by Pentecostals in the Academy.<sup>14</sup> In the absence of an adequate theological framework for their experiences, and in order to maintain the priority of Scripture, Pentecostals have adopted an Evangelical framework to understand their own experience. The result has been disconnection between the theology and practise of revelatory experience by Pentecostal Christians as they espouse a discontinuous theological approach while practising a continuous one. This disparity threatens to dilute the ongoing practise and potency of an experience that is understood by Pentecostals to be a keystone of the Spirit’s work under the New Covenant.

This paper draws on the findings of a study undertaken in preparation for a Ph.D. The study was conducted among Australian Pentecostals to reflect on the theology and practise of revelatory experiences. The Evangelical and Pentecostal approaches to revelatory experiences will be compared and contrasted in order to reveal the inadequacy of the Evangelical framework for Pentecostals, and the need

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<sup>9</sup>Like Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism is also difficult to define because of many divergent strands influencing the movement. Craig Allert argues for a loss of theological framework of the Evangelicals, showing that it developed as a protest movement rather than as a unique theological position: *A High View of Scripture?: The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 18.

<sup>10</sup>Poloma and Green, *The Assemblies of God*, 3-4.

<sup>11</sup>Sang-Whan Lee, “Pentecostal Prophecy,” 159; S. Fourie, *Prophecy: God’s Gift of Communication to the Church* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1990), 14.

<sup>12</sup>Sang-Whan Lee, “Pentecostal Prophecy,” 160; Jon Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Postbiblical Miracles* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2007), 31.

<sup>13</sup>This position is best articulated by Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), Kindle Version, Location 962.

<sup>14</sup>Parker, *Led by the Spirit*, 20.

to develop a theological framework that is consistent with the Pentecostal approach. Alignment with the Catholic mystical tradition is proposed as the proper alternative.

### **The Evangelical Approach to Contemporary Revelatory Experience**

In the Protestant Evangelical tradition, two perspectives towards contemporary revelatory experience may be identified. The first perspective, known as cessationism, holds that revelatory experience beyond the canon has ceased. Any claim to contemporary revelation is invalid, dangerous or even heretical.<sup>15</sup> The second perspective, held largely by those of the charismatic stream, is most clearly and substantively represented by the work of Baptist theologian Wayne Grudem.<sup>16</sup> Grudem's study sought to bring validity to extra-biblical revelatory experiences by providing a position that refuted the arguments of cessationism, while preserving the Evangelical priority of Scripture.

According to Grudem, contemporary revelatory experiences are valid, but are phenomenologically inferior to the special experience of the canonical characters. This position is based on his identification of two different categories of prophetic experience in Scripture: (1) the special experience of the (canonical) Old Testament prophets and their equivalents, the New Testament apostles, who speak the "very words of God", and (2) the ordinary experience of the non-prophets of the Old Testament and New Testament congregations who speak only "human words to report something God has brought to mind."<sup>17</sup> For Grudem, there is no access to the "very words of God" as evidenced in the Scriptures—post-apostolic revelatory experiences are possible, but are always qualitatively inferior since they are comprised of human words that require testing.<sup>18</sup> Mallone sums up this position well: "I know of no theologically sound non-cessationist who would suggest that prophecies today are inspired as Scripture is inspired of God."<sup>19</sup>

While Grudem affirms the aspect of "new" revelation as

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<sup>15</sup>Benjamin B. Warfield's *Counterfeit Miracles* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1918) represents a major starting point in the twentieth century. Other cessationists include John F. MacArthur Jr., *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); J. I. Packer, *God's Words* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1981); Richard B. Gaffin, "A Cessationist View" in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (edited by Wayne Grudem, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

<sup>16</sup>Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000). Although his study focuses exclusively on the "gift of prophecy" and draws largely from Paul's epistles to the Corinthians, the perspective has bearing on the broader revelatory experience at a number of points.

<sup>17</sup>Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, Location 132, cf. 489.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., Location 962.

<sup>19</sup>George Mallone, *Those Controversial Gifts* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1983), 37.

characteristic of post-apostolic revelatory experiences, he is cautious about their tenuous nature. Messages can be directed towards personal and specific needs, but should not be trusted for guidance, since only God's words in Scripture are reliable.<sup>20</sup> As "human words," contemporary revelatory messages are helpful for building the church, but have minimal authority in the manner of pastoral counselling or advice. For Grudem, to hear God's voice clearly, Christians should prioritize Scripture reading.

Grudem's primary concern is to preserve the authority of Scripture.<sup>21</sup> Pentecostal scholars have noted that this issue lies at the heart of the debate.<sup>22</sup> If God's voice could be heard clearly and accurately in contemporary experience, it follows that it must carry the same potential for authority as the biblical experience, since authority originates in God himself (Isa 45:23; Num 23:19). This is one of the primary reasons cessationists have rejected contemporary experience altogether. The very fact that there is claim to an additional voice "serves to weaken the power of the Word."<sup>23</sup> Grudem's position also seeks to protect the sufficiency of Scripture: "God has not spoken to mankind any more words which he expects us to believe or obey than those we now have in the Bible."<sup>24</sup>

### **The Pentecostal Approach to Contemporary Revelatory Experience**

Grudem's study was well received, and strengthened the Pentecostal cause such that it inadvertently became the default position for both scholars and popular teachers.<sup>25</sup> Like Grudem, Pentecostals are

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<sup>20</sup>Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, Location 3785.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, Location 114.

<sup>22</sup>Ellington, "Pentecostalism and the Authority of Scripture," 16–38; Matthew S. Clark, "An Investigation into the Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1997), 160-201; Cecil M. Robeck, "Written Prophecies: A Question of Authority," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 2 [1980]: 26–45.

<sup>23</sup>Ruth A. Tucker, *God Talk: Cautions for Those Who Hear God's Voice* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2005), 64.

<sup>24</sup>Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, Location 3013.

<sup>25</sup>An observation made by Jon Ruthven, "The 'Foundational Gifts' of Ephesians 2:20," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10, no. 2 [2002]: 31 and Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: In the New Testament Church and Today*, revised ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 186. As examples, see the work of David Lim, *Spiritual Gifts: A Fresh Look* (Springfield: Gospel, 2003), 105; Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994); Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (London: 1934, reprinted Springfield: Gospel, 1975), 173. See also Cindy Jacobs, *The Voice of God* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1995), 101; Mike Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic* (Orlando: Creation House, 1996), 117; Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God* (Grand

keen to preserve the unique role of the Scriptures. Robeck and others show that the vast majority of Pentecostal and charismatic communities assert that contemporary prophecies are always “subservient to the role filled by Scripture.” Contemporary prophecies, they declare, must never contradict the canon or be “put on par” with it, and they state that this has been the case throughout history.<sup>26</sup> Robeck further details the differences between the two, describing prophetic experience as “particular, temporal and subjective,” whereas the Scriptures are “universal, eternal and objective.”<sup>27</sup> While appearing to present a neat solution to the “Scripture vs. Spirit” dilemma, this position has significant problems for Pentecostals at a foundational level.

### Disconnect Between Theology and Practise

While Pentecostals are concerned about making a distinction between biblical and extra-biblical revelatory experiences in theory, multiple scholars have noted that this position does not hold in practise. Pentecostals affirm Grudem’s theology of a low level of authority for their experience, while consistently emulating the practises of a ‘higher-level’ experience. For example, Grudem bemoans the frequent use of the phrase, “Thus says the Lord” by Pentecostals, since it assumes a level of inspiration and authority that is equivalent to the experiences in Scripture.<sup>28</sup> Robeck shares a similar concern, showing how the use of prophecies by early Pentecostals gives them a “strongly canonical ring.”<sup>29</sup> He observes, “While there is the *de jure* claim that Scripture holds the ultimate authority, there are *de facto* practises which appear to deny that claim.”<sup>30</sup>

This dynamic was explored in the findings of my 2016 study investigating revelatory experiences among Australian Pentecostals. Using the practical theological method of Mark Cartledge, along with

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Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 278-86.

<sup>26</sup>Robeck, “Written Prophecies,” 28; William K. Kay, “Pentecostals and the Bible,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 24 (2004): 71–83, 75. Clark (“Investigation,” 159, 211, 246) shows that this perspective has been associated with Pentecostalism throughout this century, and is echoed among scholars such as Bezuidenhout (1980, in Clark, 1997), Fee (1994), and Schatzmann (1987, 39-40). See also Gentile, *Your Sons and Daughters*, 152; Gerald T. Sheppard, “Prophecy: From Ancient Israel to Pentecostals at the End of the Modern Age,” *The Spirit and Church* 3.1 (2001): 47–70, 55; William K. Kay, *Prophecy!* (Nottingham: Lifestream, 1991), 35-36.

<sup>27</sup>Robeck, “Written Prophecies,” 39, 43.

<sup>28</sup>Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, Location 997, 3669. The Pentecostal theologian Horton (1934, 187-188) also warns against this language.

<sup>29</sup>Robeck, “Written Prophecies,” 43, see also Kay, *Prophecy!*, 95.

<sup>30</sup>Robeck, “Written Prophecies,” 28.

Jeff Astley's concept of "ordinary theology,"<sup>31</sup> individual testimonies of revelatory experience were analysed for their theology and practise. Astley highlights the value of "ordinary theology" in that it takes place in personal learning contexts as individuals reflect on their experience and work out answers to their own theological questions.<sup>32</sup> Cartledge states that, while Pentecostal Christians may not be known for their "exceptional experiences of academic theology", they are known for their "exceptional experiences of religion." The result is that they have built up a "common-sense expertise" in how their experiences should be handled.<sup>33</sup>

My qualitative study involved 54 semi-structured interviews, and seven focus groups from three urban churches, as well as participant observation for four to six weeks in each church. In total, 204 revelatory experiences from 89 individuals were investigated for their content, function and process.

The research findings affirmed the observations of both Grudem and Robeck. Respondents understood their experience to be phenomenologically equivalent, and qualitatively consistent, with the biblical experience in direct and literal ways. The patterns, theological principles and epistemologies embedded in the biblical narratives acted as models from which individuals derived their understandings about their own experience.

Respondents reported that they heard from God via forms that reflected the biblical experience, including dreams and visions, internal verbal messages and sensory impressions. Interviewees affirmed the possibility of accuracy for their experiences as reflected by the free and easy use of the language "God said." Respondents aligned their experiences with those of the canonical characters Ezekiel, Isaiah, Paul and Peter.

At the same time, respondents understood their experience to be subject to human influence, requiring adequate discernment processes. This was achieved through the application of a Christocentric hermeneutic to Scripture—revelatory experiences were deemed to be authentic when they were in keeping with Christ's nature and mission. Discernment was also made possible through the community via the confirmation of secondary revelatory experiences (through another party) and by consultation with family and friends who helped to filter out psychological and physiological obstacles. Once discerned to be

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<sup>31</sup>Mark Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

<sup>32</sup>Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 159.

<sup>33</sup>Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit*, 16.

from God, respondents treated their experiences as authoritative and acted on them accordingly. Disobedience to revelatory messages was considered an act of rebellion towards God, and aligned with biblical characters such as Jonah or Saul. Revelatory experiences in the Scriptures continually acted as theological reference points for the participants' own encounters. In this way, the foundational role of Scripture was maintained and ongoing revelatory experiences posed no threat to the priority of the canon.

#### A Foundation of Experiential Continuity

The problem with the complaint of Grudem and others is that Pentecostals base their practises on the patterns in Scripture. Pentecostals see themselves as being historically and experientially continuous with the early church. A worldview that is based on the “this is that” dynamic of Acts 2:16 means that Pentecostals assume their contemporary reality to reflect the biblical past. Biblical and contemporary horizons are fused such that there is no phenomenological demarcation between the biblical and the contemporary experience.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Pentecostals write their experiences down because the biblical characters were instructed to (Exod 34:37; Jer 30:2; Hab 2:2, 3). They use the phrase “God said” as patterned after their biblical predecessors (Acts 4:31; 8:29; 11:28; 13:2). They treat their experiences as authoritative in deference to the biblical example (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29, 32-33, 39; 7:51).

For Pentecostals, the approach advocated by Grudem and others is problematic at the deepest level because it arises from a foundation of *discontinuity* with the biblical experience. This should not be surprising given that the Protestant tradition sprung from an ethos that fundamentally opposed revelatory experience.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, there has been a profound lack of theological reflection by Pentecostals in the area of revelatory experiences in spite of their widespread use. While there has been some excellent work in the area of Pentecostal prophecy (particularly in the public context),<sup>36</sup> the broader private revelatory experience that encompasses “voices” and dreams and visions (D/Vs) has been soundly neglected.<sup>37</sup> It is somewhat of an anomaly that the

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<sup>34</sup>Allan Anderson, *Introduction*, 20.

<sup>35</sup>Volken shows that both Luther and Calvin rejected extra-biblical revelations: Laurent Volken, *Visions, Revelations and the Church* (New York: Kenedy, 1963), 88-91.

<sup>36</sup>Eg. Muindi, *Pentecostal-Charismatic Prophecy*; Lum, *The Practice of Prophecy*.

<sup>37</sup>Mark Cartledge's work among British Charismatics (“Charismatic Prophecy,” *Journal of Empirical Theology* 8 [1995]: 71–88), is perhaps the most helpful for describing contemporary practice, but he does not examine the theology of revelatory experiences in depth. Stephen Parker, in *Led by the Spirit*, examines Spirit-led experiences, but focusses on the process of discernment. Anna Droll's study on visions and dreams is a recent exception and

second aspect of the Spirit experience in Acts 2:16-17 (“sons and daughters will prophesy”) has been embraced by Pentecostals, while the first “young men will have visions; old men will have dreams”) has been largely ignored. I propose two reasons for this. Firstly, this may be due to the influence of the Evangelical tradition with its preference for the epistolical genre<sup>38</sup> (and the corresponding focus on public prophecy, e.g. 1 Cor 12-14) over the narratives (with their multiple references to private revelatory experiences).<sup>39</sup> Secondly, D/Vs in particular have been viewed with scepticism throughout history, particularly among cultures of the West. Kelsey notes this trend in recent times, identifying enlightenment thinking as the main culprit.<sup>40</sup> Hymes notes a similar trajectory in the early church and again after Aquinas due to Aristotelian influences.<sup>41</sup>

Hence with only a Protestant Evangelical approach to work with, and in order to maintain their position as “people of the Book”, Pentecostals have adopted a discontinuous theological framework, and in doing so have found themselves saying one thing while practising another.<sup>42</sup> While attempts have been made by Pentecostals to fit in with the Evangelical framework via the *rhema/logos* theology,<sup>43</sup> this approach

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provides insight into private revelatory experiences among African Pentecostals, “‘Piercing the Veil’ and African Dreams and Visions: In Quest of the Pneumatological Imagination,” *Pneuma* 40 (2018): 345–65. The preference for prophecy over private revelatory experiences is evident in several biblical works. For example, Aune’s classic study on New Testament prophecy does not refer to revelatory experiences in the narratives, David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 220; Similarly Grudem does not consider private revelatory experiences in *Gift of Prophecy*, or in his study of Protestant perspectives towards the Spirit’s ministry in general, Wayne A. Grudem., ed., *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

<sup>38</sup>See Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers*. Ruthven shows that the preference for the Pauline epistles can be traced back to Luther who specifically excluded Acts from the “true and noblest books” of the New Testament, Jon M. Ruthven, *What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology: Tradition vs. Biblical Emphasis* (Tulsa: Word and Spirit, 2013), 16.

<sup>39</sup>John B. F. Miller lists twenty separate revelatory experiences in Acts, *Convinced that God had Called Us: Dreams, Visions and the Perception of God’s Will in Luke-Acts* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007, 109-236).

<sup>40</sup>Morton T. Kelsey, *God, Dreams and Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), Kindle Version, Location 187.

<sup>41</sup>David Hymes, “Toward an Old Testament Theology of Dreams and Visions from a Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective,” *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* 14, 2012, <https://aps-journal.com/index.php/APS/article/view/117> (accessed Dec 21, 2019).

<sup>42</sup>James K. A. Smith, “The Closing of the Book: Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and the Sacred Writings,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11 [1997]: 59.

<sup>43</sup>For example, refer to the teaching of popular leaders Frank Damazio, *Developing the Prophetic Ministry* (Portland: Trilogy Productions, 1983), 54-55; Joyce Meyer, *How to Hear from God*. (New York: Warner Books, 2003); Bill Hamon, *Prophets and Personal Prophecy: God’s Prophetic Voice Today* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 1978), 30-35; Mark Virkler sources the original teaching from the prayer practices of South Korean pastor Paul Yonggi Cho, *Dialogue with God* (South Plainfield: Bridge, 1986), Kindle Version, Location 715.

has been found to be anachronistic and linguistically inaccurate due to the oral nature of early church communities.<sup>44</sup> Pentecostals must grapple with the role of revelatory experience in relation to the Scriptures and adopt an approach that reflects their experientially equivalent perspective.

In Part 1, I have discussed the Evangelical and Pentecostal approaches to contemporary revelatory experience. In Part 2, I will focus on the impact of Evangelical theology on that experience and show how the adoption of an Evangelical theology to explain Pentecostal revelatory experience has negative consequences for its ongoing practise. The Catholic approach to revelatory experience will be proposed as a viable alternative.

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<sup>44</sup>John Walton and Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), Kindle Version, Location 1951-2068; McLean, "Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic," 35–56. See Part 2: "The Impact of Textualisation on Oral Communities."

**Where Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism Part Ways:  
Towards a Theology of Pentecostal Revelatory Experience  
Part 2**

by Tania Harris

**The Impact of Evangelical Theology on Pentecostal Revelatory  
Experience**

Here, I will discuss the impact of Evangelical theology on Pentecostal revelatory experience and propose the Catholic approach as a proper alternative.

The adoption of an Evangelical theology to explain Pentecostal revelatory experience has negative consequences for its ongoing practise. Philosopher James K. A. Smith describes how this occurs by contrasting the placement of authority in the oral approach of the Pentecostal community with the textual approach of the Evangelicals. This dynamic has significant implications for both bibliology and epistemology.

**The Impact of Textualization on Oral Communities**

Smith argues that the first-century church was primarily an oral community, with more emphasis on hearing than reading, prophets than scribes and aurality than textuality. This “oral state of being” reflected the broader Greco-Roman culture that valued oral communication above the written, and where access to written texts was limited to the educated elite. Although early church communities inherited the canonical consciousness of their Judaistic predecessors as the “people of the book,” Smith argues that a more appropriate identifier would be the “people of the Spirit” since their primary text was the spoken rather than the written “word.”<sup>1</sup> In the church, prophets spoke and were heard. Faith came from

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<sup>1</sup>John Walton and Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), Kindle Version, Location 2544. Similarly, in Old Testament usage,

“hearing the Word” (Rom 10:17), but this Word was not only about Christ, but was Christ.<sup>2</sup> Thus the “Word” was recognized as having divine authority, irrespective of whether it was later enshrined in Scripture. This approach did not displace the value or presence of texts in the church, but rather located their status as derivative.<sup>3</sup> Divine authority lay first and foremost with the spoken word.

At the beginning of the second century, a shift occurred whereby literacy began to be favored over orality, and the written word gained authority and credibility over the spoken word. This process of textualization shifted the authority from the people who transmitted the tradition to the words that recorded the tradition.<sup>4</sup> Sacred texts became sites of fact and authority as well as the lens through which life was seen.<sup>5</sup> The result of this process was a growing tension between contemporary prophecies and the canon of Scripture, since “part and parcel of canonical thinking is the restriction of normative revelation to a past period.”<sup>6</sup> In Smith’s words, “A ‘levelling’ takes place whereby the writings themselves become ‘an ersatz presence of God himself’; it is not only that God can be heard in the Scriptures, but that the writings themselves become divine.”<sup>7</sup>

Smith shows how the adoption of a textual approach that locates authority in the written word mitigates against the practise of ongoing revelation. The result is a dilution or even rejection of contemporary revelatory experiences. He argues that this process was evident in the second-century church, and is now being repeated in the adoption of the Evangelical tradition by Pentecostals.<sup>8</sup> As noted by Smith and others,

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Colin Brown, ed., *New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3 (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 1087.

<sup>2</sup>James K. A. Smith, “The Closing of the Book: Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and the Sacred Writings,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11 [1997]: 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 56.

<sup>4</sup>Walton & Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture*, Location 1413.

<sup>5</sup>See also John Goldingay, *Models for Scripture* (Toronto: Clements, 2004), 112.

<sup>6</sup>Smith, “The Closing of the Book,” 64.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 66.

<sup>8</sup>The work of biblical scholar W. M. Schniedewind has highlighted a similar dynamic in the textualization process of Old Testament communities. Schniedewind’s careful analysis reveals a shift in meaning for the “word of God” before and after the exile. Pre-exilic biblical literature indicates the “word of God” to be the living and active word that comes directly from God to the prophet. After the exile, the “word of God” comes to mean the received traditions of Scripture that involved interpretation by inspired teachers and interpreters. This transition saw a replacement of the prophetic office with teachers and scribes and a shift in authority from oral word to the written word (Jer 8:7-9), a move that ultimately favored the literate cultural elites and betrayed the egalitarian nature of the oral tradition. As with Smith, Schniedewind highlights the competing claims of orality and textuality: “Writing locates authority in a text and its reader instead of in a tradition and its community. Writing does not require the living voice,” Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 114.

Evangelicalism is a textual community that “organizes its experience against the horizon of the text.”<sup>9</sup> Authority is seen to lie in the text rather than in the person, and in the written word rather than in the spoken. Thus, revelatory experience always falls *under* the authority of the Scriptures. Smith warns that this threatens the practise of ongoing revelation in Pentecostal communities, and culminates in a distorted doctrine of Scripture that leads to “bibliolatry”, which is defined as a love of the Scriptures more than God.<sup>10</sup>

The tension between textuality and orality described by Smith was evident in my 2016 study among Australian Pentecostals. In a number of cases, conflict existed between the written word of God in Scripture and the spoken word of God in respondents’ lives. “Spirit” and “Scripture” became pitted against each other in a competitive dynamic. When the inspired experiences of Scripture were understood to be more reliable than the potential for contemporary experience, this made the latter unnecessary and redundant. This was also evidenced in the history of one church, where there was a shift in emphasis from the “prophetic word” to the “written word” when new leadership came in. This shift appeared to bear itself out in the disparity between the experiences of the older and younger generations. A significant proportion of the younger people struggled to embrace revelatory encounters, while the older generation reported them with ease. It would seem that as people became “Scripture-oriented,” they became less “Spirit-oriented.”

The conflict was further highlighted in the different meanings subscribed to “the Word of God.” As noted, the primary understanding for the “Word of God” in first-century vernacular was the spoken word, and more specifically the person and message of Jesus, later continued by the Spirit. However, in two of the three churches studied, the primary meaning for the “Word of God” was the written Scriptures, and to a lesser degree, preaching from the Scriptures. These descriptors reflect the Evangelical placement of authority within the text, and the corresponding idea that the entire Bible should be taken as “the Word of God.”<sup>11</sup>

While the designation of Scripture as the “Word of God” may be somewhat helpful in protecting its priority, the descriptor becomes problematic when applied to the practise of revelatory experience. The use of the same phrase for both individual experience and the entirety of Scripture confuses the particular nature of each object with its varying

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<sup>9</sup>Smith, “The Closing of the Book,” 58.

<sup>10</sup>The tendency towards “bibliolatry” among Pentecostals has also been observed by Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, 246.

<sup>11</sup>For example, Evangelical philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff advocates for this view in *Divine Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

mix of human and divine influence.<sup>12</sup> While Scripture makes the claim to divine inspiration as a whole (2 Tim. 3:16), this clearly does not apply to every word and experience within Scripture. For example, biblical scholar John Goldingay suggests that designating “Word of the Lord” for passages such as the agonising of Job, or the questioning of Ecclesiastes, represents a category mistake. This mistake becomes heightened in the context of contemporary experience. Contemporary Pentecostals do not label their agonising ponderings or doubt-filled prayers as “the Word of the Lord.” When Pentecostals adopted the experiences of the early church without their accompanying language, the result was confusion around the source of authority.

The scenario whereby the “ersatz presence” of God was believed to rest in the text was also observed in my study. In a somewhat magical approach to Scripture, “words from God” were found through a haphazard encounter with texts that carried no meaningful connection to the original setting. For example, the words “Go to the other side (of the lake)” spoken by Jesus to the disciples (Mk 4:35) were taken to mean “go to another workplace.” While the Spirit could be seen to retain the prerogative to select any vehicle of communication, the concern lay in the fact that the experience was unequivocally accepted without a process of discernment simply because it was found “in Scripture.”

This problem, characteristic of Pentecostals, has also been observed by the biblical scholar Craig Keener. He laments the “unrestrained practises” of those who are prone to ignoring the variety of genres in the text and treat the Bible as a “game of biblical Russian roulette: randomly seizing on verses isolated from context in a way that we would never do with other texts.”<sup>13</sup> In particular, Keener argues that experiential appropriations of Scripture require their own criteria, and must not be disconnected from observing the “designed sense” of Scripture.<sup>14</sup> It may well be the issue of textualization that is the cause of this problem. Pentecostals have mixed the oral and textual approach together, such that as authority moves to the words of the page, encounters with the text become “magical” and are thus accepted without discrimination. The danger lies in the assumption of authority because it is “in Scripture”, even when it departs markedly from the original intent of the text. Adopting an Evangelical approach to Pentecostal revelatory experiences is not only counterproductive to the prevalence of the experience, but also to its safe practise.

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<sup>12</sup>John Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*. Toronto: Clements, 2004: 10.

<sup>13</sup>Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 269.

<sup>14</sup>Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 19, 99.

To address the problem of textualization, Smith proposes a different understanding of Scripture than the one provided by the Evangelical tradition. According to Smith, the dynamic of revelatory experience can still operate successfully in a textual environment, but only when the text functions in a different genre. He proposes that the Scriptures should not be seen to act as “locations of the divine presence” but rather as “testimonies to the power of God present in the church.”<sup>15</sup> Thus the authority of the text is derived rather than inherent. Authority is not embedded in the text, but lies with the one “to whom the text points.”<sup>16</sup> This resembles the theology of Barth, who advocated for the idea of Scripture as a witness to Christ,<sup>17</sup> (rightly) making an ontological distinction between Scripture and the person of the Word of God.<sup>18</sup> This approach retains the priority of Scripture as the guiding norm, while still allowing for ongoing revelatory experiences that have the potential to be authoritative. It also properly locates authority with the one to whom Scripture points, avoiding the problem of bibliolatry.

This approach allows contemporary testimonies of hearing God speak to play the same role today as they do in the Scriptures. In the same way as testimonies within Scripture point to the power and reality of God, contemporary testimonies continue to affirm the presence of God in the church today.

### A Distinctive Pentecostal Epistemology

The locating of authority in the person of the Spirit over the written text has further epistemological and theological consequences. Smith highlights the type of knowledge that arises from spiritual experience in his later work, *Thinking in Tongues*.<sup>19</sup> While Evangelicals have criticized the Pentecostal emphasis on experience, Smith outlines its value for spiritual formation.

Smith shows that Pentecostal experience leads to a form of “narrative knowledge” that enables Pentecostals to “know what they know.”<sup>20</sup> Pentecostals use testimony and narrative to make sense of their experience by writing their “micro-story” into God’s “macro-story” of redemption. This approach situates truth in the context of story and in relation to a particular “mode of knowing.” This narrative knowledge is

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<sup>15</sup>Smith, “The Closing of the Book,” 67.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>17</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956) I/1, 88-124.

<sup>18</sup>Sang-Whan Lee, “Pentecostal Prophecy,” *The Spirit and Church* 3.1 (2001):165.

<sup>19</sup>James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 50-72.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 50.

“distinct from run-of-the-mill knowledge,” which is usually understood (philosophically) as “justified true belief” where “belief” is understood as assent to propositions or at least characterized by a propositional attitude.<sup>21</sup> Pentecostal faith and practise does not yield merely a “thinking thing” but rather an embodied heart that “understands” the world in ways that are irreducible to the categories and propositions of cognitive reason.<sup>22</sup> This does not devalue the place of propositional or “codeable” knowledge, but rather situates it.<sup>23</sup>

The type of narrative knowledge that arises from experience may be contrasted with the knowledge that arises from an Evangelical scholastic approach. Pentecostal theologian Daniel Castelo outlines the distinction in detail, showing how Pentecostal epistemology is incompatible with an Evangelical epistemology that separates theology and spirituality and draws from a framework of biblical inerrancy.<sup>24</sup> Like Smith, Castelo shows how the Evangelical approach places emphasis on cerebral knowledge, abstraction and theorizing in a way that leaves little room for “mystical sensibility.”<sup>25</sup> The means to divine knowledge for the Evangelical then comes primarily via the study of Scripture and, in particular, a historical-grammatical approach.<sup>26</sup>

The testimonies in my study among Australian Pentecostals strongly affirmed Smith’s observations about the epistemology of Pentecostals. The data revealed that revelatory experiences resulted in a type of experiential knowledge that was “embedded in life” and led to holistic transformation. In the study, narrative knowledge typically preceded propositional knowledge. Reflection on theological themes took place as a result of the experience rather than prior to it. Creeds, propositions and statements became secondary reflections upon the primary stories. For respondents, the primary function of revelatory experiences was their capacity to build “personal relationship” with God. These epistemological processes can be further understood through the work of Pentecostal scholars Jackie Johns and Cheryl Bridges-Johns.<sup>27</sup> They contrast the Hebrew understanding of knowledge that comes via experience (*yada*) to the Greek concept (*γινωσκειν*), which involves a

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>24</sup>Daniel Castelo, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 83-126.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>26</sup>Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, Location 3049. Hence, as Matthew Engelke observes, only a literate Christian can “fully enter faith,” *A Problem of Presence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 53.

<sup>27</sup>Jackie David Johns and Cheryl Bridges-Johns, “Yielding to the Spirit: A Pentecostal Approach to Group Bible Study,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992): 109-34.

“standing back from something” in order objectively to know it.<sup>28</sup> Unlike the Greek concept, *yada* has relationship at its core and arises from obedience (1 Jn 2:3). Knowledge is contextual rather than abstract and is measured “not by information, but by how one was living in response to God.”<sup>29</sup> This understanding of *yada* effectively shifts the epistemological emphasis from cerebral knowledge of a book to relational knowledge of a person. Indeed, several respondents contrasted learning from their experience with the Spirit versus learning from the Bible, with the key distinction being the personalized nature of the message: “I mean you have the Scriptures, and they’re awesome, but for me, if I didn’t have it [hearing God’s voice], I’d be very lost. It makes it personal; it brings you face to face with those encounters; it changes you.”

In addition, revelatory experiences were seen to be central to the participants’ spiritual growth. Rather than acting as a lightweight spiritual “add-on,” revelatory encounters represented pivotal moments that triggered significant learning. Here, the Holy Spirit was seen to actively take the role of teacher in directing the learning process and tailoring it to the individual’s particular needs. The individualized nature of learning strengthened its impact. Thus, revelatory experience found its place firmly in the center rather than at the periphery of spiritual formation.

Furthermore, the value and potency of this epistemological process was linked to the authority Pentecostals ascribed to their revelatory experiences. The transformational outcomes of experiences in the study were only effective when accompanied by appropriate responses to them. Participants were keenly aware that their experience carried divine authority and demanded acquiescence to them to be of any value. For the Pentecostal, when God speaks, obedience is required; God’s people recognize his voice and they follow (John 10:27). Learning was therefore dependent upon active participation in the process. It was only then that transformation occurred.

Bridges-Johns and Johns highlight the role of obedience in the development of *yada*. The understanding of *yada* is brought into dialogue with “praxis” defined as “reflection-action” that links knowing to doing.<sup>30</sup> Johns and Bridges-Johns show that praxis epistemology is useful for understanding the learning processes encapsulated by the notion of *yada*, but with one essential difference. Without the input of a higher authority, praxis is an insufficient means of knowing God and

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 119.

achieving human transformation.<sup>31</sup> It is because respondents in the study saw their experiences as divinely authoritative that they were motivated to act. Without this authority, “knowing” the truth may not translate into *yada*.

The attribution of divine authority for revelatory experiences is therefore the key to the development of narrative knowledge and its transformative power. This is in contrast to the Evangelical approach advocated by Grudem, who argues for contemporary prophetic experience to have minimal authority over the recipient, as with other forms of church activity like leadership, counselling and teaching.<sup>32</sup> The textual approach of the Evangelical conflicts with the oral approach of the Pentecostal by its placement of authority.

The Pentecostal emphasis on experiences in the Spirit contributes to a unique theological epistemology, a pattern which Pentecostals see as originating from the Scriptures themselves.<sup>33</sup> The Pentecostal approach positions revelatory experiences at the center of spiritual growth and faith. Participants identified the revelatory experience as the trigger that brought transformation and personal knowledge of God. Because the experience was personal, and embodied in their own life, it tended to foster knowledge of a *person* ahead of knowledge of a *book*. This reorients the mode of learning from the Evangelical emphasis on Bible study, and points to the priority and legitimacy of the revelatory experience. Spiritual formation is related to obedience and action rather than mere belief. The result is narrative knowledge or *yada* that does not reject the value of propositional knowledge, but rather gives it secondary status. As Smith states, this is not “antirational, but antirationalist; it is not a critique or rejection of reason, but rather a commentary on a particularly reductionist model of reason and rationality, a limited and stunted version of what counts as ‘knowledge.’”<sup>34</sup>

### **An Alternative Framework: The Catholic Approach to Revelatory Experience**

The Evangelical approach to Pentecostal revelatory experiences has been found to be problematic at the foundational level. Adoption of an Evangelical approach acts to mitigate against the experience, thwart appropriate discernment practises and undermine the value of narrative knowledge that arises from revelatory experience. In order to maintain

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 122.

<sup>32</sup> Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, Location 660-663.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Cartledge, *Practical Theology: Charismatic and Empirical Perspectives* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 25.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 53.

the practise of revelatory experience in Pentecostal churches, a theological approach that reflects the experientially continuous worldview of the Pentecostals is proposed. This can be found in the Catholic tradition.

The Pentecostal emphasis on supernatural experience has led Castelo and others to argue that Pentecostalism finds its place most comfortably in the Catholic mystical tradition. For Castelo, the Pentecostal stress on “encountering God” finds convergence with the Catholic mystical stress on movement towards “union” with God: “What primarily makes Pentecostalism a mystical tradition of the Church catholic is its persistent, passionate, and widespread emphasis on encounter.”<sup>35</sup> This form of mysticism is definitively Christian in that experience is seen to be revelatory rather than investigative. Through Pentecostal experience, the God of mystery self-reveals.<sup>36</sup> As for Catholic mystics, this knowledge of God is both relational and intellectual and has transformation as its ultimate goal.<sup>37</sup>

Castelo’s perspective has found agreement with several scholars who have linked Pentecostalism to the mystical tradition, or implied it in their work.<sup>38</sup> For example, theologian Simon Chan has sought to establish links between Pentecostalism and Catholic mysticism in the area of prayer practises and spirituality.<sup>39</sup> Coulter has identified parallels with the hermeneutical approaches of Pentecostals and medieval mystical thinkers.<sup>40</sup> Sociologist Poloma labels Pentecostals as “Main Street Mystics.”<sup>41</sup> In his review of Castelo’s work, theologian Sammy Alfaro suggests that Castelo affirms the theological hunches of several in the Pentecostal academy about the mystical component of Pentecostalism.<sup>42</sup>

Recent ecumenical dialogues between Catholic and Pentecostal theologians focussing on the shared experiences of the Spirit have further revealed the synergy between the two traditions.<sup>43</sup> Five years of

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<sup>35</sup>Castelo, *Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition*, 80.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 44, 55-57, 80-82.

<sup>38</sup>Castelo (*ibid.*, 39) identifies Harvey Cox, Daniel Albrecht, James Smith, Margaret Poloma and Simon Chan.

<sup>39</sup>Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2000).

<sup>40</sup>Dale Coulter, “What Meaneth This? Pentecostals and Theological Inquiry,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10, no. 1 [2001]: 38–64.

<sup>41</sup>Margaret Poloma, *Main Street Mystics: The Toronto Blessing and Reviving Pentecostalism* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003).

<sup>42</sup>Kyle Smith, Leah Payne and Sammy Alfaro, “Author Meets Critics: Responding to Daniel Castelo’s Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition,” *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 40 [2018]: 547.

<sup>43</sup>Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, “‘Do Not Quench the Spirit’:

reflection and scholarly discussion on the experiential and theological dimensions of charisms revealed a significant overlap in understandings. Catholic and Pentecostals shared common perspectives on the nature, function and importance of prophecy, discernment criteria and the need for ecclesial and pastoral oversight in the discernment process. Robeck describes the practise of prophetic gifts among Classical Pentecostals and Catholic Charismatics as a place where “bridges may be built.”<sup>44</sup>

With a shared emphasis on spiritual experience, the Catholic approach to revelatory experiences acts as an appropriate dialogue partner for Pentecostals seeking to reflect on their experience. As an example, Niels Hvidt’s multi-disciplinary study *Christian Prophecy* reflects an experientially continuous approach that is consistent with the Pentecostal paradigm. Hvidt is clear that there is no justification for a different treatment of contemporary and biblical experience from a phenomenological point of view, and that Old Testament prophecy and Christian prophecy share many common traits.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, he argues for a dismissal of the idea of any “end” to revelation.<sup>46</sup> Revelation neither ends with Christ, the apostles or with the canon. Further, Hvidt gives attention to the individual revelatory experience as well as to prophecy, and unlike Grudem, who eschews the value of reflecting on actual experience,<sup>47</sup> Hvidt reflects on insights from the actual experience of prophetic figures in history.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

Pentecostal tradition testifies to the power of revelatory encounters to enhance spirituality and to build the church (1 Cor 14:3). In order to maintain such practises, it is essential that Pentecostals reflect adequately on their experience from their own experiential worldview. Attempting to fit a Pentecostal theology into a Protestant Evangelical framework has proven inadequate and ultimately leads to dilution, if not rejection, of the

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Charisms in the Life and Mission of the Church: Report of the Sixth Phase of the International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (2011-2015),” <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/2015-non-spegnete-lo-spirito/testo-del-documento-in-inglese.html> (accessed December 9, 2019), 2016.

<sup>44</sup>Robeck, Cecil M. Jr., “A Pentecostal Perspective on Prophetic Gifts” (The International Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue, Round 6, Sierra Madre, CA, 2014), 30.

<sup>45</sup>Niels C. Hvidt, *Christian Prophecy: The Post-Biblical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6-7.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 209-216.

<sup>47</sup>Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, Location 130.

<sup>48</sup>For example, the experiences of Hildegard of Bingen, Birgitta of Sweden and Teresa of Avila.

experience. Multiple scholars have noted this tendency towards the so-called “evangelicalization” of Pentecostalism.<sup>49</sup>

Without a well-developed theology, Pentecostals are in danger of losing the distinctive of the revelatory phenomenon, as either the experience or the theology collapses under the contradiction. Smith describes it well: “The gradual evangelicalization of Pentecostalism is an attempt to adopt a framework that at the same time destroys the foundation. A Pentecostal evangelical theology is a house divided against itself.”<sup>50</sup> The Catholic tradition offers an appropriate solution to the theological problem as well as providing historical legitimacy and consistent links to the early church itself.

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<sup>49</sup>Matthew S. Clark, “An Investigation into the Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1997), 59; Garry B. McGee, “‘More than Evangelical’: The Challenge of Evolving Identity in the Assemblies of God”, in D. A. Roozen and J. R. Nieman, eds, *Church, Identity and Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, 40-41; Robeck in Scott A. Ellington, “Pentecostalism and the Authority of Scripture,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 9 [1996]: 19; Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Towards a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission*, ed. Amos Yong (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), 7; Paul W. Lewis, “Towards a Pentecostal Epistemology: The Role of Experience in Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” *The Spirit and Church* 2, no. 1 (May 2000): 95–125; Angelo U. Cettolin, *Spirit, Freedom and Power* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 45.

<sup>50</sup>Smith, “The Closing of the Book,” 59.

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**Mother Mary:  
A Historical Look at Pentecostal Views of Mary**

by Lisa P. Stephenson

**Introduction**

In 1981, during the ninth ecumenical dialogue session between Roman Catholics and Pentecostals, the topic of Mary was designated as the focus of discussion. The reports from the meeting deem the session both helpful and successful in working through differences, though the subject was described as “volatile” and the conversation as “difficult.” There were some agreements between the two parties, but much of the time together was filled by the Pentecostal representatives raising objections and the Roman Catholic representatives responding.<sup>1</sup>

The following year, Jerry Sandidge, who offered the paper for the Pentecostal side during the dialogue, published a revised form of his paper reflecting on the points of agreement and disagreement between Roman Catholics and Pentecostals on the topic.<sup>2</sup> In his article, Sandidge highlights four characteristics of Mary that he believes can serve as a consensus between the two traditions, and thus as a potential way forward for ecumenical relations. This article, therefore, will seek to demonstrate Sandidge’s claims more extensively, offering varied historical data from Pentecostal periodicals that elaborate further on his themes and suggest additional forays for ecumenical dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jerry L. Sandidge, *Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982): A Study in Developing Ecumenism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 237, 249.

<sup>2</sup>Jerry L. Sandidge, “A Pentecostal Response to Roman Catholic Teaching on Mary,” *Pneuma* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 33-42.

<sup>3</sup>For research on this topic, I utilized the digital collections of the Consortium of Pentecostal Archives ([www.pentecostalarchives.org](http://www.pentecostalarchives.org)). The periodicals date from the beginning of the twentieth century until the end, and are primarily representative of Pentecostal denominations and voices within North America. Because of the constraints of the search engine, I used the search terms “Mother Mary” and “Virgin Mary” to find pertinent articles. In no way does this research exhaust the data, but it does provide a window into Pentecostals’ views on the subject.

Corroborating the Marian characteristics that Sandidge proposes with historical documentation is a necessary step if these points of agreement can serve to further ecumenical dialogue and understanding.

I will begin by addressing the reasons why Pentecostals have been reticent to embrace Catholic Mariology. In raising these objections I do not seek to give credibility to Pentecostals' understandings (or misunderstandings) of Catholic doctrine and practice, but to highlight what Pentecostals have identified to be the troublesome assertions. Though anti-Mary rhetoric surfaces, this assessment does not represent a wholistic Pentecostal perspective on Mary. It must be taken in context and balanced with more positive depictions of her among Pentecostals, which I will then turn to and explicate further. I will use Sandidge's proposed points of agreement to structure this Marian mosaic and ground his theological claims in historical sources. What emerges from the data is that, while some Pentecostals have been hesitant to embrace Catholic Mariology, their positive valuation of Mary has not been completely muted.

### **Anti-Mary Rhetoric: Pentecostal Rejection of Catholic Mariology**

It is no secret that Pentecostals disparage Catholic Mariology. Within the literature, there are several facets of Mariology that Pentecostals find troubling and mention repeatedly in various articles. The apprehensions voiced coalesce around two primary themes that are interconnected: idolatry and Christology. With respect to the first concern, multiple authors describe Catholics' treatment of Mary as "worship" and Mary herself as an "idol."<sup>4</sup> One author claims that the Roman Catholic church "deifies" Mary.<sup>5</sup> Another describes a woman who was reciting some kind of Marian prayer as a "cry out to Baal."<sup>6</sup> Still others describe Catholics as "heathen" who are in "darkness" and operating in "blindness" because of their beliefs and practices with respect to Mary.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the harshest allegation equates Catholicism with Babylon, an eschatological view that interprets the "Mystery

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<sup>4</sup>"Tidings from Those Who Dwell Among the Heathen," *The Latter Rain Evangel*, July 1915, 22; Mrs. Thomas Anderson, "The Appalling Idolatry in South America," *The Latter Rain Evangel*, May 1926, 22-23; Ralph Williams, "Transforming Power of the Gospel in Central America," *The Latter Rain Evangel*, June 1935, 6; N. J. Poysti, "What is Bolshevism?," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, Mar. 28, 1936, 8-9.

<sup>5</sup>Charles Wm. Walkem, "Gems from the Greek," *The Foursquare Magazine*, Oct. 1946, 14.

<sup>6</sup>Mrs. L. S. Lambert, "Home Mission Needs," *The Church of God Evangel*, Jan. 19, 1946, 3.

<sup>7</sup>Alice E. Luce, "Portions for Whom Nothing is Prepared," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, Dec. 9, 1922, 6; Phebe Diorio, "Missionary News: Mexico," *The Bridegroom's Messenger*, Feb. 1963, 5.

Babylon” of Revelation 17 to be the Church of Rome and Mary as the woman riding the beast, the Queen of Heaven (Jer 44). As the scarlet woman of Revelation 17, Mary is thus the mother of all “isms” and cults. She is the “system that is blighting every nation wherever she has gone; that has held the nation in darkness and superstition and illiteracy. . . .”<sup>8</sup> One author goes as far as to blame the Mariology in Russia for the rise of Bolshevism there.<sup>9</sup>

The concern over idolatry gets even more focused for some Pentecostals in terms of Mary’s relationship to Christ. This comes to the fore in comments about the day of Christmas being overshadowed by the Virgin of Guadalupe’s feast day at the beginning of December, or that processions for Mary during Holy Week claim most of the people’s attention.<sup>10</sup> It was thought by some that Catholics loved the Virgin Mary more than they did Christ.<sup>11</sup> Other Pentecostals expressed specific concern that the doctrines of Mary’s assumption and immaculate conception put her on a level equal with Christ.<sup>12</sup> The issue of intercessory mediation was especially troubling to many Pentecostals because granting Mary this function seemed to replace Christ as the mediator.<sup>13</sup> Commenting on this, one author says:

They have dethroned Jesus and even God Himself and in place of them have set up the Virgin Mary. It is not just Jesus who saves you, it is the Virgin Mary. If you are sick they point you to the Virgin Mary. To them, Jesus is only the child of the Virgin Mary. You hear scarcely anything of Jesus as a man.

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<sup>8</sup>J. C. Kellogg, “Modern Women in Prophecy,” *Foursquare Crusader*, June 1, 1932, 3; Frank M. Boyd, “Current Events and Topics of Interest,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, July 26, 1924, 7. Seven years later some of the content from Boyd’s piece concerning Babylon and Catholicism appeared again in Stanley Frodsham’s “The Editor’s Notebook,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, June 20, 1931, 5.

<sup>9</sup>Poysti, “What is Bolshevism?,” 8-9. Though Poysti refers to the “Greek Catholic Church” with this charge, in all probability he was describing the Orthodox Church rather than the Roman Catholic.

<sup>10</sup>Diorio, “Missionary News: Mexico,” 2; “The Burlesque of Religion Witnessed in Guatemala,” *The Bridegroom’s Messenger*, July 1, 1908, 2; B. A. Schoeneich, “A Land Ruled by Priestcraft and Superstition,” *The Latter Rain Evangel*, Sept. 1912, 15.

<sup>11</sup>Minnie Varner, “The Great Mission Field at our Doors,” *The Latter Rain Evangel*, Oct. 1922, 2-3.

<sup>12</sup>“The Pulse of a Dying World,” *The Latter Rain Evangel*, Feb. 1930, 17; “Passing and Permanent: Newsbriefs from the Christian Perspective,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, Dec. 20, 1953, 7.

<sup>13</sup>Mrs. L. M. Piper, “And the Lord Looked Upon Peter: Why Christians Deny their Lord,” *The Latter Rain Evangel*, Apr. 1919, 6-7; Luce, “Portions for Whom Nothing is Prepared,” 6; Cyril Bird, “Little Is Much When God Is In It,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, Mar. 3, 1923, 6-7; Varner, “The Great Mission Field at our Doors,” 2-3; E. C. Clark, “Religion and the World,” *The Church of God Evangel*, Sept. 4, 1943, 4.

His death means to them nothing at all. They are really Mary worshipers.<sup>14</sup>

While at first glance the attitude exhibited by Pentecostals may seem to be completely closed off to Mary, one should situate these views within their given contexts. That is, many of the negative views expressed appear in missionary reports from the field (primarily Mexico and South America), and one can only assume that there is already a pejorative predisposition, given the proselytizing framework. This is all the more true if, as several Pentecostals claimed, the Catholic priests were employing their parishioners' devotion to Mary as a weapon against the Pentecostal missionaries. For example, one author claims that a Catholic priest in Columbia erected a monument to the virgin Mary on a prominent peak in the Andes to work the townspeople into a frenzy of devotion to Mary and, consequently, hatred of the missionaries because of their lack of faithfulness to the virgin.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, despite the context, the anti-Mary rhetoric among early Pentecostals might seem to diminish hopes for ecumenical progress. Is there really common ground between the two traditions on this topic? To this question we now turn.

### **Pro-Mary Claims: Pentecostal Embrace of the Person of Mary**

Whereas it is clear that some Pentecostals have been hesitant to embrace Catholic Mariology, the sources also reveal that some Pentecostals affirm the person of Mary. Positive depictions of Mary among Pentecostals can lay a foundation for further ecumenical dialogue and understanding between Catholics and Pentecostals. The historical sources help to expand and nuance Sandidge's four claims. Moreover, when it comes to favorable portrayals of Mary, Pentecostals actually adopt a Marian approach similar to Catholics! That is, while references to Mary are found in all four Gospels, the way in which she is portrayed in each work differs depending on the theological perspective of the author, and the distinctions are significant.<sup>16</sup> It has even been suggested that these textual variations can account, at least in part, for the multiplicity of approaches to Mary among the many ecclesial traditions. Elizabeth Johnson says,

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<sup>14</sup>Schoeneich, "A Land Ruled by Priestcraft and Superstition," 15.

<sup>15</sup>Dan T. Muse, ed., "Foreign Missions," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, Apr. 15, 1943, 6.

<sup>16</sup>The following are references to Mary in the Gospels: Matt 1:16, 18-25, 2:1-23; Mark 3:20-21, 31-35; Luke 1:26-56, 2:1-52; John 2:1-11, 19:25-27.

Protestants traditionally follow Mark's rather negative assessment of Jesus' mother; Catholics take from Luke a positive, personalistic view of her as full of grace and favor from God, a woman who cooperated with the divine adventure of bringing the Redeemer into human flesh; while Orthodox approach Mary in the iconic, symbolic manner of John.<sup>17</sup>

Pentecostals, rather than following the Protestant approach to Mary (via Mark), predominantly turn to the Lukan narrative when referencing Mary. This point of departure should come as no surprise given Pentecostals' penchant for Luke-Acts, and it results in a more favorable reading of Mary that parallels the Catholic approach.

### Mary as Virgin

For Sandidge's first point of agreement, he maintains that both Catholics and Pentecostals can agree on Mary being a virgin, at least with respect to the virgin birth of Jesus (which is not to be confused with the Catholic belief of Mary's perpetual virginity). From the Pentecostal perspective this is certainly true, and this facet of Mary is mentioned countless times throughout the periodicals. In fact, the description of Mary as "virgin Mary" appears so frequently that one is left with the impression that "virgin" is a part of her name!

However, beyond serving as a reference to Mary's sexual chastity when Christ was born, Mary's virginity was also deployed for other theological means. It became a defense for Pentecostals in the battle for conservative Christianity and had more to do at times with creating a spiritual litmus test among Christians with regard to views of Scripture, the supernatural, and Jesus, than it did with constructing a view about Mary per se. This is illustrated clearly in a 1962 article entitled "The Virgin Birth: Fact or Fallacy?" The piece begins by saying, "Perhaps no other doctrine in the Bible has caused more intellectual and spiritual difficulty than that of the Virgin Birth of our Lord. Certainly no other doctrine has made it possible to detect more readily whether a man is a theological 'conservative' or a 'liberal.'"<sup>18</sup> But the significance of this spiritual gauge does not stop here. The author continues:

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<sup>17</sup>Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 3; Georg Kretschmar and René Laurentin, "The Cult of the Saints," in *Confessing One Faith: A Joint Commentary on the Augsburg Confession by Lutheran and Catholic Theologians*, ed. George W. Forell and James F. McCue (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 278-80.

<sup>18</sup>Raymond Becker, "The Virgin Birth: Fact or Fallacy?" *The Foursquare Magazine*, Dec. 1962, 3.

Even the rankest infidel must confess that the Bible represents Jesus Christ as having been conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. It appears to us that if one denies the teaching on this subject he has rejected the authority of the Book.

The Virgin Birth raises the question of supernaturalism. Practically every person who denies the doctrine rejects the supernatural as such. To say that the Virgin Birth is “symbolic, rather than physical,” is to cast doubt upon the very heart of Christianity, which is its supernaturalness.

The negation of the Virgin Birth is destructive of the whole fabric of the Christian faith. It seriously weakens, if it does not destroy, the doctrine of the Incarnation (God manifest in the flesh) upon which our confidence rests and without which the Christian faith cannot survive.<sup>19</sup>

The central place of the virginity of Mary amidst the culture wars is captured well by another author who said, “Many today are denying the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. If you take that out, you may just as well burn your Bible. It is all or nothing, for on this rests the entire plan of redemption.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus, while Sandidge’s conjecture is true that Catholics and Pentecostals can agree on Mary being a virgin, historically this tenet of faith is more involved for Pentecostals. Recognizing this complexity provides the potential for an even broader basis of consensus between the two traditions. Catholics’ affirmation of Mary’s virginity signifies that there are also likely similarities between Catholics and Pentecostals on issues of scripture, Christology, and the supernatural. In this sense, Mariology can serve as a gateway to further ecumenical consensus on other theological points.

#### Mary as the “Mother of God”

For Sandidge’s second point of agreement, he proposes that both Catholics and Pentecostals can affirm the theological truth of the title “Mother of God”—and its intention to preserve certain christological claims—even if Pentecostals do not subscribe to its literal usage with respect to Mary. The historical sources bear this out and reveal the reason

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Aimee Semple McPherson, “Footsteps of Destiny,” *The Bridal Call Foursquare*, Dec. 1929, 7.

why Pentecostals shy away from the *θεοτοκος* label. It appears that many misunderstood what it meant to refer to Mary as the “Mother of God,” assuming it implied Mary’s connection with Christ’s pre-existence rather than his incarnation. One author says, “Now, Christ’s deity does not come from his mother. *Mary is never called the mother of God.*”<sup>21</sup> A different author maintains that rather than being the “mother of God,” Mary was the “mother of Jesus.” This is the case because Mary only gave birth to Christ’s *humanity*, whereas his *divine sonship* has always existed. Jesus as the Son of God could not have been “born” via Mary, only “given.”<sup>22</sup> Another author claims that “Mary did not produce God. She was merely the vehicle through which the human body of our Lord was to come.”<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, to develop Sandidge’s point of agreement further, the historical sources reveal that Pentecostals not only affirmed the christological truths contained in the title *θεοτοκος*, but also heartily embraced Mary in the role of mother. In fact, outside of Christmas, the second most common mention of Mary is around Mother’s Day. Pentecostals did not hesitate to recognize Mary as the most beloved mother and to situate her in a preeminent place among mothers everywhere.<sup>24</sup> One author says:

Mary was the perfect mother. God was able to see that before He chose her to mother His Son. Jesus remained her little one throughout His lifetime, and her attitude toward Him was always one of affection and care. The protective instinct of motherhood never departed from her, even after the recognition of her son as the all-powerful Anointed One of God. Once when she feared for His safety, she went with His brothers into the streets to search for Him and lead Him to safety. Her heart pined for His nearness and her soul suffered for His welfare. She was a mother in the highest sense of the term.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Charles Wm. Walkem, “Perplexing Problems,” *The Foursquare Magazine*, June 1949, 15.

<sup>22</sup>Kellogg, “Modern Women in Prophecy,” 8.

<sup>23</sup>E. S. Williams, “The Birth of the King,” *The Pentecostal Evangel*, Dec. 14, 1952, 10.

<sup>24</sup>Aimee Semple McPherson, “Mothers of the Bible,” *Foursquare Crusader*, May 7, 1930, 6.

<sup>25</sup>Charles W. Conn, “God’s Favorite Woman,” *The Church of God Evangel*, Dec. 13, 1947, 11.

Because of Mary's good example, Pentecostals believed that motherhood everywhere was honored and lifted up.<sup>26</sup> The significance of this for ecumenical dialogue is that, beyond Sandidge's point that there is consensus around the theological implications of the *title* "Mother of God," there is shared respect and admiration between Catholics and Pentecostals for Mary's *role* as a mother. Perhaps this shift in conversation between the two traditions would provide a more fruitful ground for dialogue, and offer other similarities to build upon that may lead Pentecostals to a more favorable attitude towards the designation *τηροτοκος*.

### Mary's Holiness

For Sandidge's third point of agreement, he posits that both Catholics and Pentecostals can value and appreciate the holiness of Mary. Once again, the historical sources bear this out, deriving Mary's purity from various details of her narrative. Some Pentecostals associate Mary's holiness with her appointment to be Jesus' mother, offering it as a reason that God chose her. For example, one author says, "Her life was as spotless as the lilies that blossom in the woodland. Her heart was as pure as the dewdrop which sparkles in the morning sun. She was to be highly favored above all the daughters of men."<sup>27</sup> Another author suggests that it was the purity of Mary's heart and mind that garnered God's favor, referring to her as a "saint of God."<sup>28</sup> One author even goes so far as to connect Mary's holiness to her genealogy and notes that both the royal and priestly lines met in Mary, combining the dignity of the former with the sanctity of the latter.<sup>29</sup>

Other Pentecostals connect Mary's devoutness with her positive response to Gabriel's announcement to her, attributing her obedience to her holiness. For example, "[Mary] must have been very pure and holy in mind and heart, great in faith and love, for she believed the angel when he told of the wonderful thing which would happen to her and she was willing to bear the reproach which the unbelieving and evil would make of it. She is a pattern for all women in chastity and obedience."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>"Godly Mothers in the Church of God," *White Wing Messenger*, Apr. 26, 1947, 1; Frank J. Lindquist, "Christmas is for Everyone," *The Pentecostal Evangel*, Dec. 20, 1953, 3.

<sup>27</sup>Bert Edward Williams, "The Birth of Christ was on This Wise: When God Bestowed Honor on the Poor," *The Latter Rain Evangel*, Dec. 1932, 3.

<sup>28</sup>Conn, "God's Favorite Woman," 3.

<sup>29</sup>Rolf K. McPherson, "Think on These Things: The Virgin Mary's Place in History," *The Foursquare Magazine*, Dec. 1947, 12.

<sup>30</sup>Will Shead, "Marriage by the Word of God," *The Church of God Evangel*, Nov. 28, 1942, 8.

Still other Pentecostals noted Mary's holiness in reference to the *Magnificat*. One author commented that Mary's purity is demonstrated in this hymn because "none but the purest hearts could give such genuine adoration and worship."<sup>31</sup> Another remarked that, particularly in Mary's song, there is a "note of holy joy" so high that it could only have been sung by someone whose spirit was free from guile. Moreover, this same author notes that the words that comprise the *Magnificat* are Scripture and thus demonstrate that Mary had an "unusual acquaintance with scripture" that served to produce wholesome effects in her life and helped to preserve her from evil so that she could be consecrated to God.<sup>32</sup>

Further, among Pentecostals, we also see Mary's holiness mentioned in conjunction with the Day of Pentecost. In these instances it is noted that even though Mary was "sanctified," she still needed the baptism of the Spirit.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, Pentecostals do not struggle to recognize in Mary's life a godliness that is both persistent and exemplary. Sandidge is correct in noting that Pentecostals can identify with this truth and the historical sources reveal that they do so in multifaceted ways. To continue to open further forays into this characteristic of Mary that can serve ecumenical relations, it would be worthwhile to explore further the interconnection between the perpetual work of the Spirit in Mary's life and the notion of sanctification.

### Mary as an Example of Christian Faith and Trust

For Sandidge's fourth point of agreement, he claims that both Catholics and Pentecostals can subscribe to Mary as a model and example of Christian faith and trust. Out of all the points of agreement, this resonates most strongly with Pentecostals, who look at various moments of her life as recorded in Scripture and tease out affirming qualities.<sup>34</sup> This theme is best exemplified in an article titled "God's Favorite Woman."<sup>35</sup> In this piece, the premise is that Mary was God's

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<sup>31</sup>Conn, "God's Favorite Woman," 11.

<sup>32</sup>Paul F. Beacham, "The Song of Mary," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, Dec. 16, 1948, 3.

<sup>33</sup>Aimee Semple McPherson, "The Holy Spirit," *The Bridal Call*, July 1923, 6-7; idem, "Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Its Place in the Church," *Foursquare Crusader*, Mar. 22, 1939, 8.

<sup>34</sup>For a more extensive treatment of this theme see Lisa P. Stephenson, "Truly Our Sister?: Pentecostal Readings of Mary," in *Receiving Scripture in the Pentecostal Tradition*, ed. Martin Mittelstadt, Daniel Isgrigg, and Rick Waldholm (Cleveland: CPT Press, forthcoming).

<sup>35</sup>Conn, "God's Favorite Woman," 3, 11, 14.

favorite woman because there were various characteristics that Mary embodied to such an extent that she was “a little higher, a little deeper, a little broader in most things than the others around her.”<sup>36</sup> The point of highlighting Mary in this way was that her life should serve as a model for Christians today to emulate.

In order to exemplify the praiseworthy nature of Mary, the author, Charles Conn, highlights several facets of her life that are commendable. First, he notes that one of the most “striking” things about Mary was her “seemingly boundless faith.”<sup>37</sup> Specifically, that Mary could believe such an absurd claim that she would have a son while still being a virgin—even if she could not understand it—attests to her faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, Mary’s piety was exemplified by her ability to “effectually praise God.”<sup>38</sup> Her *Magnificat* points to her spiritual passion and the purity of her heart. In this passage of scripture one finds genuine adoration and worship. Third, Mary used great discretion after leaving Elizabeth’s presence and returning home: there is no record of Mary telling her secret to anyone—including Joseph—or of demanding fanfare, self-claimed virtue, or honor. No, Mary just returned home quietly. Fourth, the biblical narrative notes that Mary was a woman of meditation: she treasured up all the things that had happened after Christ’s birth and pondered them in her heart. Mary “spent much of her time in reverent meditation and musing on God’s righteousness, Person, and Word. Religion to her was not a perfunctory task to be performed regularly, but it was an inner experience that never grew old, that never relaxed its hold on her heart and mind.”<sup>39</sup> Fifth, Mary was a woman of obedience. This is the case not only initially in her faith-filled response to God’s choice of her as the mother of Jesus, but also in her attitude towards Jesus later, reflected in her response to the lack of wine at the marriage in Cana. While telling others to do whatever Jesus commanded them, her advice reflected the posture she herself had taken towards him. Lastly, but most importantly, Mary’s constancy is lifted up. Describing this aspect of Mary’s character, Conn writes,

She held on; she stayed, not only when the warm winds of eager youth were blowing, but through blasting tempests of hopelessness and despair, and finally through the doldrums of loneliness, of weakness, of helplessness. No up-and-down experience was in her heart, no vicissitudes ever occurred in her spiritual life. After the cruel death of her son, most mothers

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

would have quit, or, at least, ceased an active part in religious work. But not constant Mary. On the day of Pentecost she was still with the followers of her son. . . . Regardless of the shock of seeing Jesus crucified, her stout heart kept beating for God.<sup>40</sup>

As this demonstrates, Pentecostals can and do subscribe to Mary as a model and example of Christian faith and trust. Consequently, perhaps the ways in which Mary has informed and formed Catholic spirituality should not be altogether unwelcomed among Pentecostals. Further exploration that seeks similarities on this point between the two traditions should be pursued, recognizing that Mary can play an integral role in Christian discipleship and that this utilization of Mary is not altogether foreign to Pentecostals.

### **Conclusion**

Given the historical data above, Sandidge's optimism regarding the existence of shared convictions between Catholics and Pentecostals concerning Mary is not the result of far-fetched ecumenical hopes. Rather, there is significant ground to warrant focusing in on his four points of agreement in hopes of revealing even more vistas of commonality between the two traditions. The historical sources provide a window into what Pentecostals have thought about Mary and the ways in which she is incorporated into the tradition, even if it is on the margins. Continued dialogue between Catholics and Pentecostals in this area can serve to push Pentecostals to see in Mary a Spirit-filled woman who should be honored within the faith.

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 11, 14.

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## **Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue on Mary: Moving the Conversation Forward**

by Christopher A. Stephenson

### **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.<sup>1</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup>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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Thus, both Catholics

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<sup>2</sup>"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.

<sup>3</sup>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" (*χρηριον*; 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.”<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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

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<sup>4</sup>Council of Orange, canons 5-6; Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, 375-76.

<sup>5</sup>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.”<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.”<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup> 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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<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 21.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 20.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 17.

<sup>9</sup>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.<sup>10</sup> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* echoes this sentiment.<sup>11</sup> 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<sup>12</sup>), 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

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<sup>10</sup>Final Report of the International Roman Catholic Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982),” 62.

<sup>11</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 487.

<sup>12</sup>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,<sup>13</sup> the time may be right for a more pneumatologically-informed Mariology.<sup>14</sup>

### 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.<sup>15</sup> 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

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<sup>13</sup>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).

<sup>14</sup>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).

<sup>15</sup>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.<sup>16</sup> 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

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<sup>16</sup>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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## Eschatology and Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective<sup>1</sup>

by Van Johnson

### Pentecostal and Reformed Views on Time and Space

Upon accepting the invitation to join the Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue in Accra (Ghana) to present a paper on the theme “Mission to the Needs of the World,” I reached first for Newbigin’s classic treatment on the theology of mission, *The Open Secret*.<sup>2</sup> He depicted the current problem facing Christian missions right at the outset. It is spatial in nature. No longer will it do to externalize mission from the center of church life—with Christendom here and missions over there; the church in the right part of town and the mission church in the other. “With the radical secularization of Western culture,” he writes, “the churches are in a missionary situation in what was once Christendom.”<sup>3</sup> Further, the global rejection of the hegemonic position of the West means that the western Church no longer benefits from the advantages of colonialism’s territorial spread. Instead, Newbigin insists, she must resist colonialism and all its trappings. “And in this situation we shall find that the New Testament speaks much more directly than does the nineteenth century as we learn afresh what it means to bear witness to the gospel from a position not of strength but of weakness.”<sup>4</sup>

When the topic is mission, spatial concerns are secondary for Pentecostals. Their starting point and its consequence for mission were captured in the theme song of a short-lived American television series that ran from 1966-67, a science fiction comedy called *It’s About Time*, which featured two astronauts who traveled back to a prehistoric era. It

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is a modified version of the one delivered during the third round of the fifth session of the international dialogue between the World Communion of Reformed Churches and Classical Pentecostals in Accra, Ghana, November 29–December 4, 2018. It still retains some of its nature as an oral presentation in a dialogue format.

<sup>2</sup>Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>3</sup>Newbigin, *Open Secret*, 2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 5.

was a comedy of dislocation: “It’s about time, it’s about space, about strange people in the strangest place.”

For a Pentecostal, it’s about time. Birthed in an atmosphere of acute expectation for the soon return of Christ, North American Pentecostalism was shaped by an abbreviated sense of time that reduced the value of space. Territorial aspirations were minimal. Indeed, like other sectarian groups, early Pentecostals even shrank what was commonly considered Christian-occupied territory. That is, the mission field not only encompassed outright pagans but also spiritually cold, so-called Christians and the properties they inhabited. Urgency, therefore, was directed toward redeeming people rather than spaces.

Their view of time affected not only their missional sensibilities but also their sense of being in this world. To restore the life and mission of the early church the Pentecostals traveled back to an ancient era, but in so doing they absorbed the New Testament (NT) emphasis on the imminent return of Jesus, which propelled them ahead to the precipice of history. Taking their cues from a world that no longer existed in preparation for one that had not yet arrived, they became strangers in the world they inhabited.

This historic view, however, is waning with time: a growing number of Pentecostals are questioning the validity of such radical time-shifting. After a century, Pentecostals realize they have more time than they once thought they did, and the possibilities for engaging in the here-and-now are becoming more apparent. Space appears redeemable, not just the people who inhabit it. Pentecostals have a new taste for redeeming the culture and bringing territory under the control of Christ.

The change in perception, initiated by a re-evaluation of the timing of Christ’s return, may signal the maturing of the classical Pentecostal movement, or, its extinction. To put it less apocalyptically, the movement may be morphing into something still Christian, still valuable for the Kingdom of God, but not Pentecostalism as such. We will revisit this below.

It seems to me that one of the reasons that the Reformed tradition prioritizes the spatial elements of eschatology over the temporal is because the doctrines of predestination and election have located the plan of God outside of time. Time has been factored in to such an extent *in advance* that it is not all that practically relevant for a Reformed view of eschatology and mission. Furthermore, the primary moments within salvation history have already occurred: Christ has died and risen in accordance with the determination of God before time itself. To quote Anthony Hoekema, in light of the victory of Christ, “the most important

day in history, therefore, is not the Second Coming of Christ which is still future but the first coming which lies in the past.”<sup>5</sup>

The problem for the Church of a delayed *parousia*<sup>6</sup> is as old as the first century, and so it is with enthusiasm that I accept Newbigin’s invitation to listen to the NT for wisdom about mission, especially about how to conduct mission when the promised return does not materialize in the expected time frame. Before concluding with observations about a Pentecostal approach to eschatology and mission, I will make a few general remarks about the relationship between the terms “eschatology” and “mission.” I will follow that up with a discussion on the relevance of apocalyptic eschatology for our deliberations. But first, I will locate my perspective in time and space.

I approach this work from a background in biblical theology. My thesis at the University of Toronto tracked the development of various visions of the afterlife in Jewish apocalyptic literature. The apocalyptic worldview that I studied provided background for both New Testament eschatology and the variant of it adopted enthusiastically by early Pentecostals.

My vantage point is that of North American Pentecostalism. I do not claim to know how eschatology fared as Pentecostalism emerged in all parts of the globe. I will speak to what I know best—North American beginnings in the early twentieth century—without presuming that its historical development is normative for all regions. Although the phrase “North American Pentecostalism” sometimes disguises differences between American and Canadian perspectives, the term here is appropriate because of a common eschatological worldview.

### Eschatology and Mission

The honor I felt when invited to join this dialogue was rivaled only by a sense of relief that the topic was “Eschatology and Mission,” because when considered at the level of God’s involvement, they form a simple equation. If the mission of God is God’s purpose to restore all creation, then eschatology describes the actualization of his intent. The problem in describing eschatology, however, starts with the realization that God calls the Church to be involved in the process, which begs the question: What exactly is our role? What we believe God has done, is doing now, and will do, shapes how we perceive our role in his mission.

I have no intention of trying to distinguish between a Pentecostal and Reformed approach to mission based on criteria like levels of

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<sup>5</sup>Anthony Hoekema, “Amillennialism,” in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 177.

<sup>6</sup>Or, the return of Christ.

commitment and industriousness. Although Pentecostals have a reputation for active participation, they have a whole work ethic named after them!<sup>7</sup> My contribution is a brief consideration of the role different perceptions of time and space play in variant eschatological systems and missional strategies.

Biblical eschatology describes how God keeps his promises, or covenants, to bring restoration to creation. That the term “eschatology” denotes a study of last or later things puts an emphasis on the timing aspect of God’s saving work, where timing is understood not in a calendrical or mechanical way, but as the moment when God decides to act. An eschatological moment is when God works to bring about a promised restoration.

Before Christopher Wright’s influential *The Mission of God* (2006)<sup>8</sup>—his overview of the Scriptures as one grand narrative of God’s work in the world to set it right—there was Walter Kaiser’s *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (1978).<sup>9</sup> I was fortunate enough to sit under his teaching when he was at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, and he convinced me that the idea of the promise of God, a promise theology, was the thread that ran throughout the Old Testament (OT). Consequently, the salvific work of God begins in Genesis and runs throughout the Hebrew Scriptures.

From a Christian perspective, of course, it is in the NT era, the time of the new covenant, where we find the dramatic advancement of God’s purposes. The fact that God is effecting salvation through Christ and the Spirit means that the promised last days have arrived. As my pastor Keith Smith said, “If you are waiting for the last days, you are a little late.” The span of NT time covers both what God has done (the already) and what he has yet to accomplish (the not yet), and it is in the latter that the Church’s mission is located.

If eschatology refers to God-initiated moments when he acts in salvation-history to fulfill his promises, then mission is ultimately about divine action. From what Newbigin tells us, the term “*missio Dei*” came into vogue in missionary theology in the 1960s because the World Missionary Conference in Willingen, 1952, emphasized it. He applauds

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<sup>7</sup>I have in mind the Protestant Ethic that sociologist Max Weber made famous in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-5), his study of the correlation of Calvin’s theory of predestination with the success of capitalism. In short, the insecurity for the individual believer inherent in an understanding that God chooses who is to be saved resulted in rigorous attempts to show one’s salvation through hard work and industry.

<sup>8</sup>Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

<sup>9</sup>Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

it for refreshing Augustine's position in his dispute with Pelagius: the work of salvation is God's work from beginning to end. Still, as Newbigin warns, its popularity comes with a risk that "mission of God" be misconstrued by the Church as permission to remain on the sidelines.<sup>10</sup>

A failure to respond to a call for action is not a charge typically laid against global Pentecostalism. Rather, in a Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue, the concern might be that Pentecostals have over-emphasized their role in the mission of God, as if the Kingdom awaits the fullness of human effort. The view that the Church is called to action because Jesus is delaying his return until all peoples have heard the good news has a history in Pentecostal circles. Despite the differences around this table concerning what weight to give to the significance of human action in the plan of God, our common starting point is the conviction that the Church engages in mission because God calls her to do so.

### **Prophetic and Apocalyptic Eschatology**

Paul Hanson's categories of prophetic and apocalyptic eschatology are helpful for background on the NT perspective.<sup>11</sup> Prophetic eschatology (the primary form of eschatology in the OT) concerns the ongoing work of God in history; apocalyptic eschatology (which comes into its own in Jewish apocalyptic literature in Second Temple Judaism) tracks God's salvific actions above and beyond history. Apocalyptic eschatology builds on, and then transcends, the earthly horizon of the prophetic vision, which is largely covenantal and whose compass point is the land promised to Abraham (Gen 12,15). The glorious future anticipated by the Israelites was this-worldly and national in scope. Thus, to gauge God's faithfulness one would survey the lay of the land. Apocalyptic, however, is driven by an otherworldly shift in perspective, where time is recalculated, and the spatial realm reimagined.

A clarification about terminology is in order. The term "apocalypse," by general consent, is reserved for the genre. "Apocalyptic eschatology" is readily used to describe the kind of eschatology found in the apocalypses and in other forms of literature. The widely accepted definition of the genre apocalypse includes spatial and temporal aspects:

a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both

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<sup>10</sup>*Open Secret*, 17-18.

<sup>11</sup>Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 11.

temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world.<sup>12</sup>

Through revelation—what could never be deduced from earthly appearances—the object of human hope is transferred to a space beyond historical time. Elemental for the apocalyptic worldview is the discontinuity between this world and the next.

### From Prophetic to Apocalyptic

Several factors had to come together to facilitate the shift from prophetic to apocalyptic thinking, one of them being a growing acceptance of individualism, i.e., the individual is an appropriate object of the covenantal relationship along with, or instead of, the nation as a whole.<sup>13</sup> This was a crucial step away from a spatial and national perception of a blessed future, but it was a spiritual crisis of national proportions that propelled the transition.

The context for the emergence of apocalyptic eschatology a few centuries before Christ, and its continued appeal among Jews leading up to the Bar Kochba revolt (132-5 CE), was a crisis of space. Hope for the fulfillment of God's promises in this world was in decline as the Greek empire gave way to the Roman. With nothing on earth to show for it, many Jews had abandoned belief in the intervention of an invisible God and embraced the ever-present power of the empire instead. This pessimism about earthly conditions caused apocalyptic visionaries to look elsewhere.

Visionary scenes, such as those found in Daniel (the one OT apocalypse) and in Revelation (the only NT apocalypse), are a staple of the genre. Specifically, it is the depiction of the seer's immediate access into the presence of God, often as part of a heavenly tour, that separates an apocalypse from a prophetic writing.<sup>14</sup> The two are also demarcated based on the content of their visionary experiences. The main events of apocalyptic eschatology that are largely absent from the OT but common in the NT—a final judgment at the end of history, resurrection to a new world for the faithful, punishment in a fiery hell for the wicked—came into popular thinking among the Jews in the Second Temple period.

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<sup>12</sup>John Collins, *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, Semeia 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), quoted in "What is Apocalyptic Literature?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

<sup>13</sup>While there is no consensus as to whether Isa 26:19 depicts a national resurrection (as in Ezek 37 and the vision of the dry bones) or a personal one (like Dan 12:2-3), this appears to me to be a rare OT example of the latter.

<sup>14</sup>John Collins, "What is Apocalyptic Literature?," 7.

Another essential element found particularly in the historical apocalypses,<sup>15</sup> i.e., those that envisage an end to history with a final judgment, is the presumption that the end is near, and therein lay the practical implications for the audience. The function of historical apocalypses was to reorient the hearers' view of their current situation, and to that end, heavenly secrets about otherworldly realities were disclosed. It was a call for right action, not speculative staring into the sky. In sum, the variable of time rises in importance, the significance of earthly space recedes, and another world comes into view for those who remain faithful to the God of Israel.

### New Testament Apocalyptic Eschatology

Although there is only one book in the NT that is an apocalypse, the worldview we have just described which shortens time and relocates redeemed space pervades the NT.<sup>16</sup> That is not to say that every NT passage is explicitly concerned with the main events of the eschaton, but those events and the worldview behind them were definitive for how the NT writers articulated the Christian faith.

The NT adaptation of apocalyptic eschatology included a redefinition of the nature of eschatological time. The end is still imminent, but in another sense, it has already arrived. NT time is split in half, each part initiated by a Messianic arrival: Jesus lived and died, establishing the new covenant in his blood, but then he left with a promise to return. Early Christians expected to see him much sooner rather than later, their situation similar to the football fan watching the end of a match: no one knows exactly when injury time is up, except for the referee, but the time will be short (especially for the team down a goal).

I take it as a given that no generation expected the soon return of Jesus more fervently than the first one. They had no sense of church history with which to temper their expectations. The earliest church had their hopes raised high, as high as the heavens, and therein lay their dilemma.

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<sup>15</sup>It is common to distinguish between two types of apocalypses: those that are historical (like Daniel, parts of 1 Enoch [Animal Apocalypse, Apocalypse of Weeks] and 4 Ezra) and those that feature an otherworldly journey (other parts of 1 Enoch [Book of the Watchers, Similitudes], and Testament of Abraham). What ties them together is "a transcendent eschatology that looks for retribution beyond the bounds of history" (John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 15).

<sup>16</sup>Adela Y. Collins, "Apocalypticism and Christian Origins," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John Collins (Oxford University Press, 2014).

*Luke's Perceptions*

Hans Conzelmann made the case that Luke responded to the delay of the *parousia* by writing Acts, thereby creating a Church Age.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, what Luke accomplishes is the transformation of the delay from a dilemma into an essential aspect of the divine plan. Without endorsing all of Conzelmann's arguments, I think his perception of Luke's sensitivity to the issue of the non-return is correct. Luke writes two volumes rather than just a gospel to encourage the completion of what Jesus initiated. The incipit of Acts (which links to the full prologue in Luke 1:1-4) sets up volume two as a continuation narrative by declaring that the first volume *concerned "all that Jesus began to do and to teach"* (Acts 1:1).<sup>18</sup> The proclamation of the Kingdom inaugurated by Christ is to be continued by empowered witnesses until he returns. The opening scene in Acts illustrates this well. Jesus warns them off speculation about when the Kingdom will come and redirects their energies toward witness. He then ascends, they stare into heaven, and two men appear and ask: "*Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky?*" (Acts 1:11). That is, stop looking up and start looking around, there is something to do. The story of Acts is the record of what they did, written to encourage the Church to carry on in likewise manner.

*Paul's Varied Perceptions*

If Luke writes with sensitivity to the temporal situation of the early church, Paul does so even more. As part of my doctoral studies, I took a course on Paul with John Hurd at Toronto School of Theology, University of Toronto, where the assignment was a diachronic analysis of Pauline theology to track changing emphases from the earlier letters to the later ones.

Hurd placed the Thessalonian letters at the starting point. The pastoral issue that Paul addresses in 1 Thessalonians regarding the fate of Christians dying before the *parousia* is one of the clues to its early date. While later Christians would take death as a given and wrestle with the nature of death for the Christian—e.g., concerns about burials and the interim state—what the Thessalonians wanted to know within 20 years of Jesus' ascension was how to factor in death at all. Such confusion is consonant with their first-generation Christian belief in an imminent return.

My work in Hurd's course traced how Paul varied his eschatological expressions diachronically: with the passage of time, Paul increased the

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<sup>17</sup>Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke* (New York: Harper, 1961).

<sup>18</sup>All Scripture references are from the *New International Version*, 1984.

range of his references to the realized aspects of eschatology without abandoning his “not yet” perspective. For instance, Paul’s resurrection language broadens. He refuses to say in the baptismal passage of Rom 6:1-14 that believers are already raised with Christ, even though he affirms repeatedly in the same text that they have died with him. This reservation disappears with his explicit declaration in Col 3:1 that those in Christ are already raised with him. It is also clear that with time he changes his perception of his own destiny: compare the confident statement in 1Thess 4:17 about “*we who are still alive and are left*” with his confession at the beginning of Philipians that he may die and go to be with the Lord (1:20-1).

At an earlier stage of ministry Paul was even a cessationist about marriage. In one of the more ignored chapters in the Pauline letters, 1Cor 7, he makes a strong appeal for believers to remain single because of the imminent *parousia*. The call for such radical action, combined with an injunction that slaves not seek their freedom, is justified by the “*present crisis*” (v. 26): “*What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none*” (v. 29). This is a far cry from the household counsel he gives later in the letter to the Ephesians, “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church*” (5:25). To summarize, Paul appears to vary terminology and pastoral counsel in response to the continued delay of Christ’s return.

Paul actually addresses the reason for the delay in Romans 9-11, where the topic is the future of Israel. The failure of his own people to be the ones leading the way into the Kingdom of God has raised the issue of God’s faithfulness. With deep emotion and an avowal that his mission to the Gentiles is not a betrayal of his own people, Paul explains the growing disparity in numbers between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the light of God’s mercy. Because of his mercy the Gentiles are being grafted in, for this is their time. When *the “full number of the Gentiles has come in,”* then all Israel will be saved (11:25-6). The time of Christ’s return, which will trigger the resurrection, ultimately hinges on Israel’s acceptance of Messiah. “*For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*” (11:15).

Whereas we have multiple letters of Paul to examine for the nature of his eschatological expressions, any consideration of the effect of a delayed *parousia* on Paul’s missionary strategies is limited to Acts (and to a few travelogue entries in his letters). Acts depicts the apostle as the itinerant missionary until the very end, and one who was intent on extending the gospel’s geographical reach. Much the same picture emerges in Romans: “*by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit*” he has completed a cycle of ministry from Jerusalem to Illyricum (15:19), and now he is ready to begin a new chapter with a

journey to Spain (15:24). What should be noted, though, is his explanation to them that he must go home to Jerusalem before he journeys to Rome, because he had made a commitment to remember the poor there,<sup>19</sup> and he was on his way with the offering he had collected (Rom 15:25-29). For Paul, urgency in mission did not mean abandoning the poor and the commitment he had made.

## **Eschatology and Mission in Pentecostalism**

### Urgency and other Early Characteristics

If the Reformed Tradition has a preferential option for Romans and Galatians, then Pentecostals do so for Acts (and the gospels in general). Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on one's view, early Pentecostals were blissfully unaware of the dictum that doctrine comes from didactic passages, not historical narratives. Consequently, when reading the gospels and Acts they did not approach them as one might who visits a museum exhibit to stand behind glass or rope in order to peer into a different time and space. They were not observers; they thought they were in the exhibit.

As restorationists, they perceived no historical distance between them and the early church, and here we should recognize the contribution of cessationism. The early Pentecostals were quite aware of the theory, and they seemed to have taken its basic premise to heart that the charismata had ceased. Therefore, it was the return of Spirit Baptism and the gifts among them that shaped their self-understanding as a restoration movement. While some early Pentecostal writers recognized redeeming moments in church history (usually from the period of the Reformation onwards), it was the return of tongues that marked the culmination of the restoration period.

On account of their preferential option for Acts and, in particular, Acts 2, Pentecostalism was a missional movement from birth. Their understanding of Spirit Baptism was eschatological because of Peter's quotation from Joel: "*In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people*" (Acts 2:17a), and it was missional because of Jesus' instructions in Acts 1:8. "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*"

These texts—Acts 1:8 as promise and Acts 2 as fulfillment—functioned together in early Pentecostalism to fashion a missional movement marked by urgency, inclusivism, and an openness to both

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<sup>19</sup>Galatians 2:10.

revelation and the role of signs and wonders in evangelism. As we will see below, in sociological terms they were value-oriented rather than norm-oriented. From a missiological perspective, early Pentecostal mission was not spatially stratified, as if mission occurred somewhere else. The missionary sending church was also itself a missional church.

If apocalyptic expectation put the promises of God on the clock, then Pentecostals set their watches fast. Urgency, in the spirit of 1Cor 7, meant that desperate times called for prioritizing one's actions in light of the world to come. Worldly pleasures were identified and denounced. Earthly aspirations were replaced by future considerations. Most importantly, it was their sense of time that channeled their interpretation of Spirit Baptism in a missional direction, thereby preserving Jesus' intent that empowerment be for the sake of others rather than for personal benefit.

### *Inclusivity*

Secondly, urgency supported the high value they placed on inclusivity. An early Pentecostal conviction that God would unite all Christians sprung from the belief in a church renewed by the Spirit acting in concert in mission. On this count, the Pentecostal tradition has failed miserably. A horrendous record of dividing and splintering in the global Pentecostal community is a historic betrayal of an early vision, which makes this Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue in Accra (as well as other inter-faith dialogues involving Pentecostals) part of our penance.

There was greater success at the congregational level, where an egalitarian spirit pervaded mission. It made no practical sense to relegate women to the sidelines as cheerleaders when there were not enough workers to cheer on. Racial barriers appeared to lower, at least for a time, and here Azusa Street is the shining example of what can happen when mission overrides all else. Of course, the prominence of women in the Holiness movement that preceded Pentecostalism reminds us that there is an older heritage at work. Indeed, their shared heritage of inclusivity has much to do with the fact that they both began as movements: a fundamental characteristic of a movement is that everyone participates.

The "all flesh" reference of Joel 2:28 grounded the Pentecostal insistence that Spirit Baptism, with speaking in tongues, was for all without distinction. Pentecostals involved women, choosing to see their Spirit Baptism and giftings as qualitatively the same as those of men. It was when the movement transitioned into denominations that women began to lose out; when the criteria of calling was supplanted by the criteria of authority, women were put in their place.

Their churches grew because of mentoring that the transforming presence of God was intended to benefit others. Men and women, young and old, testified to conversion, Spirit Baptism and healing wherever they went: in church, at work and at home. With that type of missional heritage, Pentecostals have a traditional aversion to any type of church mission that relies solely on those who minister on church platforms.<sup>20</sup> The mentoring of a missional way of living came from various directions: from the platform in preaching and teaching, from the floor through prayers and testimonies, and from the prayer room, where the energy of the service was concentrated in a missional direction.

My memories of the Pentecostal church that my dad pastored in Montreal are most vivid when I remember the Sunday night meetings, which were more routine than frenetic. If an observer had wandered in at 6 p.m., and many did, they might have concluded that what was going on had no rhyme or reason. But if they stayed around, the lasting impression was different, because standing and rejoicing in the presence of the Lord was only our first move. We had a three-step routine: standing, kneeling, and going out. We stood in praise, and then we knelt in prayer. Every Sunday night ended up in the prayer room, where we interceded for others. After we had knelt, we then executed our signature move. We went out. Going home signified going out into the world, with a new week in front of us to do something for Jesus.

### *Apocalyptic Epistemology*

The third characteristic of Pentecostal mission was an apocalyptic epistemology, a belief in revelation that informs text and tradition. For early Pentecostals, this was not a replacement for the Bible, nor a higher form of revelation than the written text. Its currency among them followed from their reading of the Bible as restorationists. As dreams and visions guided the early mission in Acts, as the Spirit spoke in ways that led the first believers, so it was with them. Although their revelatory experiences differed, they were like jazz improvisations on a standard theme, Jesus is coming soon. What they saw was the glory of heaven or the horror of hell; what they heard was encouragement to be ready for his return and exhortation to evangelize quickly.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Cecil Robeck notes the significant role of street meetings and neighbourhood evangelism for the Apostolic Faith Mission. Even the most famous Pentecostal revival depended on workers going out to witness (*The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 108-9.

<sup>21</sup>According to Jacobsen, while a belief in the soon return of Jesus was acute at The Apostolic Faith Mission in L.A., they devoted little space in their newsletters to speculation about eschatological details (*Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 80-1. On

One Canadian example will make the point. At the end of *The Promise* (No. 1)<sup>22</sup>—the first newsletter from Toronto, where Pentecostalism began in Canada in November 1906—the leader of the revival, Ellen Hebden, posted a poem she claimed originated in a revelation that was expressed with tongues and interpretation. Written as the words of Jesus, the first stanza recalls the cross, and the second reads this way: “I soon shall be returning / To fetch my precious bride / And then amid great glory / I’ll place her by my side.”<sup>23</sup> The Promise is being fulfilled and the Lord is returning.

Before considering a few aspects of missionary work among Pentecostals, it is helpful to note that a determination to do missions globally was a primary reason Pentecostals organized in the first place. At least this was the experience of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) and the Assemblies of God, U.S. Despite their reticence to organize formally, individual congregations alone could not meet the financial demands of their missional aspirations to send out workers to the ends of the earth. Coordinated action with other churches was the only pragmatic solution.

### *Pragmatism*

Like Paul, who celebrated the freedom of being single because time was short, early Pentecostals engaged in mission with little of the time-consuming prerequisites mission boards now (rightly) insist on. Missionaries went without aptitude testing, language training and with little awareness of the cultural barriers they would face. Indeed, some of the earliest from North America set out with confidence that language barriers would dissolve on arrival. The belief in xenolalia as a missionary tool had circulated in some nineteenth century holiness groups and had made its way to Azusa via the influence of Charles Parham. A belief that every legitimate form of tongues speech was an earthly language was seemingly tailor-made for a community in a hurry. When Pentecostals arrived on foreign shores, convinced they could witness by speaking in tongues, the results were certainly comic. The locals, including the Protestant missionaries already stationed there, were watching a comedy of displacement: strange people in the strangest place. If necessity is the

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the other hand, *The Apostolic Messenger* (Vol. 1, No. 1), published by A.H. Argue in Winnipeg (February and March 1908), was filled with detailed dispensational explanations.

<sup>22</sup>*The Promise*, No. 1 (May 1907), 4. This is the first edition of a series (most of which are not extant) published at the East End Mission in Toronto by missionaries Ellen and James Hebden from Yorkshire, England.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

mother of invention, then for Pentecostals, missional urgency is the mother of pragmatism.

Grant Wacker argued convincingly that Pentecostalism survived and thrived because its approach combined an otherworldly, or primitive perspective, with a rigorous pragmatism: when ideas failed, adjustments were made.<sup>24</sup> Their handling of xenolalia is a case in point. Many Pentecostal missionaries were undeterred by their inability to preach in tongues; they learned the local language and carried on. And they had other means of showing the gospel. Their belief in the power of God served them well overseas, where the public practices of healing and deliverance communicated the power of God to confused, but intrigued, local audiences. Furthermore, they were naturally inclined to trust indigenous leadership.<sup>25</sup> Their tendency to appoint local leadership and keep moving rather than set up mission stations derived from convictions part theological—that the gifts were for all—and part eschatological—Christ’s imminent return required speed and agility to finish the job.

### *Salvation and Social Action*

The historic disagreement among Protestant missionary societies regarding the proper aim of missionary activity, whether that be the salvation of the soul or care for the body, preceded the first batch of Pentecostal missionaries in the early 1900s.<sup>26</sup> In Neil Smelser’s treatment of the nature of social movements, *Theory of Collective Behavior*,<sup>27</sup> he divided social movements into two classes: value-oriented and norm-oriented. The former attempts to change the values of individuals, and the latter, the norms of society. Generally speaking, along with many other conservative evangelicals, Pentecostals fit into the value-oriented category—a classification reflected in their prioritization of evangelism.

Having said that, such a classification is a bit of an awkward fit for Pentecostalism. As a movement of the poor and the marginalized, a distinction between care for the soul and care for the body is somewhat

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<sup>24</sup>Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). The interplay between early Pentecostal otherworldliness and pragmatism is one that he develops throughout the book. See in particular his opening chapter.

<sup>25</sup>The book for Pentecostals was Melvin Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO.: Gospel Publishing House, 1953).

<sup>26</sup>Note the case study of early Pentecostal missions in China by Daniel Bays, “The Protestant Missionary Establishment and the Pentecostal Movement,” in *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism*, eds. E. Blumhofer, R. Spittler and G. Wacker (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 50-67.

<sup>27</sup>Neil Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: The Free Press, 1962).

artificial. As Douglas Petersen asserts in *Not by Might, Nor by Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America*, extending care is natural for Pentecostals because they are the poor.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, Pentecostals perceive cosmological space as filled with angels and demons, whose activities influence everyday life. This apocalyptic sense of space, what Luther called a world “with devils filled” in his hymn “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” remains a given across the global movement. With such a starting point, salvation cannot be reduced to an interior change within the individual because the effects of demonic activity are external. Deliverance breaks the power of sin in its external and social effects, bringing healing to the body and restoration to relationships, and sometimes it even breaks the cycle of poverty.

The final reason why a classification that drives a wedge between spiritual and social care is too rigid for an understanding of Pentecostalism is seen in global trends, where outreach has moved beyond the organic to a more structured form of engagement in the social and political arenas.<sup>29</sup> Obviously, such a transition presupposes a more expansive view of time than what I have associated with the early Pentecostals in North America. In the discussion on millennial beliefs below, I will consider whether Pentecostalism can expand its vision for the renewal of earthly space without compromising her premillennial convictions that wholly redeemed space can only materialize after Jesus does.

## Eschatological Expressions in Pentecostalism

### Former and Latter Rain

Early Pentecostals had several systems to express their eschatology. Among them was the typology of the Former and Latter Rain, which they borrowed from A.B. Simpson. Based on the rainfall patterns in Israel, where the early rain accompanied planting and the latter, the harvest, Simpson had argued that first-century Pentecost was the former rain and what they were expecting would be one last great deluge of the Spirit.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Douglas Petersen, *Not by Might, Nor by Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1996).

<sup>29</sup>D. Miller and T. Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>30</sup>No one developed this more thoroughly than Wesley Myland in *The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power with Testimony of Healings and Baptism* (Chicago: Evangel Publishing House, 1910). Another early eschatological framework was modeled on the first week of creation: as God worked for six days then rested, so after 6,000 years our millennial rest is at hand (“The Millennium,” *Apostolic Faith* [Sep 1906], 3). There is

Pentecostals applied this to themselves, grounding their eschatological perspective in their encounters with God through the Spirit. Eschatological hope was a living hope rather than something speculative because they were experiencing the eschaton in a dramatic and personal way. They testified often about how their experiences in the Spirit led to deeper intimacy with Jesus. This is a crucial point for a Pentecostal understanding of eschatology and mission. It was their love for Jesus that compelled their longing to see him again and that same love that drove them to others. The heart of Pentecostal eschatology and mission is rooted in the affections.

### Dispensationalism and the Millennium

Pentecostals had the eschaton in their hearts, but also on the charts. Pentecostals adopted a complex form of premillennialism, which was quite influential at the time of their emergence in the 1900s. Dispensationalism, a periodization of history, featured an end-times scenario of Rapture, a seven-year Tribulation, the return of Christ and the Judgment, followed by a one thousand year (millennial) reign of Christ and Christian martyrs on the earth (Rev 20). Dispensationalism seemed an irresistible grace for many Pentecostals: a whole system (with abundant Bible references and with diagrams) that proved the imminent *parousia*.

We now turn to a consideration of a millennium and what it says about redeemed space, because the various understandings associated with it have missional implications.

With its amillennial approach, the Reformed tradition has largely stayed out of the debates on the millennium: the thousand-year period referred to repeatedly in Rev 20 is not to be taken literally; the number is symbolic for the reign of God in the present age that began at the first coming of Christ. A literal millennium continues to be an issue in Pentecostalism, though, partly because of the heritage of Dispensationalism.<sup>31</sup> Although Dispensationalism has waned in influence in my circles, along with a broader distaste for systems, which includes ambivalence about a millennial period, there is something larger at stake here as we consider how eschatology relates to mission. Even if we eschew the systems, there are lingering predispositions surrounding a

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Promise theology in Toronto, imported from the UK and influenced by Ellen Hebdgen's involvement in the Pentecostal League of Prayer and its publication, *Tongues of Fire*.

<sup>31</sup>George Ladd, in *The Blessed Hope: A Biblical Study of The Second Advent and The Rapture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), argues that premillennialism is an ancient belief, whereas the Rapture is a modern variant. His point: one need not believe in the Rapture to be a premillennialist. See in particular the Introduction (5-14).

millennium that deserve consideration. While amillennialism is making some inroads into Pentecostal circles, especially among our academics and younger pastors, there are two primary categories that remain relevant in the broader Pentecostal-Charismatic world: premillennialism and postmillennialism.

The premillennial view, the standard one in historic Pentecostalism, insists that before the golden age Jesus must return. Thus, the disposition behind this view is that of a pessimistic optimist: pessimism about this world combined with optimism that Jesus is coming—the signs of the world’s demise show that deliverance is at hand. I think on this matter Pentecostals have the mind of Paul. His definition of hope, particularly when he mentions hope along with faith and love (e.g., Eph 1:15-18; Col 1:4-5), is hope for the next world rather than the present.

Postmillennialism is a view that the millennium occurs during the Church Age, and Jesus will return after a golden age of righteousness and peace has been ushered in. Donald Dayton argues that a “latter-day glory” of the Church was expected in both Puritanism and Pietism.<sup>32</sup> To the trajectory of advocates for postmillennialism, through the Great Awakening and into the nineteenth century, we may add some segments of the current Charismatic Movement, where the global success of Church renewal seems to portend a bright future for the Church and the globe.<sup>33</sup> Such optimism is attractive: 1) it adds value to human effort and importance to the work of the Church, and 2) it resonates with the cultural narrative that socially engineered evolutionary progress is in our grasp.

Premillennialism, with its belief in a sudden and complete transformation at Jesus’ return, reflects the view that the mission of God is ultimately better defined as revival (i.e., as re-creation, life from death, the saved from the lost), than as renewal (i.e., as refurbishing, as a process where the marred is repaired until it takes on the original form). In concert with apocalyptic thinking about the disconnect between this world and the glorious one to come, premillennialism longs for this world to be replaced. Pentecostals take quite literally the “new” in Rev 21:1, “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.*”

Postmillennialism seems a reworking of prophetic eschatology inasmuch as it anticipates space will be redeemed within historical time. The earth is renewed because Jesus is reigning and the Church is being obedient. Change occurs in society as a renewing process, much like it

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<sup>32</sup>Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1987), 147-8.

<sup>33</sup>Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 310.

does for the individual in Wesleyan perfectionism. Although Dayton argues that Wesley is difficult to pin down as to his preferred view of the millennium, his combination of Arminianism and perfectionism trended toward a vision of the future that was not just personal but also social in scope.<sup>34</sup> As we cooperate with the Spirit, change is going to come, here and now.

In short, while the millennium may no longer generate the interest it once did in some Pentecostal circles, the dispositions associated with the prefixes of “pre” and “post” remain critical to a discussion about the mission of God. To revisit Newbigin’s warning that it matters how we define God’s work, and his concern that we might misconstrue the championing of the *missio Dei* as making the Church negligible, I have the opposite concern about the postmillennial disposition—that it sidelines the work of our Lord. We believe, of course, that the Lord works through his Church, but that does not negate the danger that the medium itself might be taken too seriously, with the result that we sanction the work of our hands and declare them to be the Kingdom of God. I do believe in depravity when it comes to the Church’s actions in this world.<sup>35</sup> There are “slave castles” within a few hours’ drive of us on the coast of Ghana built by Christians.

### What of Today?

#### Previewing the Kingdom

To pick up the issue raised earlier, does an extended involvement by Pentecostals in the affairs of this world compromise or negate the nature of their otherworldly hope? Time and space do not permit an extended discussion, so my comments are merely suggestive for further research by Pentecostal scholars. The core of the issue, I believe, is whether time will continue to play a determining role in our missional praxis. That is, will decisions be made about how to redeem space after the nature of apocalyptic time has been factored in?

The biblical terminology of “sign” seems a propitious starting point when considering social engagement because the term functions to signify something other than itself. If we plan our work in this world, whether in church or outside of it, as a sign of the future, we may avoid building for building’s sake. Since it is God who will build his kingdom, the works of our hands preview the coming Kingdom rather than construct it. Our objective for constructive work, then, is to erect signs of the coming Kingdom, even if those structures are only temporary.

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<sup>34</sup>Dayton, *Theological Roots*, 152-3.

<sup>35</sup>See any Church history textbook.

This terminology is amenable to Pentecostals because we believe in the power of signs and wonders to show the world its future—as our Lord taught us. Lazarus died twice. The woman healed of an issue of blood eventually succumbed to some other condition. Nevertheless, though the effects of Jesus’ acts in reviving one and healing the other were not permanent, they were previews of a coming Kingdom without death, or mourning, or crying, or pain.

Pertinent to this discussion is Keith Warrington’s observation in his survey of current Pentecostal scholarship that Pentecostals have latched onto Kingdom of God language in their attempt to adjust to the delay in the return of Jesus.<sup>36</sup> As I have argued, there is a Pauline precedent for change in vocabulary as eschatological perceptions shift, and the Kingdom of God supplies a rich theological category for a Pentecostal reexamination of the nature of Jesus’ mission in order to reframe its own. To begin with, Kingdom of God theology affirms a preferential option for the poor (Luke 4:17-19). A reemphasis on this aspect of the Kingdom is of greater necessity for richer communities than for regions where care for the poor is only business as usual. For a Pentecostal, though, social concerns will never trump concern for the spiritual condition of the individual. We believe that the most important eschatological events are yet to come. The next life is the one to mind, with a judgment, a resurrection, a heaven and a hell.

Therein, however, lies a dilemma: the temptation to deplete this world in the process, especially when this is exacerbated by a Rapture theology that emphasizes escape from this world before the worst sets in. It should be said, however, that such an attitude about the environment is not a necessary corollary of the belief that perfection lies in another world. Premillennial eschatology is not the root of the problem, nor is a different type of eschatology, which views this planet as our eternal home, its necessary solution. Rather, concern about how we treat the earth and all God’s creatures on it is mandatory because of the creation narrative, which includes the divine command to reflect God’s image by ruling, not destroying, the earth (Gen 1:26-8). Scripture is clear that God will restore all things (Rom 8:19-21), and until then premillennialists should glorify God by minding the carbon footprints of their missional roaming around his creation.

#### Forward Leaning and Upward Focused

There is a lot at stake for us Pentecostals in the attempt to expand our sense of earthly space while maintaining the priority of time. We

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<sup>36</sup>Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 312-13.

were raised up as a forward leaning movement, pressing toward the end with the brevity of time a constant motivation. For us, the main events of eschatology are still to be fulfilled. While we have a healthy dose of Protestant/Reformed thinking about “the already” of the cross and resurrection, we have not lost our sense of the importance of Judgment Day, which is the Day of salvation. A Pauline text in this regard is Rom 5:9-11, which declares we are justified now and reconciled now, but saved from wrath on that day.

Thus we identify with Paul who depicts himself as a runner who is in constant training so as not to be disqualified from winning the prize (1Cor 9:24-27). We are forward leaning in how we think about salvation. We are also upward focused because our cosmological sensibilities tell us that there is a world parallel to ours, invisible but felt, where angels and demons pervade, and above them, Jesus our Lord seated at the right hand of God. It is Jesus’ return for which we long, and our hearts drive us forward to include others in the company of the redeemed.

### A Robust Eschatology

Traditionally, a robust eschatology for Pentecostals is one that is both proclaimed and lived. This tradition may be in jeopardy due to the current lack of preaching about Christ’s return. One of the repercussions of Dispensationalism’s fall from grace in some quarters of Pentecostalism<sup>37</sup> is a general de-emphasis on eschatology. Pastors trained in preaching the return of Jesus as part of an elaborate system may be at a loss to do so without it. Or, they may be suffering from eschatological fatigue and want to avoid the subject altogether.

To that end, the PAOC is refreshing its statement of faith (“Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths”) to emphasize the main events of eschatology without favoring any system. The project is meant to revive preaching about the great hope of Christ’s return by untethering it from systems that are subject to theological and cultural climate change. Such preaching is vital for Pentecostal health. For instance, it continues to anchor the last-days’ conviction that Spirit Baptism is intended for witness instead of personal benefit. Pentecostalism didn’t circle the globe because the first participants only

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<sup>37</sup>Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 310-313. Warrington gives several reasons why Dispensationalism, and in particular, the Rapture of the Church and a 7-year Tribulation preceding the return of Christ to earth, has fallen out of favour with a growing number of Pentecostals (e.g., the delay in Christ’s return after years of intense expectation; the upward mobility of some Pentecostals, which decreases the desire for another world [313]). What he does not do, unfortunately, is distinguish between Premillennialism and Dispensationalism as a variant of it. One can hold to the former without adhering to the latter.

spoke in tongues. Preaching the biblical text systematically, rather than preaching a system, will afford many opportunities to engage eschatology, because references to the *parousia* as well as other eschatological events permeate the NT.

There is another factor here, and I am wondering if the problem is really a distaste for the apocalyptic worldview itself, which is out of sync with the world-embracing theological currents circling the globe. In the field of biblical studies, the lines are still drawn between those who accept an apocalyptic Jesus and those who find the idea an embarrassment, attributing its origin to the imagination of the early church.<sup>38</sup> There may be a similar sentiment among some Pentecostals. While accepting the NT depiction of Jesus and his eschatological teaching, they are embarrassed for having trumpeted his imminent return, and now find themselves left behind in the pursuit of the more spatial elements of Kingdom work.

### Conclusion

To conclude, we discussed earlier that a diachronic analysis of Pauline eschatology suggests that with the continued delay of the return of Christ, Pauline terminology became more realized, that is, it trended toward the “already” rather than the “not yet.” If this is indicative of a trajectory within the NT as a whole, one might suppose that Revelation, a Christian apocalypse with multiple visions depicting an unrealized otherworldly future, might have been written quite early—around the same time as, say, 1 Thessalonians.

Instead, the dating of Revelation is surely towards the end of the first century (80s or 90s), when the Church was facing another chapter in a tragedy of dislocation with no earthly hope in sight. From all appearances, the Roman empire was still firmly entrenched, and its claim to absolute power emboldened by blasphemous declarations. Emperor Domitian welcomed the people’s acclamation of him as “our Lord and God.”<sup>39</sup> The Romans saw the Christians not just as subjects, but as strange people; the Christians saw themselves as foreigners in a strange land. Most importantly, though, in Revelation they saw Jesus above space and beyond time.

From a chronological and canonical standpoint, Revelation’s function as the final book is strategic for the orientation of the Church’s

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<sup>38</sup>A. Hultgren, “Eschatology in the New Testament: The Current Debate,” in *The Last Things: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Eschatology*, eds. C. Braaten and R. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 2002).

<sup>39</sup>Paul Achtemeier, Joel Green, and Marianne Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 572-3.

mission. As we engage in preparation for Christ's return, the Lord comes to us in a series of world-altering visions, with the Lamb that was slain, the one who overcame evil, in the foreground. May we overcome, then, until he comes, which will be sooner rather than later. In the stunning closing chapter of Revelation, Jesus speaks three times and each time repeats: "I am coming soon" (22:7, 12, 20). If that reminder was needed at the end of the first century, then may our response two millennia later be: "Come quickly Lord, when our longing will be replaced by reunion, and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And, may you find us fully engaged in the mission that befits your soon coming."

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The Holy Spirit even makes us speak to men in prophecy, that is, he makes us humble and docile “channels” of the Word of God. Prophecy is made in boldness, to show the contradictions and injustices openly, but always with meekness and constructive intent. Penetrated by the Spirit of love, we can be signs and instruments of God who love, serve, and give our lives.

Pope Francis, Pentecost Homily 2014<sup>1</sup>

## A Pentecostal Perspective on Prophetic Gifts

by Cecil M. Robeck, Jr.

### Introduction

From the beginning of the modern Pentecostal Movement, Classical Pentecostals have understood themselves as standing within a very long prophetic tradition. When they think of the gift of prophecy, they think first of the Old, and then of the New Testament prophets and they value the prophetic gifts outlined by Paul.<sup>2</sup> They acknowledge the continuation of prophetic manifestations throughout the course of the Church’s history.<sup>3</sup> Such manifestations have at times been subject to diverse responses, especially by Christian leaders who have not always understood or appreciated these gifts.<sup>4</sup> They also believe that the Holy Spirit, with his many charisms, has been poured out upon this modern movement at this point in history, in keeping with the promise of Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 2:16-21.<sup>5</sup> They contend that this relatively recent

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<sup>1</sup>“Francis’ Pentecost Homily,” [ZE140608] *ZENIT: The World Seen from Rome* (June 8, 2014).

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Donald Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts: A Series of Bible Studies* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, [1928] revised 1972), 48-54; Donald Gee, *Ministry-Gifts of Christ* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1930), 38-45. Gee’s work is generally representative of Pentecostal thinking on the subject.

<sup>3</sup>Eddie L. Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity: A 20<sup>th</sup> Century Look at Church History from a Pentecostal/Charismatic Perspective* (Chicota, TX and Tulsa, OK: Hyatt International Ministries, Inc., 1996).

<sup>4</sup>Examples range from the decisions rendered by the bishops against Montanism, to the arguments for cessationism, to the claims made by those who condemned Edward Irving, to those who confuse preaching with prophesying.

<sup>5</sup>Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke’s Charismatic Theology*, JPT Supp. 16 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Larry R.

outpouring of the Spirit has been instrumental in forming an eschatological “community of prophets” at this present time, which serves as a harbinger of the end of the age.<sup>6</sup>

Even today, many people are caught up in following alleged prophets, or in accepting every word spoken with the claim, “Thus says the Lord.” It is for this reason that the topic of prophetic gifts is an important one for Catholics and Pentecostals to study together. Thirty-five years ago, the late, former-Pentecostal turned independent Charismatic evangelist and promoter of the prosperity gospel, Kenneth Hagin, wrote, “For years I have travelled extensively in ministry. Everywhere I go there is always somebody who has a ‘word’ from the Lord for me – sometimes two or three. In all these years only one or two of them have been correct.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1977, Hans Reudi-Weber, a theologian working with the World Council of Churches, raised some pointed questions to ecumenists about the nature of this charism and its sister gift, the discerning of spirits. He noted that an

. . . almost total lack of ecumenical reflection on prophecy remains a disturbing fact. The danger is great that the terms “prophet” and “prophecy” are being filled with all kinds of content. The Bible is then easily misused providing only proof texts for statements and decisions which in fact are not *submitted to the judgment, grace and direction of the biblical testimony*. A study on prophetic vocation in the New Testament and today is therefore of great importance to the ecumenical movement.<sup>8</sup>

Reudi-Weber also pointed to the importance of what he understood as the discerning of spirits. He complained that any relevant Old Testament passage “consists mainly of negative tests, as difficult to apply today as they were in Old Testament times. Is it possible,” he wondered, “to receive better criteria from New Testament texts on prophecy?”<sup>9</sup> It is this task on which the International Catholic-

McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic* JPT Supp 8, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 99-106.

<sup>6</sup>Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* JPT Supp 1 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 58-121.

<sup>7</sup>Kenneth Hagin, *How You Can Be Led by the Spirit of God* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1979), 108.

<sup>8</sup>Hans Reudi-Weber, “Prophecy in the Ecumenical Movement: Ambiguities and Questions,” in J. Panagopoulos, Ed., *Prophetic Vocation in the New Testament and Today* Supp. Nov Test 45 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), 222. Italics mine.

<sup>9</sup>Weber, “Prophecy in the Ecumenical Movement,” 227.

Pentecostal Dialogue has chosen to work. It is not a simple task, but it is an important one. The questions are, “Where do we start?” and, “How do we proceed?”

### Setting the Prophetic Stage

Scripture speaks often of prophets and of prophecy. It provides many oracles within a larger context that we can examine in our quest to determine the nature of this charism. In the Old Testament, prophetic oracles played several roles. Some came as prescriptive words, that is, words of instruction (Micah 6:1-5; Haggai 1:8). Others came as warnings or even as judgments (Amos 1:3-2:16). Still others carried promises (Jeremiah 31:31-40). Sometimes people readily accepted the words of the prophets, resulting in an action such as repentance for which the prophet called (Jonah 3:1-10). But society probably would describe prophets as eccentric or unconventional people, that is, they did not always fit the standard by which Israel thought people should speak or act, even when speaking on behalf of God. Prophets did strange things. They made challenging statements. People seldom perceived prophets as bearers of good news. Their words carried momentous consequences because of the actions of Israel, about which the people and their leaders were often in denial. The people of Israel did not always appreciate hearing the prophetic words through which God sometimes addressed them. As a result, they did not often embrace their prophets; they stoned (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34) or otherwise murdered them (Jeremiah 26:23).

Still, the prophetic tradition is deeply rooted in the whole of Scripture. It begins as early as Exodus<sup>10</sup>, when the Lord called Moses to serve, quite literally as his mouth (*peh*), speaking the words (*dabarim*) of Yahweh to Pharaoh. When Moses recoiled at Yahweh’s plan, claiming a speech impediment, Yahweh told Moses that his excuse was unacceptable. Moses would still carry the words that Yahweh wanted Pharaoh to hear. God then instructed Moses to pass his message along to Aaron, the elder brother of Moses. Aaron would act as the mouth (*peh*, Exodus 4:16) or “prophet” (*nābī’*, Exodus 7:2) of Moses. Another way to say it is, that while Yahweh would remain invisible to Pharaoh, Moses would act in the role of God (*’elōhīm*) (Exodus 4:16; 7:1) before

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<sup>10</sup>Taking the point of the Phrygian Montanists, Tertullian argued that prophecy began with the *ecstasis* that Adam experienced as he slept, in Genesis 2:21-22, providing the inspiration that led him to make the prophetic pronouncement (v. 23) that pointed ultimately to the great mystery (*sacramentum*) described by the Apostle in Ephesians 5:31-32. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 48:4-6; Tertullian, *On the Soul* 11:4. For Tertullian’s understanding of the relationship between sleep and the ecstasy that leads to prophecy see Tertullian, *On the Soul* 48:3.

Pharaoh, while Aaron would serve as Moses' prophet (*nābīʿ*). According to this simple definition, then, the person who prophesies is someone who speaks, to use a Petrine formulation (1 Peter 4:11), "the *very* [emphasis is the author's] words of God (*hōs logia theou*)" to another individual—nothing more. Indeed, to add to these words was a presumptuous act, which was later singled out as a capital offense, deserving of death (Deuteronomy 18:20). When one who carries a word from the Lord does so on a regular basis, that person is called a prophet, or in the case of a woman, a prophetess, such as are Deborah (Judges 4:4) and Anna (Luke 2:26).

There were those who prophesied falsely. Jeremiah 27-28 provides a case in point. The prophet Jeremiah delivered an oracle from the Lord to a group of priests and the people of Judah, only to have it countered shortly thereafter by another prophet, Hananiah. Jeremiah prophesied that the Lord had given "*all these lands into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, my servant*" and "*all the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson . . .*" (Jeremiah 27:6-7). A bit later, Hananiah confronted Jeremiah before a similar audience with a very different word (Jeremiah 28:2-4). "*Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel,*" proclaimed Hananiah, "*I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place. . . King Jeconiah . . . and all the exiles from Judah. . .*"

Who were the people to believe, and how were they to make their decision? In the end, they recognized that Jeremiah had been right, for Hananiah died just as Jeremiah promised, and Judah became the slaves of Babylon, not for two years as Hananiah predicted, but for seventy long years, in keeping with Jeremiah's prediction of three generations. In the short term, they believed Hananiah. In the longer term, time proved Jeremiah's word to be the true word from the Lord just as it proved Hananiah to be a false prophet.

Through the centuries, many people have made claims regarding the inspiration of a specific "word" or "message." Sometimes these words have been genuine, like Jeremiah's word proved to be. At other times they have not been true, as in the case of Hananiah. As a result, Hananiah was labeled a "false prophet." *Jesus warned that false prophets would come, and he told his followers that they could know these frauds by the fruit that they bore* (Matthew 7:15-20). Some, Jesus promised, would even be able to produce "*great signs and omens [wonders], to lead astray, if possible, even the elect*" (Matthew 24:24).<sup>11</sup> Half a century later, the Apostle John wrote that there were already many false prophets who were busy pedaling their wares. "*Do not believe every spirit,*" he

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<sup>11</sup>All Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

warned his readers, “but *test the spirits* [emphasis is the author’s] *to see whether they are from God*” (1 John 4:1). The analysis of their sayings meant that listeners should assess their content.

If the person who prophesies is to convey a message from God to a particular audience, one must ask first, how that message is received. That is, who stands behind this message and what is the process of inspiration? Importantly, in Scripture we understand that the prophet is always to have a prophetic consciousness that is discreet; the prophet is never confused with the one who initiates the prophetic word that the prophet is to give. First, there is God; then there is the prophet. At times, the message is believed to materialize through a strong impression or intuition.<sup>12</sup> While the prophet may spend time in reflection, there is much in Scripture that suggests that prophetic gifts are also spontaneous, coming only at the touch, or voice, of God.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes these messages from the Lord come directly in words. There is a long tradition of the *bath qôl* in Hebrew tradition that is the audible voice from the heavens available for all to hear, though the *bath qôl* was typically a public phenomenon where many heard the voice of God. One example is when Jesus was baptized, and his disciples heard the voice of God again during the Transfiguration (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; John 12:28).<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, Samuel’s call came as a personal audition while he was still a young boy in Shiloh, in the home of Eli the high priest (1 Samuel 3:1-18). Elijah stood at the entrance of a cave, and heard what Scripture described as “a still small voice” (AV) or “a gentle whisper” (NIV; 1 Kings 19:12). Isaiah was in the Temple when he heard the Lord say, “*Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?*” (Isaiah 6:8). As in the case of Isaiah, such an auditory experience came during a vision (Isaiah 1:1; 6:1-13; Hosea 12:10; Habakkuk 2:2-3; Revelation 1:10-11). At the same time, Jeremiah provides several clear examples of visionary encounters. He saw a vision of an almond branch (Jeremiah 1:11-13) and a vision of fig baskets (Jeremiah 24:3). The Lord asked him what he saw. Jeremiah responded with his description and the Lord told him what the

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<sup>12</sup>Jacob H. Kaplan, *Psychology of Prophecy: A Study of the Prophetic Mind as Manifested by the Ancient Hebrew Prophets* (Philadelphia, PA: Julius H. Greenstone, 1908), 84; George Barton Cutten, *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912), 349-357; Walter C. Klein, *The Psychological Pattern of Old Testament Prophecy* (Evanston, IL: Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1956), 84, notes that the prophetic message “may flash into his mind as a sight or a sound, and he may incorporate into his vision or audition the sensory stimulus that has precipitated the ecstasy.”

<sup>13</sup>Theodore H. Robinson, *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel* (London, England: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 1923, 1953), 32, 43-46.

<sup>14</sup>See also *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9:1.

symbolism in these visions meant. Yahweh's explanations introduced the message that Jeremiah was to convey. On yet other occasions, the Lord spoke through dreams (Job 33:14-18; Matthew 1:20; 2:12). It is significant to note that it is such visual phenomena that form or support the messages that originally led to biblical descriptions of prophets as "seers" (*rō'ēh*; 1 Samuel 9:9, 11, 19; 2 Samuel 15:27; 1 Chronicles 9:22; 26:28; 29:29; 2 Chronicles 16:7, 10).

In a unique incident following the rebellion of Aaron and Miriam against Moses, Yahweh was angry and called Miriam, Aaron, and Moses to the Tent of Meeting. Once there, Yahweh summoned Moses' siblings forward and addressed them (Numbers 12:1-9).<sup>6</sup> *"Hear my words:*

*When there are prophets among you;  
I the Lord make myself known to them in visions;  
I speak to them in dreams.  
7Not so with my servant Moses;  
he is entrusted with all my house,  
8With him I speak face to face – clearly, not in riddles  
and he beholds the form of the Lord.*

Clearly, the Lord speaks in various ways through his prophets.

The state of mind that a "prophet" has at the time of inspiration (that is, when receiving a revelation from God) has undergone considerable study, especially by members of the psychological community, though with mixed results. Often the terms "ecstasy," "frenzy," "enthusiasm," and "trance" have been used to describe all prophetic activity.<sup>15</sup> Earlier Old Testament studies frequently viewed the process in which a prophet received a revelation as being an ecstatic one in which people entered a state "outside" of themselves, or in the words of Scripture, they were turned into someone else (1 Samuel 10:6). Writing in the 1920s, for instance, Theodore Robinson described prophetic inspiration in this way. The prophet

. . . might be mingling with the crowd, sometimes on ordinary days, sometimes on special occasions. Suddenly something would happen to him. His eyes would become fixed, strange convulsions would seize upon his limbs, the form of his speech would change. Men would recognize that the Spirit had fallen upon him. The fit would pass, and he would tell to those who stood around the things which he had seen and heard.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Kaplan, *The Psychology of Prophecy*, 138, 140.

<sup>16</sup>T. H. Robinson, *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel*, 50.

This description sounds like what took place when Saul met a band of prophets on two occasions (1 Samuel 10:5-12; 19:18-24). The texts tell us that the Spirit of God possessed him; he was turned into another man; he went into a prophetic frenzy, and he lay naked on the ground for a day and a night. His actions also gave rise to the proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" It was a description that influenced biblical commentators for a generation.

There is also clear evidence in the Old Testament of prophetic guilds or prophetic schools. There appear to have been several such schools, for example, at Ramah (1 Kings 19:20), at Bethel (2 Kings 2:3), and at Jericho (2 Kings 2:5, 7, 15-18), where the students were called "sons of the prophets." Interestingly, Amos denied that he was part of such a group (Amos 7:14), in a sense, declaring his independence from human interference, and claiming that the Lord gave him his message directly. The Lord had taken him from his vocation as shepherd and fruit picker. It is likely that prophets led these schools, where they studied prophetic words given on earlier occasions, where they taught students about the role of prophets in liturgy, and where they trained students or encouraged them to listen for the voice of God. It does not seem likely that they taught people how to prophesy as such, since prophecy is something that comes through Divine initiative, not through human conjuring.

The presence of musicians working with prophets and the presence of prophetic messages within some of the Psalms (Cf. Psalm 50:7-25; 60:6-8; 89:19-37) is suggestive of ways in which prophets may have participated in rite and liturgy. At times, the power of the Lord came upon a prophet while a musician played (2 Kings 3:15). Under David, musicians sometimes prophesied to the accompaniment of music (1 Chronicles 25:1, 3, 6). This may provide useful background when considering what Paul meant when he spoke of "spiritual songs" (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-19). On other occasions, the schools of prophets formed processions (1 Samuel 10:5). One wonders whether these processions did not look something like the Krishna converts, armed with bells, drums, and cymbals, who were commonly seen marching on city streets during the 1970s and 80s. The drums would stop and the prophet would speak.

The prophetic tradition was highly valued by the writers of deuterocanonical and other intertestamental writers as well. The Psalmist (74:9) lamented the absence of prophets already in his day, though Malachi (4:5-6) pointed toward the return of the prophet Elijah. The author of 1 Maccabees acknowledged the disappearance of prophets prior to his time (1 Maccabees 9:27). Accordingly, Judas Maccabeus, the primary figure in this book, made plans for the return of a prophet in a hoped-for future (1 Maccabees 4:46; 14:41). Similarly, the author of the

Sibylline Oracles looked forward to an eschatological kingdom in which the prophet would return (3:781). Just before, during, and shortly after this same intertestamental period, the prophetic element frequently elided into apocalyptic. While prophetic and apocalyptic elements often overlapped as in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Daniel 3), Enoch's vision (1 Enoch 1:1-3), and John's vision while "in the Spirit" (Revelation 1:1-3, 10 ff.), they also exhibit discrete characteristics. Clearly, prophecy and apocalyptic are related, but they also represent different genera. Prophecy is concerned that the message represents exactly what God wants said, while apocalyptic tends to convey its often-pessimistic message in a dualistic fashion while employing specific types of symbols.<sup>17</sup>

### Prophetic Gifts in the New Testament

It is little wonder, then, that when John the Baptist appeared on the scene after some 300 years of prophetic absence, hordes of people went out to hear him (Mark 1:1-5). They thought that they recognized him as the voice coming in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (40:3) regarding one who would cry out from the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord. They wondered whether he was *the* prophet who was to come. They recognized John's prophetic character (John 1:21), and they recognized in his message the very words of God (John 1:32-34). His clothing made of camel's hair with a leather belt, his ascetic diet of locusts and wild honey (Mark 1:6), and his abstinence from alcohol (Luke 1:15) set him apart. John's provocative address, "*You brood of vipers!*" (Matthew 1:7); his equally provocative question, "*Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*" (Luke 3:7); his demand for his audience to repent; and his use of apocalyptic imagery, "*The chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire!*" (Matthew 7:10), were characteristics that they could easily interpret as arising from within the older prophetic tradition. As a result, there were many priests and Levites who queried him on this

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<sup>17</sup>The classic study on this topic is D. S. Russell, *The Old Testament Library, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic: 200 BC-AD 100* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1964). For a concise overview of apocalyptic characteristics, including a medium or prophet, a generally pessimistic worldview, a cosmic setting, dualistic tendencies, the use of symbols, angels, and mythical beasts, and an appreciation for the transcendence of God and the hope that God will intervene in the end, see Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972). See also Robby Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation* JPT Supp Series 30, (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2006), who emphasizes the prophetic character of the Apocalypse. Indeed, the Book of Revelation is most like the prophetic books found in the Old Testament. It contains several specific oracles spoken or written by the prophet, John, under the inspiration of the Spirit, to the Churches in its second and third chapters, for instance.

subject (John 1:19-27) as he announced that “the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6) was now making its appearance in Jesus (John 1:30-34).

The Israelites also recognized Jesus as a prophet (Mark 6:14-15; 8:28; John 4:19). He had a clear prophetic consciousness that God had sent him (Mark 9:37) to represent himself. Jesus seems to have understood his ministry as standing in the line of the Old Testament prophets who had been sacrificed by the people of Israel through the centuries (Luke 13:31-35).<sup>18</sup> His prophetic message announced the imminence of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15; 13:28-31). Yet, the incidents in which Jesus seems to have spoken prophetically never seem surrounded by, or contextualized within, anything looking like “ecstatic” phenomena.

As we think about prophets, prophecy, and the prophetic charism, perhaps a good beginning is for us to refer to a Petrine text:<sup>19</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift (*chárisma*) each of you has received.

<sup>11</sup>Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. (1 Peter 4: 10-11 NRSV)

The first epistle of Peter is not typically the starting point for discussions on the charisms, but while in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (and elsewhere) Paul tends to open up the topic of charismata in ways that demonstrate their wide variety, this Petrine passage merely summarizes all charisms as representing one of two categories. Either it is a charism of speech, or it is a charism of service.

It is not difficult to see how Paul’s list in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, even with all its nuanced distinctions, might be read in light of these same two categories. “Words of wisdom,” “words of knowledge,” “utterances in tongues,” the “interpretation of tongues,” “prophecy,” even “the discernment of spirits” might easily be described as charismatic endowments by which one reveals “the very words of God,” in other

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<sup>18</sup>David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 157. King Jehoiakim chased the prophet Uriah down in Egypt and killed him with a sword. Cf. Jeremiah 26:20-23.

<sup>19</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), 205. Dunn notes that the word, “charisma,” appears outside Paul, only here. He contends that this passage is “a typically Pauline passage” in the way it uses the term, “charisma.”

words, they are all speech gifts. We might more easily envision the other charisms in this same catalogue, “faith,” “gifts of healings,” and the “working of miracles” as gifts of service.

There are other charisms that appear in various Pauline catalogues and texts as well. Charisms such as apostles, teachers, helpers, administrators in 1 Corinthians 12:28; ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and compassion mentioned in Romans 12:8<sup>20</sup>; evangelists and pastors in Ephesians 4:11, celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7:7-8, and martyrdom which is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 13:3. Manifestations such as “exhortation” might easily fit into the category of word or speech gifts, though charisms such as “apostle,” “evangelist,” “pastor,” and “teacher” might also be categorized in this way.

**Table 1.1**

<b>1 Cor. 12.8-10</b>	<b>1 Cor. 12.28</b>	<b>1 Cor. 12.29-30</b>	<b>Eph. 4.11</b>	<b>Rom. 12.6-8</b>
Words of Wisdom	Apostles	Apostles	Apostle	Prophecy
Words of Knowledge	Prophets	Prophets	Prophet	Service
Faith	Teachers	Teachers	Evangelist	Teaching
Healing	Miracles	Miracles	Pastor/teacher	Exhortation
Miracles	Healings	Healings		Giving
Prophecy	Helps	Tongues		Mercy
Discernment of Spirits	Administration	Interpretation		
Tongues	Tongues			
Interpretation				

While it is the case that we are focusing the current discussion on the charism of “prophecy,” we should keep in mind the fact that these other word-oriented charisms also involve speaking messages that God has given. We might even say that if the charism of prophecy is simply the act of conveying a message from God to those he wishes to address, then all of these other word charisms are also genuinely prophetic, belonging to what might be described as a prophetic prerogative, even if

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<sup>20</sup>The NRSV translates Romans 12:6-8 as: “We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup>ministry, in ministering; teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. The NIV translates this same passage as: <sup>6</sup>Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; <sup>7</sup>Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching<sup>8</sup>; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

they are not “prophecy” in the narrow sense of the term as Paul has described it.

In the New Testament, the charism of prophecy is mentioned both in a nominal form, “prophet(s),” such as in the case of Agabus (Acts 21:10), or as unnamed individuals (1 Corinthians 12:28), or as prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:6, 22). Also, prophecy is referred to in a verbal form, such as in the case of Philip’s four daughters who “prophesied” (Acts 21:9), or in the nameless members of the Corinthian (1 Corinthians 11:5; 14:3, 31) and Thessalonian (1 Thessalonians 5:20) congregations. Prophetic gifts provided direction and guidance as in the cases of Ananias (Acts 9:10-16), Cornelius (Acts 10:3-8), Peter (Acts 10:9-10), the group of prophets and teachers who were worshipping and fasting at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3), and Paul (Acts 16:9-10). By following the prophetic pronouncement the needs of a congregation were sometimes met (Acts 11:27-30). Although listeners might all recognize the prophetic word as a genuine word from the Lord, how that word was to be understood, or applied, was sometimes the subject of considerable debate (Acts 21:8-14). What is clear from these examples is that from time to time God speaks through the charism of prophecy, but observers must test or discern, accept or reject, all such claims to speak on behalf of God (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22).

Unlike the early prophets of the Old Testament, who often experienced the Spirit in more ecstatic ways, the Pauline notion that within the worshipping congregation, “the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet” is in keeping with a God who is orderly (1 Corinthians 14:32). This further suggests just as clearly, that those who prophesied in Paul’s day had a level of self-control that differentiated their actions from those of the earliest prophets.<sup>21</sup>

It may still be worth mentioning that the philosopher, Celsus, writing about AD 178, claimed that he knew of “many, who, although of no name, with the greatest facility and on the slightest occasion, whether within or without temples, assume the motions and gestures of inspired persons; while others do it in cities or among armies, for the purpose of attracting attention and exciting surprise.”<sup>22</sup> He went on to observe that

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<sup>21</sup>George Barton Cutten, *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912) 343-344. Cutten described early prophetism this way: “The inspiration of the early Hebrew prophets conforms rather more closely to our idea of possession than to that of inspiration, if we may judge from the accounts which we have in the Old Testament. By the use of music, dancing, and other exciting means, a highly contagious ecstasy was developed, in which the participants prophesied. The influence of the nomadic, prophesying troops which traversed the country was felt by those who came in contact with them.”

<sup>22</sup>Origen, *Against Celsus* 7.9. In a sense, this is not unlike either the actions of certain Old Testament prophets, Saul, for instance, nor the description given by

they sometimes “added strange, fanatical, and quite unintelligible words, of which no rational person can find the meaning: for so dark are they, as to have no meaning at all; but they give occasion to every fool or imposter to apply them to suit his own purposes.” While this may sound as though these people first prophesied and then spoke in tongues, that is not a necessary conclusion, for the Old Testament prophets were sometimes accused of engaging in “dark sayings” as well.<sup>23</sup> It seems likely that there may be a range of responses that are possible during the process of prophetic inspiration, though Paul, at least, calls for order (1 Corinthians 14:32-33). In both cases, there seems to be a heightened awareness that God is speaking, that God wants individuals who hear his voice or see his vision to convey, or to act upon, what they hear or see before a specific audience.

There is little doubt that the New Testament writers took seriously the charism of prophecy and the existence of prophets in their day. Indeed, the Church was established “*upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone*” (Ephesians 2:20). This reference seems to suggest an ongoing role for such people within the life of the New Testament church. That point is not to deny that the Old Testament prophets have a role here, but it would be surprising to find that New Testament or early Christian prophets do not also have a role. The Church is not yet institutionally stabilized, and those who have been called and commissioned as apostles or as prophets have an ongoing role to play. One might even argue that they have a primary role, given that in the lists found in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and 12:29, as well as here in Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11, apostles and prophets always rank first and second positions. That role is probably something like what Ephesians 3:5-6 states: New Testament prophets were recipients, along with apostles, of revelations “by the Spirit” (*en pneūmati*) according to which “*the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.*”

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Apollonius of Hierapolis, who wrote that Montanus “became beside himself, and being suddenly in a sort of frenzy and ecstasy, he raved, and began to babble and utter strange things, prophesying in a manner *contrary to the constant custom of the Church handed down by tradition from the beginning* [italics mine].” Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.16.7. I think that it is important to note that it was only the prophetic *tradition* as understood by Apollonius that was violated.

<sup>23</sup>Origen, *Against Celsus* 7:10. “The prophets have therefore, as God commanded them, declared with all plainness those things which it was desirable that the hearers should understand at once for the regulation of their conduct; while in regard to deeper and more mysterious subjects, which lay beyond the reach of the common understanding, they set them forth in the form of enigmas and allegories, or of what are called dark sayings, parables, or similitudes. Cf. Hosea 12:10; Ezekiel 20:45-49.

My sense, however, is that we should avoid the term “office” as much as possible when speaking of prophets for two reasons. First, while the term typically translated “office” (*diakonia*) applies to deacons, priests, and bishops, neither Paul nor any other New Testament writer employs this term in conjunction with either apostles or prophets. Second, as the term “office” came to be used more widely in the Church institutionally, it seems to have taken on a quality of authority, not necessarily of service (*diakonia*), that the New Testament writers did not intend when they spoke of prophetic gifts.

Various New Testament texts suggest that “prophecy” (*prophēteia*) and related terms such as “prophesy” (*prophēteuo*), “prophet” (*prophētēs*), “prophets” (*prophētikós*), and “prophetess” (*prophētis*) hold a range of nuanced meanings. There were prophets who seem to be associated with specific cities, such as Jerusalem or Antioch (Acts 11:27; 13:1). There were prophets who played an itinerant role (Acts 21:10). There were also those people who prophesied, but who Scripture never designated as prophets or prophetesses (1 Corinthians 14:1, 5-6, 24, 31). Indeed, Paul seems to suggest that prophecy is potentially available to everyone within the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:1, 5, 39), and while it is valid to seek such a gift for purposes of ministry (1 Corinthians 14:3, 31), it must be recognized that the bestowal of this gift rests with the Holy Spirit, who distributes each of the gifts in a sovereign manner (1 Corinthians 12:11). It must further be understood that while the Holy Spirit, who indwells all of those who follow Christ (Romans 8:9), is the source of all charisms, and as a result of this indwelling, the potential for prophetic speech lies within each Christian (Acts 2:17-18, 38), not all are called to serve as prophets, or even in a prophetic capacity (1 Corinthians 12:29).

Prophetic gifts play a variety of roles, or satisfy a variety of purposes. 1 Corinthians 14:3 mentions three of them: upbuilding or edification (*oikodomēne*), encouragement or exhortation (*paráklēsin*), and consolation or comfort (*paramuthian*). But prophetic gifts appear to have more than these three purposes. Luke, for instance, illustrates that prophetic words can provide direction, such as when the prophets and teachers worshipping in Antioch were instructed by the Holy Spirit to separate out Saul and Barnabas for what would become known as Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:3). In Acts 11:27-30, Luke records a second account in which Agabus prophesied that a famine was coming over the whole earth, and he notes that this prophecy came to pass during the time when Claudius was Caesar. Unfortunately, all we have is a brief summary of what Agabus said. What we do not have is a record of the oracle as it was given. What is possible for us to ascertain, then, is that whatever Agabus said, that is, whatever the words that he used in the

oracle regarding this famine were, the people in that congregation understood it to be a warning on which they needed to act. As a result, they took up an offering for the Church in Jerusalem.

Luke gives a third account of prophetic activity when he records the encounter between Agabus and Paul, as Paul is about to leave Caesarea while continuing his journey to Jerusalem. Agabus engages in two activities that were common among Old Testament prophets. First, he engaged in what is known as a symbolic action. He took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands with it (Acts 21:11). Symbolic actions are not present in all prophecies, but they were used by several Old Testament prophets, for instance, by Isaiah, when he walked naked and barefoot through the streets for three years, and then used his action to illustrate the judgment God was bringing to Egypt and Ethiopia (20:2-6). They would be taken captive and marched naked and barefoot through the streets to shame them. Jeremiah engaged in symbolic actions when he was commanded by the Lord to purchase, wear, and then hide, some underwear until it was rotten and then dig it up and use it in a symbolic action to prophesy that just as the underwear was ruined, so the Lord would ruin the pride of Judah (13:1-11). Later, Jeremiah wore a yoke, first of wood and then of iron, to make his point about the upcoming captivity of Judah (27:1-28:17). And then there is Hosea, whose marriage to the prostitute, Gomer, at the command of the Lord, symbolized the unfaithfulness of Israel (Hosea 1:2-8, 3:1).

In addition to using a symbolic action, Agabus employed a messenger formula to introduce his message (Acts 21:11). "Thus says the Holy Spirit . . ." (*Táde légei tò pneŷma tò hágion*) clearly corresponds with messenger formulas like "Thus says the Lord," or "says the Lord" that are encountered in nearly all the Old Testament prophets (e.g. Isaiah 7:7; Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 6:3, 11; Hosea 2:16, 21; Amos 1:3, 6; Obadiah 1; Micah 2:3; Nahum 1:12; Zephaniah 4:2; Haggai 1:5; Zechariah 1:3; Malachi 1:4). Such widespread usage of a messenger formula is intended to signal that what follows is a word from the Lord delivered by the person speaking. But it does more than that. For a person such as Agabus to ascribe what follows to "the Lord," or in this case to "the Holy Spirit," places a burden upon him that he has, indeed, received this message from God. This messenger formula, "Thus says the Holy Spirit" is consistent with Luke's development of pneumatological thinking in his two-part series, Luke-Acts, but it also stands in continuity with the Old Testament usage of "Thus says the Lord." At the same time, it acts as a kind of exclamation point at the beginning of the "word" or message that suggests something like, "Now pay attention because this is an important word from the Holy Spirit."

This messenger formula is also not dissimilar from Jesus' own words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," or "You have heard it said . . . but I say unto you," which was rooted in the authority that the Father had granted to him, each time he used these clauses. As a result, these messenger formulas call for our attention, but they also assume that what follows will require study, interpretation, and testing by the community of faith. When the saying is found to be true, it will require the community of faith to own, and to follow, it as a word from the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

The message conveyed by Agabus was simple enough. The words of his prophecy are, "This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles" (Acts 21:11). Even though Agabus used the messenger formula, and performed the symbolic action, the message itself gave way to multiple interpretations. Agabus simply made a statement of fact, grounded in the future. The simplest way of understanding his message was that when Paul reached Jerusalem, the Romans would take him captive and he would become a Roman prisoner. Upon hearing these words, the people understood these prophetic words as a warning for Paul not to proceed with his plan to go to Jerusalem. As a result, they pleaded with him not to continue his journey (Acts 21:12). But that was not the end of the Lukan account.

Paul did not view Agabus' words as a warning to him. Luke previously noted when Paul was in Ephesus (20:22) he informed the saints that he was "captive to the Spirit" (*'idoù dedeménos egò tò pneúmati*) and on his way to Jerusalem as a result. At the same time, Luke reported in Acts 21:4 that just days before his arrival in Caesarea, during a weeklong layover in Tyre, "Through the Spirit [*toũ pneúmatos*] they told Paul not to go to Jerusalem [*mē 'epibaínein eis 'Terosóluma*]." The "they" is not specifically identified in this case, but given the fact that the "warning" came through the Spirit, it was probably a prophetic message. Unfortunately, we do not have the oracle given in Tyre; we have only a summary. The question is whether Luke's declaration that there were those in Tyre who "warned [literally: *elegon*] Paul not to go to Jerusalem" means that Paul had received a prophetic word directing him not to go, or as in the case before us, the word was simply an announcement that he would be taken captive upon his arrival in Jerusalem and thus, the people in Tyre had heard what the people in Caesarea now understood. Since Luke was with Paul in both places, and he clearly sides with the people in Caesarea (Acts 21:12), that is, "we and the people" urged Paul not to continue his journey, it may be that Luke is simply stating his personal thoughts that the prophetic word

given in Tyre, and now in Caesarea, was to be understood by Paul as a warning not to proceed.

Paul ends up taking control of the situation, however, by telling the Christians in Caesarea, as well as the chronicler of these events, namely Luke, who were begging him not to go forward, that their understanding of this event led to a gut-wrenching experience with much weeping and the breaking of Paul's heart. Paul informed them that not only was he prepared to go on with his journey, he was also prepared, if necessary, to die (Act 21:13). His interpretation of Agabus' prophetic announcement, then, must rely upon his own experience that is based upon Acts 20:22. He was "captive to the Spirit" as he headed toward Jerusalem, not knowing at that time what would happen to him upon his arrival. In the end, the group acceded to his wishes (if not to his interpretation!) and prayed that "The will of the Lord be done."<sup>24</sup>

Admittedly, this passage describes a rather messy situation. Perhaps that is why Paul makes it clear that one of the most significant things we can do when confronted by prophetic words is to test them. Jesus noted that the evaluation of the fruit of the "prophet" was a valid means of testing. We have seen that, in some cases, whether the prophecy comes to pass, that is fulfillment over time, is also a valid test. The apostle John instructed his readers to "test the spirits" (*dokimázete tà pneúmata*) to see whether they are from God, while the apostle Paul used the same verb (*dokimázete*) when exhorting the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 5:19-22) not to despise prophecy, but rather, to test it, keeping the good and discarding the rest. This ability is likely the same thing as Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12:10, the discerning of spirits (*diakríseis pneumátōn*), for he uses it also in 14:29 (*diakrinétōsan*) to describe the activity that those in the Corinthian community who listen to prophecy, are to undertake.<sup>25</sup>

It is commonly understood that both *diakrisis* and *dokimazo* refer to the same reality, the act of judging, testing, or discerning. The fact that they are both employed in the case of prophecy, the judging, testing, we may construe them as referring to distinguishing what spirit underlies the prophetic word or inspired speech. The Pentecostal team has noted in

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<sup>24</sup>J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1973), 64. Lindblom cites the account of two contradictory prophets in 1 Kings 13:1-32, noting that, "The object of this story was to give this lesson: when a revelation that you have received is contradicted by the revelation of another prophet, you have to obey the divine voice that you have heard yourself."

<sup>25</sup>See, for instance, the discussion in David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979). 133-135 on 1 Corinthians 14:29 and 151-152, and on 1 John 4:1. Hill treats them each as referring to the same thing, namely the discerning of spirits. Similarly, David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 221.

some detail the significance of this gift for evaluating inspired speech in their discussions with the World Communion of Reformed Churches.<sup>26</sup>

A final test for distinguishing between true and false prophecy comes down to protocol. Paul set forth a protocol for how a congregation may evaluate prophetic utterances. It required testing. If observers can test the person who prophesied by the fruit that they bore in their lives outside the congregation, it was the case that the fruit of their actions within the congregation could, and should, also be evaluated. Do they look forward to bringing something to the congregation that will edify, encourage, comfort, or confront the congregation in a manner that is loving and not self-serving? Are they willing to follow the rule, the protocol set forth by Paul? Are they willing to allow others to assess their words to determine their value for the congregation (1 Corinthians 14:29)? Are they willing to take turns, allowing others to go before them (1 Corinthians 14:30)? Are they willing to exercise self-control, allowing for an orderly progression of gifts within the congregation (1 Corinthians 14:32)? Are they willing to embrace only what is good in their messages, and set aside that which is not (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)?

Ultimately, within the New Testament, it is difficult to state categorically that it contains many prophetic oracles that we can examine, outside of some of Jesus' teaching as well as John's prophecy in the Revelation. However, there is one such passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 that calls for a brief analysis. In this passage, Paul provides a word that he declares to be one given "by the word of the Lord" (*'en lógo kyriou*). At the end of this "word" or message, Paul exhorts his readers to "encourage (*parakaleite*) one another with these words," one of the roles that prophetic messages might take (1 Corinthians 14:3, 31).

The two theories regarding this passage are (1) this is an independent and previously unrecorded saying of Jesus<sup>27</sup>, or (2) this is a prophetic word that Paul has chosen to incorporate at this point in his concern to address the worries of the Thessalonians about those Christians who had already died.<sup>28</sup> If this is an oracle that was given through an unnamed prophet in the early church, this "prophecy" would seem to reiterate

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<sup>26</sup> "Experience in Christian Faith and Life: Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community and Justice," in *Reformed World* 63(1) (March 2013): 18-27; Paragraphs 72-113, especially paragraphs 74-82; Wolfgang Vondey, Ed. *Pentecostalism and Christian Unity, Volume 2: Continuing and Building Relationships* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 217-267.

<sup>27</sup> So, Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 141.

<sup>28</sup> Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), 193. Best views this as the "most probable" view for this passage; so too, David Aune, *Prophecy in Ancient Christianity*, 253-256.

some of the teaching of Jesus in more apocalyptic terms than are found in Mark's account of Jesus' teaching on the return of the Son of Man (Mark 8:31-9:1). The oracle read:

*We who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.*  
(1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

Among the questions that might arise if this is a genuine word of the Lord given through an anonymous prophet, is whether such ideas were prevalent in that time. The answer is that 2 Baruch 30:1-5 and 50:1-4 carry one of the important ideas found in this saying, the idea of a resurrection of the dead, the re-uniting of the living and the dead, and all of it taking place upon the coming of the Anointed One.

### **Post-Canonical Use of Prophetic Charisms**

The early Fathers continued to highly value the gift, or charism, of prophecy, some of whom, it appears, prophesied spontaneously on occasion. When Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, visited the congregation in Philadelphia (Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians* 7:1-2), Syria noted that when he proclaimed with a loud voice, "Give heed to the bishop, and to the presbytery and deacons," his words had come both unexpectedly to him and without previous knowledge of the congregation's situation. It was "the Spirit" who "proclaimed these words," he said. Thus, his call for unity among the Philadelphians came as a charismatic manifestation, a prophetic word given during a sermon, a prophetic word to which Bishop Ignatius bore witness.

Polycarp had a prophetic vision before his martyrdom (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 5 and 12), which the congregation in Smyrna accepted as constituting a valid prophecy. The early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Syrian liturgical manual known as the *Didache* (11:3-12.1, 13:1, 3-4), knew of both resident and itinerant prophets, and allowed them considerable freedom in speaking and in praying. The *Shepherd of Hermas* (Mandate 11), written from Rome during the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, was concerned

with the presence of false prophets, who preyed upon the weak within the congregation. It offered several pointers on how to detect them.<sup>29</sup>

As the patristic period developed, prophetic gifts continued to exist. According to Irenaeus (Gaul), if one did not accept the ongoing presence of such charisms in his day, one could not be a fruitful Christian (*Proof of Apostolic Preaching* 99). He contended that exorcisms, prophecy, healing, and miracles were all found regularly during his time (*Against Heresies* 2:32.4).<sup>30</sup> At the same time, he accused Marcus, the Gnostic teacher, of relying upon a false “prophetess” for his teaching (*Against Heresies* 1.13.3). Justin Martyr (Palestine and Rome) spoke of prophetic gifts in his day (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 88.1). In his works *On Patience* (12:10) and *On Prayer* (4:3) Tertullian (Carthage) asserted the presence of the charism of prophecy in that North African city. He honored a woman in the congregation at Carthage, who was alleged to be a regular recipient of words and visions from the Lord in his *Treatise on the Soul* (9:4).<sup>31</sup> The facts he gleaned from her vision of the soul were used to support his theological and philosophical arguments for the shape of the soul.<sup>32</sup> Origen (Alexandria and Palestine) wrote of the gift of prophecy in his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, 8. Then, of course, there were the widespread prophetic claims of the Montanists (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5:14; 5.16.8-9; 5.18.5; Tertullian, *On the Soul* 9:3-4).

More importantly, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (AD 250-258), made repeated appeals to visions, dreams, and the gift of prophecy. He claimed to have experienced visions that directed his personal movements (Cyprian, *Letter* 10.4.1; 20 (14).1.1-2; 16 (9).4.1; 55

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<sup>29</sup>Prophets who exalt themselves, seek dominance, are bold and presumptuous, act boisterously, live luxuriously, engage in deception, demand payment for prophesying, avoid the righteous while preferring the purposeless and double-minded because they can give them what they want, may be viewed as false prophets. In short, Hermas’ warning is to watch the life or fruit of those who claim to prophesy.

<sup>30</sup>Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Irenaeus and Prophetic Gifts,” Paul Elbert, Ed., *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M. Ervin*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 104-114.

<sup>31</sup>Even during Tertullian’s Montanist period, he reported that all the revelations made through this sister were “examined with the most scrupulous care, in order that their truth may be probed” (*Treatise on the Soul* 9.4). See Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., *Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian and Cyprian* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 128-134.

<sup>32</sup>Tertullian also referred to “revelations” to support his conviction that women should wear a veil in church, (*On the Veiling of Virgins* 1:7). “They who have received Him [the Paraclete] set truth before custom. They who have heard Him prophesying even to the present time, not of old, bid virgins be wholly covered.” Cf. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., *Prophecy in Carthage*, 135-139. Much of Tertullian’s argument was based upon his reading of John 16:12-13a, which suggested that Jesus promised that he would provide the Church with further revelation or direction after his ascension by means of prophetic gifts.

(58).5.2)<sup>33</sup>. He reported that entire synods of bishops in North Africa took visions and prophecies under consideration when making their appointments to ecclesial offices (Cyprian, *Letter* 39 (33).1.1-2; 40 (34).1.1). Among Cyprian's most commonly referenced texts were Jesus' words in Matthew 10:19-20. Like many during his day, he viewed Jesus' promise to his followers as a promise that upon their confession to the governmental powers that they were indeed Christians, they would be exercising a prophetic gift through that confession, since it was the Holy Spirit who gave them both the ability, and the words, to confess (Cyprian *Epistle* 10.4.1; 58 [55].5.2; 76.5; 81 [82].1).

What this brief survey suggests is that prophetic charisms were found throughout churches of the Roman Empire well into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. The most common among the charisms seems to have been the gift of prophecy, a spontaneous utterance or oracle believed to have originated with God and been conveyed by someone trusted to carry the words of God without interference. The charism of prophecy was followed in frequency only by healing and claims to miracles.

Despite this widespread evidence from the time, some people believed that they were losing the fervor of the apostles. First, liturgical life was becoming more stylized, that is, liturgical manuals such as the *Didache* began to appear, spelling out specific prayers and orders of worship that the churches adopted. Second, Marcion's challenge forced the Church to determine what writings it would recognize as having a place in what would become the canon of Scripture. The choices the Church made sometimes did away with regional favorites. Third, because of pressing needs caused by evangelization in the face of persecution, they developed apologetic systems that explained what Christianity was and what Christians believed. Fourth, with the rise of Gnosticism and other competing theological systems, it became more important for the bishops to address the false teachings that were involved. Finally, to help their congregations grow spiritually it became important for the bishops to articulate the doctrines of the Church clearly, hence the development of the Church's earliest forms of constructive theology, first, in the various *regulae fidei* and then in the form of creeds.

Some believed these steps toward greater institutionalization, regardless of how logical they were, had taken their toll upon the spontaneous interventions of the Holy Spirit. They longed for the days with regular performances of signs and wonders, when miracles took place on a regular basis, and when God seemed to speak directly to the

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<sup>33</sup>See also the claims of Pontius, *Life and Passion of Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr*, 7.

people through gifts like prophecy, tongues with interpretation, and words of wisdom and of knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

In a sense, many of them came to believe that the Church was too top-heavy and poorly led. It had too many bishops telling people what to do. They believed that when the bishops claimed to be speaking on behalf of God, in a sense, they usurped the charism of prophecy from the people. The bishops seemed to have claimed that the prophetic prerogative belonged only with them. “What happened to the Body of Christ?” some wondered. What happened to the spontaneity and sovereignty of the Holy Spirit? Where was the demonstration of the gift of prophecy? It was within such a context that the Montanists arose in the latter half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. The conflict that rose between the bishops and the Montanists deeply scarred future understandings of prophetic gifts, even though Hippolytus (AD 160-236) and Epiphanius (AD. 315-403) claimed that Montanus both accepted, and taught, the orthodox doctrinal beliefs of the Church.<sup>35</sup> Further, Jerome (AD 348-420) criticized the Montanists only for making obligatory certain matters (e.g. fasts) that the Church viewed as matters of conscience.<sup>36</sup>

While many historians from Adolph von Harnack onward have claimed that prophetic gifts stopped functioning once the churches established, published, and received the canon of Scripture, the historical evidence does not bear this out. James L. Ash has pointed out that while something he calls the “prophetic office” seems to have been in decline by the mid-Second century, prophetic gifts seem to have been “captured by episcopacy in some locations, particularly in Asia Minor, perhaps as early as 100 AD [sic.]”<sup>37</sup> By the time the Montanist threat had been addressed, “The charisma of prophecy,” had become “the special province of the bishop, and the relics of the dying gift were to remain ever beneath the episcopal mitre.”<sup>38</sup>

By the time of the Protestant Reformation, followers identified the gift of prophecy as preaching. John Calvin, for instance, identified the gift of prophecy as “preaching” when he wrote “In the Christian Church, therefore, prophecy at the present day is simply *the right understanding*

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<sup>34</sup>I make this generalization based upon St. Chrysostom’s claim in his *Homilies on First Corinthians* 29.1, stemming from his ministry in Antioch (AD 386-397), that “This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place. And why do they not happen now?”

<sup>35</sup>Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies* 8.12; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 48.1.

<sup>36</sup>Jerome, *Epistle* 41.3.

<sup>37</sup>James L. Ash, “The Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy in the Early Church,” *Theological Studies* 37 (1976), 236.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 250. If this is the case, perhaps the ultimate claim to the prophetic gift may lie in the doctrine of papal infallibility.

*of Scripture and the particular gift of expounding it*, since all the ancient prophecies and all the oracles of God have been concluded in Christ and his Gospel.”<sup>39</sup> In a sense, he adopted what might be described as a cessationist position with respect to the charism of prophecy by defining it in this way.

When Martin Luther left for Wartburg in 1523, he became concerned with one of his successors in the region of Wittenberg, Dr. Andreas von Karlstadt. His primary concern focused on claims made by Karlstadt regarding prophetic gifts. Karlstadt and his followers, who Luther called the “Heavenly Prophets,” claimed that they received direction on the sacraments through a “living voice from heaven.” Luther was horrified, calling his followers to follow Christ and the apostle Paul, and to ignore Karlstadt’s prophetic claims. From his perspective, the claims made by Karlstadt were extremely problematic. He charged that, “They make for confused, disturbed, anxious consciences, and want people to be amazed at their great skill, but meanwhile Christ is forgotten.”<sup>40</sup>

As a result, the issue of continuing revelation, including any subsequent claim to the exercise of prophetic gifts, became problematic. Instead of weighing prophetic claims as instructed in 1 Corinthians 14:29, or testing everything and keeping what was good while rejecting the evil according to 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22, there was the likelihood that the Holy Spirit was being quenched. As a result, much subsequent activity was dismissed out of hand, sometimes by the assertion of a canonical dispensationalism, at other times by redefinition. The most common method following the Reformation seems to have been the assertion made by Calvin. The Canadian Old Testament scholar, R. B. Y. Scott, however, has argued, I think convincingly, against Calvin and others that while preaching and prophecy are both forms of proclaiming the Word of God, they are not the same.

In the New Testament, preaching (*kērussō*) took precedence over prophetic utterances, but that did not mean that prophecy ceased to exist. Indeed, the Apostle Paul, contended that prophecy was among the most valuable charisms because it built up the Body of Christ in a variety of ways (1 Corinthians 14:1-6). Scott demonstrated observers could hear both preaching and prophecy in the Temple courts of the Old Testament (Amos 7:10-13; Isaiah 1:12; 6:1-8; Jeremiah 26:17-19). The prophets did not simply expound and apply the message, or the written Scripture, or

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<sup>39</sup>David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, Eds. Ross Mackenzie, Trans., *The Epistles of Paul The Apostle to the Romans and the Thessalonians*, Calvin’s Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), 269.

<sup>40</sup>Martin Luther, “Letter to the Christians at Strasburg in Opposition to the Fanatic Spirit,” in Conrad Bergendoff, Ed. and Trans., *Luther’s Works*, 40:70.

even an inherited tradition, though they stood in a living succession of prophets who shared largely the same religious and ethical convictions. The prophets spoke as if Yahweh had, at that moment, laid hands on them and put words into their mouths. (Amos 7:15; Isaiah 6:8-10; Jeremiah 1:9). Prophecy was the declaration that the will and purpose of the living God were urgent and relevant in the present moment in which the people stood – God was calling directly for a decision to believe and obey.

On the other hand, preaching was the announcement of the Good News of what God had done, and was prepared to do, for those who would hear and believe.<sup>41</sup> Its primary purpose was repentance (Acts 2:14-40; 3:12-26). Despite these helpful clarifications, it is still the case that when issues of social import (or social justice) are concerned, many advocates view their preaching as constituting prophetic speech. This assessment is frequently offered when a pastor or priest of some eminence speaks to a social issue in such a way as to counter the accepted social norm or status quo.<sup>42</sup> Such assessments are sometimes also applied to Christian social movements.<sup>43</sup> It is important to note, however, that while such sermons or movements may appeal heavily to Scripture, especially to a number of Old Testament prophetic texts, they do not seem to be the same as the charism of prophecy.

### Contemporary Claims to Prophecy

From time to time, people have raised questions regarding the continuation of the gift of prophecy. This was particularly true in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Joseph Smith made the claim that the revelation known popularly as the *Book of Mormon* should be placed alongside his version of the Bible. Later, other books were added, holding a more or less canonical status for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,

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<sup>41</sup>R.B.Y. Scott, "Is Preaching Prophecy," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 1 (1955), 11-18.

<sup>42</sup>Many have described sermons by such notables as Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert McAfee Brown, and Henry Sloan Coffin as constituting prophetic speech. See, for instance, Thomas A. Mulhall, *Lasting Prophetic Legacy: Martin Luther King, Jr., The World Council of Churches and the Global Crusade against Racism and War* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014); Robert McAfee Brown, Denise Larder Carmody, John Carmody, *Future of Prophetic Christianity: Essays in Honor of Robert McAfee Brown* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); André Resner, *Just Preaching: Prophetic Voices for Economic Justice* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003); "The Future of the Prophetic Voice: William Sloan Coffin, Jr., '56BD (June 1, 1924-April 12, 2006): A Tribute, *Reflections* (Winter 2006). (New Haven CT, Yale Divinity School, 2006).

<sup>43</sup>David S. Gutterman, *Prophetic Politics: Christian Social Movements and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

namely, *The Doctrine and Covenants* and *The Pearl of Great Price*.<sup>44</sup> In more recent times, some Adventists have treated certain writings of Ellen G. White, such as *The Great Conflict*, or *The Ministry of Healing* as holding a more or less inspired status.<sup>45</sup> Christian Science has done much the same with Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health*. In short, some have believed that there is more to be written.

During the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the claims made by some charismatic leaders, whether they appear in David Wilkerson's *The Vision*,<sup>46</sup> or the oracles of certain "Kansas City prophets" have raised questions among some Pentecostals.<sup>47</sup> The practice of recording and circulating certain prophetic oracles among Protestant, Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox Charismatics, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, raised similar questions afresh.<sup>48</sup>

The fact that such claims exist does not mean that we are to understand all such claims as equally helpful, or equally harmful. To say that they are a theological impossibility today as many cessationists might suggest is not a valid position to embrace. Karl Rahner has argued as much when he says,

Therefore, anyone who absolutely rejects the possibility of special revelations offends against faith; and anyone who denies that they may occur even since the apostolic age offends against a doctrine which is theologically certain. There is nothing further to be said on the subject. Everyone, then, who

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<sup>44</sup>For an overview of the subject of continuing revelation in the LDS tradition see G. B. Arbaugh, *Revelation in Mormonism: Its Character and Changing Form* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1932), and D. S. Crowther, *Gifts of the Spirit* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon, 1983).

<sup>45</sup>Several books in the Adventist tradition outline the function of the continuing gift of prophecy. Among them are A. G. Daniells, *The Abiding Light of Prophecy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1936); W. A. Spicer *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Adventist Movement: A Gift that Builds Up* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1937); C. B. Haynes, *The Gift of Prophecy* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1946); and more recently *The Spirit of Prophecy: Treasure Chest* (Glendale, CA: Prophetic Guidance School of the Voice of Prophecy, 1960).

<sup>46</sup>David Wilkerson, *The Vision* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1974), 143.

<sup>47</sup>David Pytches, *Some Said It Thundered: A Personal Encounter with the Kansas City Prophets* (Nashville, TN: Oliver Nelson/A Division of Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 167; Clifford Hill, *Prophecy Past and Present: An Exploration of the Prophetic Ministry in the Bible and the Church Today* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books/Servant Publications 1989), 317; Mike Bickle with Michael Sullivant, *Growing in the Prophetic* (Orlando, FL: Creation House, 1996), 239.

<sup>48</sup>I. C. Stanton, *Has God Said? A Record of Prophetic Promptings to Our Generation* (Los Angeles, CA: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1980), foreword; see also Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "Written Prophecies: A Question of Authority," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 2:2 (fall 1980), 26-45.

wishes to be a Christian must ask himself whether he does not live in dispositions which *a priori* exclude such revelations from God; and whether he does not seem to believe and approve of the visionary events in Scripture only because he is used to them, but not because they would not instantly rouse him to rationalistic protest should he encounter them for the first time.<sup>49</sup>

The Apostle John gave the directive, “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God*” (1 John 4:1). If we follow this and Paul’s direction to the Corinthians (14:29) to allow for prophetic speech and then to weigh what is said; or we follow his directions in 1 Thessalonians 5: 21-22 to “*test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil*”, there is no need to “quench” (1 Thessalonians 5:19) the Spirit’s ability to motivate someone today to speak on behalf of the Lord.

The Charism of prophecy is a gift that Classical Pentecostals and Catholic Charismatics commonly share.<sup>50</sup> It is a place where we may build bridges. In most cases, the messages that we experience have an *ad hoc* character about them. They are typically addressed to specific people, at specific times, in specific places, for specific reasons. As the Pentecostal English theologian, Donald Gee observed in 1930, “In the midst of all the prophetic ministry in the early church, [there was] much of it doubtless transient in interest, local in application, and apparently sometimes questionable in veracity. . . .”<sup>51</sup> There is a clear sense in these messages that none of these words are intended to supersede or compete with Scripture in any way. They simply provide immediate instruction, direction, encouragement, hope, or consolation to those who were the recipients of the very words of God.

Protect us, Lord, from being so offended by your revelations that we curse your prophets. Guard us from being so foolishly blinded by your majesty that we lose any sense of how to speak

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<sup>49</sup>Karl Rahner, *Visions and Prophecies* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder New York, 1963), 16-17.

<sup>50</sup>For Catholic Charismatic literature on this topic, see George A. Maloney, *Listen, Prophets!* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, no date); Bruce Yocum, *Prophecy: Exercising the Prophetic Gifts of the Spirit in the Church Today* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1976).

<sup>51</sup>Donald Gee, *The Ministry-Gifts of Christ*, 45.

as your witness. Rather, help our lips praise you for your glory.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Prayer taken from Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro, Compilers, *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

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**Fourth meeting of the International Lutheran-Pentecostal Dialogue  
September 7 – 13, 2019, Antananarivo, Madagascar  
Communiqué**

Representatives of various classical Pentecostal churches that belong to the Pentecostal World Fellowship, and member churches of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) began a five-year dialogue in 2016, preceded by preparatory meetings from 2004 - 2010 at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France. The fourth meeting took place September 7-13, 2019 at the Center of the Malagasy Lutheran Church (MLC) in Antananarivo, the capital city of Madagascar. Through annual meetings, the partners seek to understand each other better, at both international and local levels, in order to appreciate each other's theological and spiritual traditions and to find ways for common witness.

The theme of this meeting of the dialogue focused on healing and deliverance in light of Luke 4:18b, "Proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free". Each day began and ended with devotions led by the various members of the dialogue. Rev. Dr. Opoku Onyinah from the Church of Pentecost in Ghana presented a paper on "Pentecostal Understanding of Freedom, Healing and Deliverance". Rev. Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo and Rev. Dr. Noel Rabemanatsoa from the Malagasy Lutheran Church gave presentations on Fifohazana, a Christian revival movement in Madagascar, which has a strong healing ministry and an ecumenical outreach in the local context. All presentations were followed by lively discussions about the role of healing and deliverance in the life of the church. Discussions emphasized the sovereignty of God in healing and the importance of prayer and intercessions, as well as professional counseling.

On Sunday, September 8, the dialogue members joined a Lutheran worship service that took place in the framework of this year's annual

meeting of the Antananarivo Synod. The lively service brought together thousands of participants; the delegation members were greeted by the President of the Malagasy Lutheran Church, Rev. Dr. David Rakotonirina. The two Co-Chairs of the Lutheran-Pentecostal dialogue, Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann from the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, and Dr. Jean- Daniel Plüss from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Switzerland, both brought greetings to the gathering. The Lutheran Co-Chair, Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann publicly presented a letter of appreciation from the LWF to the MLC President, thanking the church for its support in organizing this year's dialogue meeting. The participants were generously invited for lunch afterwards, which also offered an opportunity to meet several pastors and church members from the Antananarivo Synod.

On Tuesday, September 10, the Malagasy Lutheran Church offered participants a festive hospitality dinner, which included a cultural program and a presentation of the structure and activities of the MLC. On Wednesday, September 11, the dialogue members had an opportunity to visit one of the revival camps of the Malagasy Lutheran Church in Antananarivo, Toby Betesda Ambohibao, where the well-known female leader of the movement, Germaine Volahavana, better known as Nenilava (1918-1998), had spent several years of her life. The revival camp cares for mentally and physically ill people and those suffering from addiction. The group attended a worship service at the camp, which included both healing and deliverance. The President of the MLC, Rev. Dr. David Rakotonirina, besides having participated actively at the dialogue meeting, and on various public occasions, stressed the importance of the Lutheran-Pentecostal dialogue for the churches in Madagascar.

Members of the Pentecostal team who participated in the meeting are: Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss, Co-Chair (Pentecostal Assemblies of Switzerland), Rev. Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. (Assemblies of God, USA), Rev. Tham Wan Yee and Rev. Moon Tee Yee (Assemblies of God, Malaysia/Philippines), and Rev. Dr. Opoku Onyinah (Church of Pentecost in Ghana) as a guest presenter. Members of the Lutheran team who participated in the meeting are: Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann, Co-Chair (Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil), Rev. Dr. Tamás Gáncs (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary), Rev. Dr. Cheryl Peterson (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), Rev. Dr. Johannes Zeiler (Church of Sweden), Rev. Dr. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson (Consultant on behalf of the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, France/Japan) and Rev. Anne Burghardt (Communion Office staff support on behalf of the LWF/Estonia). Rev. Dr. Joseph

Randrianasolo and Rev. Dr. Noel Rabemanatsoa from the Malagasy Lutheran Church attended the meeting as local participants.

Rev. Gani Wiyono (Assemblies of God, Indonesia), Dr. Olga Zaprometova (Church of God, Russia), Rev. Dr. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Pentecostal theological consultant, Finland/USA) and Rev. Dr. Wilfred J. Samuel (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia) were unable to attend.

The next and the last annual meeting of this round of dialogue is scheduled to be held in 2020 in Pasadena, California, USA. During this meeting, dialogue members will work on the final report, based upon presentations, discussions and encounters from the previous four years.

Antananarivo, Madagascar, September 13, 2019



**Press Release on the International Dialogue  
Between  
The World Communion of Reformed Churches  
And  
Classical Pentecostals**

Representatives of various classical Pentecostal churches and a delegation from the World Communion of Reformed Churches met in Baguio City, Philippines, October 23 - 30, 2019. This meeting was the sixth session of the third round of dialogue, which focuses on the understanding of mission.

At the beginning and end of each day, participants gathered to pray, sing, read and reflect upon the Bible together. This time of sharing in spirituality and worship helped to contextualize the discussions that took place, and to build greater community between the participants.

This year, the dialogue teams focused on distilling the essence of the past five years of discussions, which focused on the following aspects of the church and mission: mission and salvation, the Holy Spirit and mission, mission and the unity of the church and mission and eschatology. The document of this round of dialogues will be published in 2020. It is hoped that this publication will be useful for Reformed and Pentecostal churches to better understand each other and encourage common witness in word and action.

The dialogue teams were graciously hosted on the campus of the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary. Asia Pacific Theological Seminary is a cooperative ministry of the Assemblies of God national churches of Asia, Pacific Oceania, and the Assemblies of God World Missions-USA, serving theological students throughout Asia and Oceania. Its President, Rev. Tham Wan Yee, and all members of the faculty expressed their enthusiastic support for this ecumenical endeavor. The students were invited to learn about the value of bilateral dialogues during an open panel session, through a time of questions from the students. Rt. Rev. Dr.

David Daniels preached during a chapel service. On Sunday, the dialogue group attended a Pentecostal worship service at the Epicenter Church in Baguio. The next evening, the dialogue participants enjoyed a dinner with the faculty of the seminary, hosted by President Yee.

The Pentecostal team included Rev. Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, co-chair (Assemblies of God, USA), Rt. Rev. Dr. David Daniels (Church of God in Christ, USA), Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss (Swiss Pentecostal Mission) and Dr. Olga Zaprometova (Church of God, Russia). The Rev. Dr. Teresa Chai (Assemblies of God, Malaysia/Philippines) and Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Grey (Australian Christian Churches) were unable to attend.

The Reformed team included the Rev. Dr. Karla Ann Koll, co-chair, (Presbyterian Church USA/Costa Rica), Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing (Executive Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches), Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi (Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ghana), Rev. Dr. Bas Plaisier (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) and Rev. Dr. Gabriella Rácsok (Reformed Church of Hungary) and Rev. Dr. Nadia Marais (Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa). The Rev. Dr. Carmelo Alvarez (Disciples of Christ, Puerto Rico) was not able to attend.

Baguio City, Philippines  
October 29, 2019

**Walls, Andrew F. *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 2017. ISBN 978-1-62698-258-1. \$28.47.**

Andrew Walls' work as a missionary, church historian and educator has spanned many decades and he is one of the most well-respected scholars in his field. This book is the last in a series three books on World Christianity. The first two, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* and *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, were well received by the broader Church world. Like the others, this book is a "ragbag," to use his own term, of articles that he has published over the last 48 years (ix). All have been updated and some have never been published before. This book, with one major exception, which I shall note in due course, does live up to its claim of being a study in World Christianity. The book is divided into three parts, with each part having five or six articles.

Part I reveals Walls' deep knowledge of and passionate interest in Church History. There are five chapters in this part, "World Christianity and the Early Church," "Origen, the Father of Missions Studies," "Worldviews and Christian Conversion," "Toward a Theology of Migration" and "Globalization and the Study of Christian History."

In chapter one, he admits that he "fell into the trap" (4) of other scholars in identifying "the early church with the Church of the Roman Empire," to the exclusion of the Church elsewhere. Thankfully, he was rescued from this trap (4). What I appreciate about this statement is both his humility and his willingness to be stretched and grow in his understanding of the worldwide Body of Christ. It is this geographical, linguistic and cultural variety that makes the book so interesting to read.

In chapter two he makes a compelling case for considering Origen, the early church Father from Alexandria, Egypt, as the father of mission studies. Living in a land where polytheism was dominant compelled Origen, who became a Christian educator, to defend his faith, often using Greek categories of thought, with a goal to be thoroughly Greek yet thoroughly Christian (23), meaning that Origen strove to explain the gospel within his Greek worldview.

In the next chapter, Walls logically moves into considering the nature of worldview and the nature of Christian conversion. He states that "worldviews are the mental maps of the universe that contain what we know, or think we know, about the universe and, how it operates, and about our own place in it. . . . Such mental pathways may link, for instance, the area of rights and duties both to the area of religion and the area of kin relationship; they may also link the places of danger to the sources of power and protection" (35-36). He goes on to make the case

that when people embrace the gospel, their worldview is transformed but the old worldview is not necessarily destroyed. In some cases the old gods are not destroyed but are reclassified as demons. He then goes on to demonstrate that Enlightenment Christianity of Europe became the dominant mold into which the Protestant missionary movement was expressed (44). In later chapters he goes on to discuss how this worldview “wineskin” was inadequate to deal with the supernatural worldviews in Africa.

In chapter four, he moves on to discuss two great migrations in history, the Great European Migration during the colonial era and the Great Reverse Migration going on today where those from the colonized nations are now moving into Europe in great numbers and seeks to understand them within the biblical framework of migration demonstrated by people like Abraham. He suggests that the Great Reverse Migration may yet impact history and the church in the West in ways not yet clearly seen (59).

Chapter 5 concludes Part I with thoughts on the impact of globalization on the study of Christian history, particularly on the theological academy and the sources for studying Christian history. Here he brilliantly describes how Western theology, which has been impacted by Greek philosophical and Enlightenment thinking, is simply too small to grapple with the wide, spirit-world oriented, worldviews in Africa. What he fails to acknowledge here, however, is that Pentecostal theology and spirituality, with its emphasis on spirit empowerment for service, divine healing and deliverance from demons, does not share these limitations. Given the size of the Pentecostal movement and its resonance with African worldviews, it is difficult to understand this omission, especially when in an earlier chapter, he routinely states examples from African church history that document the place of signs and wonders in the presentation of the gospel.

In Part II, he focuses exclusively on the African church. In discussing Church History in Africa in chapter 6, he routinely mentions those involved in spiritual disciplines who regularly battled the powers of darkness, so prevalent in the African worldviews, with signs and wonders accompanying their work. Great church growth was the result. In chapter 7, he describes the Christian experiment of settling freed slaves in an African colony, Sierra Leone. While his history here is quite detailed, at no point does he critique the issue of racism that undergirded the slavery movement, nor does he critique the cultural assumption that sending the children of African immigrants back to Africa, for which they were not suited, may not have been a good idea.

Chapter 8 “*Christianity and the Language Issue. . .*” deals with the issue of Western missionaries in West Africa grappling with the

indigenous languages and their success or, in a number of cases, their failure, in doing so. He records a number of stories of missionaries in Sierra Leone, where English was common due to the resettled former slaves and their British overlords, who broke free of the propensity to stick to English and tried to learn the native languages and dialects in the region, translating portions of the Bible and other religious publications as part of their work. Some also developed linguistic aids, such as primers, in the various languages, to assist new missionaries in learning these languages.

These efforts, however, do not appear to have been in the majority. Walls notes that one missionary woman “pressed upon anyone who would listen to the importance of African languages. She had little success; to most of those people in Britain who were well disposed to Africa, the best possible outcome seemed to be that Africans would learn English” (121). He concludes that “the colony of Sierra Leone gradually emerged as a Christian community, the most substantial early success of Protestant missions in Africa. And its Christianity was English-speaking, with literacy in English, and its people enthusiastically participated in the British cultural and literary inheritance” (120).

I found chapter 9, “*The Discovery of African Traditional Religion and Its Impact on Religious Studies*,” to be the most interesting and, in my opinion, perhaps the most challenging. Again, he notes the rich history of Africa, both in creating great civilizations and in the reception and practice of Christianity (130). He cites 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary literature, including David Livingstone’s *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, which was published in London in 1857, describing life in Africa at that time.

A major focus of this chapter is explaining African traditional religions in the context of the developing field of anthropology in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He notes, “in this way the study of African religion passed from missionaries to academic anthropologists and became a field within the social sciences. In time the anthropologists left the library for fieldwork of their own and ceased to be dependent on the missionaries, becoming in the process the principal providers of detailed local studies of African religion” (135). He praises the literary work of Geoffrey Parrinder and other missionaries, as well as African scholars Bolaji Idowu and John S. Mbiti and others. Again, however, he fails to note that Pentecostals have engaged this worldview quite successfully.

Chapter 10 provides an excellent focus on African theologian Kwame Bediako, who I found inspiring. Walls does an excellent job of describing his life, teachings and writings, and his legacy to the African church. I will look forward to reading more on Bediako because of this chapter.

Part Three (chapters 11-16) is entitled, “*The Missionary Movement and The West*.” This is where the logic of Walls’ “ragbag” approach gets a bit confusing. The chapter titles are, *Missions and the English Novel*, *World Parish to World Church: John and Charles Wesley on Home and Overseas Missions*, *Missions and Historical Memory: Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd*, *Distinguished Visitors: Tiyo Soga and Behari Lal Singh in Europe and at Home*, *Western Christians in China: A Chapter in a Long History* and *Building to Last: Harold Turner and the Study of Religion*. While most of these are fine articles in themselves, the subject cohesion between the chapters found in the first two parts of the book is lacking here.

Chapter 11, *Missions and the English Novel*, studies the mood towards missions in the West by reviewing the works of the noted novelists of the times like Jane Austen, Herman Melville and others. While it is well written and is certainly a legitimate subject, I find the relevance to this book is only tangential since Walls’ stated theme is related to crossing cultural barriers in the history of worldwide spread of the faith, not the attitude of those on the home front.

Chapters 12 to 13, cover the work of individuals, the Wesleys in England (12) and Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd in America (13). While the Wesleys and the early Methodists did not cross cultural barriers themselves, save for that of colonial America and Sierra Leone, they certainly laid the foundation for later Methodists to do so. Early American missionaries like Brainerd did not find it necessary to sail overseas to conduct cross-cultural missions. The Native Americans amongst whom they lived were in fact a world apart in terms of culture, language and religious practices. The article, then, covers the life of David Brainerd and his impact on missions in America and how his journal, posthumously published by Edwards, impacted the lives of others, particularly Henry Martyn, who went to India. Chapters 14 and 15 cover the work of others, most notably in South Africa and China. The concluding chapter is about Harold Turner, a noted scholar in religion in a past generation for whom Walls apparently had much affinity. Walls notes Turner’s great contribution to scholarship on new religious movements worldwide, including the African Independent Church movement.

In the conclusion, Walls refers to missiologists as the “magpies” and “subversives” of the academic world, charging into the domains of theologians, biblical scholars, historians and the like. He notes that one of the missiological concerns is for the future of doing theology (259). Restating his theme that western theology is far too narrow for the worldviews of Asia and Africa, which raises all kinds of issues that need attention, he calls on us to engage in this process (264). Despite his

omission of the Pentecostals in this area, his concern is legitimate and, I believe, represents a broad frontier for doing theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He also warns us that the broad use of the English language for doing theology, rather than the vernaculars of the non-Western world, may lead to English becoming the new Latin of ecclesiastical thinking. We would do well to heed this warning.

Despite the aforementioned weaknesses, I found much to commend in his work. His deep knowledge of theology, anthropology and church history make this book an excellent contribution to the field. Much of what he writes about Africa is relevant to Asia due the similarities in worldviews, colonial experience and western missionary influences, both good and bad. I would strongly recommend this book to theologians, missiologists and theological librarians all over the world.

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## Contributors

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(Continued from front inside cover)

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